**Series Title:**

**"OUR DILEMMA: GOD'S SOLUTION"**

**Paul's Letter to the ROMANS: Chapters 1-8**

***DO-IT-YOURSELF RELIGION***

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Inety percent of bad golf shots, says Jack Nicklaus, happen before your swing. My biggest mistake occurs before that. It’s when I make a tee time.

Comparing winning at golf and life is instructive, especially when seen from God’s place in the gallery. Neither victory depends on our appearance, net worth or achievements. Our golf score *should* improve by playing more. But access to heaven comes solely by accepting God’s forgiveness of our sins (John 3:16; 3:36; 14:5-6).

If the Bible is God’s letter to us, if He’s the Creator/Sustainer of the universe, if we’re all born separated from Him by original sin and destined to keep sinning, if life here is but a fraction of our soul’s eternal existence, if ultimately we spend forever with God in heaven or isolated from Him in what the Bible calls hell, if God allows no sin to enter heaven, how then can we fix our terminal sin dilemma?

By keeping the Ten Commandments? If so, how ya doin’? Perfect yet? Because that’s what God requires.

While exploring the Bible at Nordy’s, we’ve seen that God’s already pro-actively dealt with our malignant sin problem:

1. He saves us BY His grace. We can do nothing to deserve it (1 Corinthians 15:3-4; Ephesians 2:8-10).
2. He saves us FROM His eternal judgment (Romans 5:9).
3. He saves us TO be living proof on earth and later in heaven that He’s God, and we aren’t (2 Corinthians 5:9).

God acts. We receive. He does the saving and keeping, not us! THIS sets Biblical Christianity apart from religion.

Discovering, comprehending and applying what God has for us in the Bible not only determines our eternal destiny, but also improves our lives today as men, husbands, dads and leaders. If that fails, we can always turn to Dr. Phil and “The Best Dang Sports Show!”

***The Romans Recap***

It’s been five months since we last studied Romans, up through ch. 8, so let’s roll the highlights and get caught up. Written in Greece in 57 AD, Paul's letter to Gentile and Jewish Christians in Rome answers the question: How can we be made right with God? (Job 9:2, 10; Luke 18:18-19). It’s thirty years since Jesus’ miracle life, death and resurrection, now known across Nero’s sprawling empire.

This letter is the Roman believers’ first Christian literature! And it’s the Bible’s clearest outline of the Christian faith. Paul builds an airtight case for the lost, sinful state of every man, leaving us condemned by God to die, or be separated forever from Him. Only He can commute our death sentence. Prompted by love, He’s ready to do that for EVERYone who comes to Him believing that Jesus’ sacrificial death is the sole path to God. Embracing this Good News gives us peace *with* God, the peace *of* God, freedom to start thinking, acting and speaking like Christ, and freedom to reject sinful desires. Impossible? Yup … unless God lives in us!

Before drilling into ch. 8, let’s skim chs. 1-7. Ch. 1 has Paul’s theme: God accepts us by faith alone, not by anything we do or don’t do. Salvation’s not for sale! **Let’s read Romans 1:16-20 (p. 836).**

Ch. 2 – Religious people (represented here by Jews), the non-religious (Gentiles), even unreached pagans know right from wrong and are accountable to God, Obeying a list of do’s and don’ts don’t cut it. **Let’s read Romans 2:12-15 and 28-29 (p. 837).**

In ch. 3 God -- who *is* love, *hates* sin and is *just* by nature -- is seen satisfying His justice by dispatching His Son Jesus from heaven to Palestine to take the death rap for *all* of us. As a result, we can -- by faith -- *choose* to receive His total forgiveness and be given right standing before Him. **Let’s read Romans 3:10-12 and 19-28.**

Ch. 4 says even Jewish icons Abraham and David were accepted by God based just on their *faith*. **Let’s read Rom. 4:2-5 (p. 838).**

Ch. 5 states that by giving the reins of our life to Christ, we're at peace with God, and pronounced *perfect* by Him! Whoa! **Let’s read Romans 5:1-2 and 8-12 (p. 839).**

Ch. 6 -- God's grace sets us free from sin’s PENALTY, helps us defeat sin’s POWER over us, and when we’re in heaven, rids us of sin’s PRESENCE! **Let's read Rom. 6:1-2 and 20-23 (p. 840).**

Paul, born a Jew *and* a Roman citizen, became a Pharisee/scholar and anti-Christian terrorist, then was miraculously morphed by God into His first missionary! Moonlighting as a tentmaker, in ch. 7 this spiritual giant owns up to failure in trying to live “the Christian life” on his own. God shows him that the *only* way to win our daily battle over sin’s seductions is to rely on Christ's defeat of sin and death. **Let’s read Romans 7:21-25 in THE MESSAGE:**

“It happens so regularly that it's predictable. The moment I decide to do good, sin is there to trip me up. I truly delight in God's commands, but not all of me joins in that delight. Parts of me covertly rebel, and when I least expect it, they take charge. I've tried everything; nothing helps. I'm at the end of my rope. Is there no one who can do anything for me? Isn't that the real question? The answer, thank God, is that Jesus Christ can and does. He acted to set things right in this life of contradictions where I want to serve God with all my heart and mind, but am pulled by the influence of sin to do something totally different.”

