

The Epistle to the Romans

Ch. 8-B

A failing memory haunts old Harry as he raves about a new cafe in town. His pal Artie asks, “Which one?” Harry googles his brain’s *hippocampus*, but apparently school’s out. “Art,” he says, “what flower is that?” “That’s a rose.” “I know that!” Harry growls, turning to his wife. “Rose, what’s that new deli’s name?”

Previously in Romans

Scholarly Paul’s brilliant letter says it all with just two, 3-letter, monosyllabic words. Creation’s #1 Problem: **SIN**. Only Cure: **GOD**. Every human has hooked, sliced or shanked God’s standard of perfection. As supreme Judge over all, only His verdict matters.

“Religion” is Latin’s “*religio*” (“something that binds”). It stresses what *we* do *for* God over what *God has* done, *is* doing and *will* do *for* us. We’d never deserve salvation (3:10-18). God’s done it *all for* us!

Your faith in receiving God’s forgiveness makes you totally, forever right with Him (3:24-25, 5:71). We could not perfectly obey God’s laws, so He freed us from religion’s demands which result in pride or guilt. Now we are “complete in Christ” (Colossians 2:10)!

The believer is “in Christ,” and Christ’s Spirit is “in us” (Colossians 1:27). Jesus told Paul that believers were “with” Christ (identified with Him) in His death, burial, resurrection and ascension.

As “citizens of heaven,” God will never again condemn us for sin (Philippians 3:20)! Being human, Christ’s followers do sin and suffer the consequences in this life, i.e., busted relationships, destructive behaviors, shame, etc. Still, God is true to His Word as we agree with Him that we did sin, and that it was what Jesus died for. Sins which God has literally forgotten (Hebrews 10:17-18)!

Because God’s not crouching, waiting to catch us sinning so that He can throw us under the bus, His unconditional, supernatural love draws us into making decisions that reflect Jesus’ character (8:29).

Let’s read this tradition-busting chapter that dwarfs all manmade declarations. It’s Romans 8:1-39 (p. 332, Msg)

Hard Times Rock – Good Times Roll

Romans 8:18-25

Caesar’s Empire ranged from Spain to Syria, and from Egypt to England -- one-fourth of the world’s population. At this 57 A.D. writing, Italy housed some three million slaves.

In 64 A.D. Nero began arresting Christ's people, feeding them to wild animals, using them as human torches. But these horrors, advises Paul, pale compared to heaven's imminent ecstasies (2 Corinthians 4:17).

All creation is groaning with evil, decay, disease and death, waiting for Christ to return (Genesis 3:14, 17-19; Colossians 3:3,4). This is when Jesus sets up His kingdom on earth for 1,000 years (Isaiah 11:5-9; 35:1-2; 65:20). Then He re-creates "a new heaven and new earth" where He, men and nature live in peace (Isaiah 11:6-9; Hebrews 2:10; 2 Peter 3:7; Revelation 21:5). Just think: no more hairy Burger King cavemen or Vern Fonk TV commercials.

DISCUSS: What evidence is there of Creation's groaning?

DISCUSS: What connections do you see, if any, between God and your current set of frustrations?

When Christ enters your life, He makes your spirit perfect, yet your mind, emotions, will and body still battle sin. So we eagerly await Jesus' return "in the clouds" to take us with Him forever (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18). Then we're issued a new, sin-proof body that will never wear out (Philippians 1:6; Titus 2:13)!

DISCUSS: How would having this hope affect your life?

He Can Work It Out *Romans 8:26-30*

Too tongue-tied to pray? The Holy Spirit speaks on our behalf to God the Father, translating our wants into what God *wants* for us. And, honestly, don't we want what God has for us (James 1:17)!

God wastes nothing in a believer's life, purposefully using ALL of it for our good (Genesis 50:20). Things may seem lousy at the time, but if you love God, you have His word that you need not fear or be anxious (Philippians 4:6-7, 19). You can thank God that your minutest concerns are under His control (1 Thessalonians 5:18).

DISCUSS: How would it feel if you knew God is present in all of your ups and downs to harmonize that cacophony into something good?

God never says "Oops." He knew you before Creation (Jeremiah 1:4-5). He knew Adam and Eve would mess up. He knew He'd send Jesus to die for your sin. He knew He'd "call" you (2 Thessalonians 2:13-14). He knew if you'd accept His forgiveness, He'd adopt you and transform you to reflect the very traits of Christ so that when you arrive in His presence, you'll be heaven-ready not just in your spirit, but in your thoughts,

emotions, will and body as well (1 Corinthians 15:42-49)! **Let's check Psalm 139:1-18 (p. 467 NIV).**

From Here Through Eternity Romans 8:31-39

God's given us His dearest, costliest Gift - His Son, so what could He possibly hold back from us? It's like Mummy and Daddykins give you a new Porsche 918 Spider for your 16th birthday, but those meanies won't pop for floor mats 'til your 18. Awww, poor baby!

Still anticipating his reader's questions, Paul wonders who'd have the nerve to press charges against you if the Creator's already given you a clean bill of health and is now readying your celestial condo.

Perhaps Romans 8:35 is the Bible's Continental Divide, posing that watershed question: "Could anything stop God from loving you just as much as He loves His Son Jesus?" Paul's Holy Spirit-inspired reply reverberates through our entire being: "Nada!" Jesus has conquered Satan and the Grim Reaper for you (Philippians 1:21)!

God will keep, defend, protect and provide for those who place their faith in Him through Christ (Ephesians 6:11-13). No foe of any description anywhere in the universe, not even ourselves, can rip us away from God. Why? **GOD IS FOR US!** He's NOT out to get you!

Wanna hear something equally outrageous? As a follower of Christ, you cannot fail to meet His expectations of you because He has none (Psalm 103:13,14)! He can't love you any more or any less.

DISCUSS: What are the benefits of "no condemnation?"

DISCUSS: What's good about the Holy Spirit residing in your spirit?

DISCUSS: How could you possibly ever profit from suffering?

DISCUSS: What does God's "no separation" promise mean to you?

DISCUSS: If Jesus were your houseguest, how would you introduce Him?

"...YES AND NO..."

No condemnation or separation from God. No fear of the past, present or future; He's turning it ALL into something good for you, because in faith you said "Yes" to His invitation to trade your sins for His forgiveness so that you can be secure in His love.

You have said "Yes" to Him, right? Please do that today.

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