Now, a powerhouse chapter! **Let’s read Rom. 8:1-39 (p. 841).**

***Facts Trump Feelings***

***Romans 8:1-4***

Every Christ-follower is tempted to approach life’s tee, fearing that his sin has cut him off from God, perhaps even cancelled his salvation! But since those who are “in Christ” are forever secure, Paul convincingly trashes this notion (Titus 3:5, 1 John 5:12).

Man couldn't meet God's standard of perfection by keeping the Laws given to Moses. So, to get into relationship with us, God *had* to make it possible for us to *become* perfect – at least in *HIS* eyes! By sacrificing His Son Jesus Christ on the cross, God gives us what we could never earn -- that gift of righteous standing before Him.

So then, why live with constant guilt …. when God says we’re cool!

***“What’ll It Be, Bub?”***

***Romans 8:5-11***

Before turning to Christ, we’re handcuffed to our old sinful desires. No matter how moral or religious, we’re displeasing God by rejecting Jesus’ sacrifice. Paul says if God's Spirit is living in you, you *belong* to Him. But if you haven't invited God's Spirit to enter your life, you don't belong to Christ. There's no "I *think* I’m a Christian" or "I *hope* I am." Jesus says you're in or you’re out.

***“God, Make My Day”***

***Romans 8:12-17***

Because the believer's liberated from his date with eternal torment, he can repel sin’s tug by choosing to do what pleases God (Romans 12:1-2). Each morning we can say, "God, I'm all yours, every minute. Help me think, say and do what brings You joy today."

***The Secret of Waiting***

***Romans 8:18-27***

Everybody and everything *groans* today with inequities, illness, wars, broken relationships, atrocities. Aware or not, we’re all on tiptoes for when this old heaven and earth will one day vaporize, and God ushers in the new, improved models (Revelation 21:1-8).

Meanwhile, Christ's followers anticipate indescribable scenes to come, when our Lord returns to take us to be with Him forever (Philippians 3:20-21; 2 Corinthians 5:1-4; John 16:33).

When we're too frazzled to even pray, God's Holy Spirit *in* us groans with us, and prays to the Father *for* us! God the Father loves and provides for us; God the Son gave His life to save us; and God the Holy Spirit is our non-stop Link to our Father in heaven!

***We’ve Got Questions***

***Romans 8:28-30***

Why’s there so much suffering? It's not fair! We fixate on the *immediate*; God sees the *ultimate*. We ask “why” because life is lived in the windshield, but understood in the rear view mirror.

Believers in Christ can have unshakable confidence that our Father in heaven is *causing* ALL our circumstances to eventually pan out for our *benefit*, using ALL of life’s contents to shape us into taking on Christlike characteristics (Jeremiah 18:1-6; Proverbs 20:24; 1 Corinthians 2:11; Romans 11:33; Genesis 50:20).

God says He knew us personally, by name, even way back before Creation. He knew Adam and Eve would screw up. He knew He'd offer His Son to take the punishment for our sin. He knew that if we’d accept His forgiveness, He'd adopt us as His kids, and give us an equal share in the inheritance coming to His Son Jesus, something we could never merit on our own (Psalm 139:1-18)!

***Nuthin’….Nobody….No Way***

***Romans 8:31-39***

Paul gives Christ’s followers the best assurance imaginable, namely that the same God who deployed His Son to earth to die for our sins will preserve, protect and provide for those who place their faith in Him through Christ. No enemy within or without, even death or hell, can separate us from God -- because no matter who's *against* us … GOD is ***FOR*** us!

### Heeeeeeeeeere’s Johnny!

As Ed McMahon might tell Johnny Carson, everything you ever need to know about your life’s most pivotal choice is in these eight chapters of Paul’s snail mail to Rome. Do you have a grip on how much God loves you, and the price He’s paid to have a relationship with you? Teeing it up for life with Jesus is not just good business today, but for all our tomorrows. If you haven’t done that yet, right now as we close, why not swing into a prayer like this:

“God, we both know I’m a sinner. By faith I'm believing that Your Son Jesus completely paid for all my sins, once and for all, on that cross. I give you my life now. Here it is, Father. Teach me how to live Your way. And I’ll thank You the rest of my days. Amen."

His Deal

October 7 & 14, 2003

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