**Paul's Letter to the Romans:**

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

**Chapter 12:1**

***The Urge To Merge***

M

aybe it’s my Tennessee DNA, gospel music, R&B or the Grand Ole Opry just up the road a piece, but Ray Stevens’ “Mississippi Squirrel Revival” reminds me of home.

Well, when I was a kid, I'd take a trip every summer down to Mississip'

**To visit my Granny and her antebellum world.**

**One day I happened to catch myself a squirrel.**

**When Sunday came, I snuck him into church.**

**I's sittin' way back in the very last pew,showin' him to my buddy Hugh,**

**When that squirrel got loose and went totally berserk.**

**What happened next is hard to tell.**

**Some thought it was Heaven, others thought it was Hell.**

**As the choir sang "I surrender all,"**

**The squirrel run up Harv Newman's coveralls.**

**Harv leaped to his feet and said, "Somethin's got ahold of me!"**

**The day the squirrel went berserk in the First Self-Righteous Church**

**In that sleepy little town of Pascagoula.**

**It was a fight for survival that broke out in revival.**

**They were jumpin' pews and shoutin' “Hallelujah!”**

**Well, Harv hit the aisles dancin' and screamin.'**

**Some thought he had religion; others thought he had a demon.**

**And Harv thought he had a weedeater loose in his Fruit of the Looms.**

Faster’n that squirrel could “go yard” in Brother Harv’s Dockers, the Gospel crackled like lightning from tiny, first century Palestine across the Roman Empire. God had come to earth as a newborn! Then He grew saying He was the Jews’ long-awaited Messiah!

Calling this “blasphemy,” seeing Him as a threat, Jerusalem’s elite hauls Jesus before Caesar’s local puppet, Pilate. This Miracle Worker from backwater Nazareth then gives His life on a cross, comes alive on the third day, is seen by five hundred witnesses, zips back to heaven, and is now awaiting His Father’s signal to return to whisk His earthbound followers to be with Him for all ages to come.

This unsettles and incites many to persecute the new “Christians,” but it’s welcomed by millions of Gentiles and a few Jews. Lacking a Larry King Show, Paul hits the road with this “good news,” and writes letters – like this one to believers in Rome, spelling out God’s relationship with man, from Adam to Armageddon and beyond.

***Romans Rewind***

‘Til now Paul’s given us these why’s and how’s to become “righteous” (sinless in God’s sight) if we hope to be in God’s family:

1. Each of us is born a sinner, without excuse before God, no matter how hard we try to lead a good life (Romans 2:1).
2. God didn’t give Moses the moral Law (10 Commandments) to show us how to be good, but to prove that without God’s help, we face His coming wrath against sin (Romans 3: 19-20).
3. Jesus, God’s Son, willingly became the Sacrifice for your sin and mine, paying the penalty to save us from a hopeless, eternal alienation from God (Romans 3:24, 4:25).
4. We’re put right with God not by our efforts, but by acting on faith, as Abraham did 4,000 years ago, to receive God’s forgiveness – a gift from God’s *amazing* grace (His undeserved favor) and mercy (His unmerited restraint). That act of faith puts us at peace with God permanently, totally satisfying His need to punish us for our sin (Romans 5:1).
5. Although believers are forgiven, and free to keep on sinning, Paul says this is unconstructive, disrespectful and unwise in light of all that God’s done for us (Romans 6:1-3).
6. Living the Christian life is no snap. Even Paul admits *not* doing what he knew to be right, and instead doing what he knew to be wrong, making him miserable. God’s antidote is His Holy Spirit’s liberating power within us, giving us the will and ability to say “no” to sin (Romans 7:24 –25).
7. Having received God’s unconditional forgiveness, and been credited with Christ’s own moral perfection, and having been adopted into His family, Paul says God will *never* hold our sins against us, but we’ll suffer their natural consequences in this life—do the crime, do the time (Romans 8:1, Galatians 6:7). But *nothing* will ever separate us from God’s love (8:33, 35).
8. Only God’s mercy spares believers from permanent exile in a fiery lake called hell (Romans 9:13-18; Matthew 25:41, 46).
9. Now, during this age of grace, explained in “the mystery” revealed to Paul by Christ, everybody comes to God not on our merits but only through God’s generosity. Trusting in Christ alone, we’re “saved” from God’s coming judgment on all unrepentant sinners (Romans 10:9-13).
10. Because they rejected Christ as Messiah 2,000 years ago, God set aside the Jews as a nation and as the only religious portal to Him. But now He welcomes *all* people to have a relationship with Him, with unrestricted, 24/7, direct access, not through a human broker (Hebrews 4:14-16). One day God will end this age of grace, elevating Israel to prominence when Christ returns at the end of the Great Tribulation to purge the world of sin, and to rule over all the earth (Romans 11:25).
11. Paul affirms that God will never renege on His promises, that we’re unable to grasp His greatness, and that everything has its beginning, middle and end in Him (Romans 11:29-36).

That’s deep stuff, but as Mark Twain put it, "People are bothered by those passages in Scripture which they cannot understand; but as for me, I always noticed that the passages in Scripture which trouble me most are those which I *do* understand."

### Walkin’ The Talk

In chs. 12-16, Paul takes what we’ve been *discovering* and *comprehending*, and shows how it *applies* to our daily life, giving us the urge to do more than merge our personal agenda with God’s perfect plan for our lives, but to wholeheartedly submit to it. **Let’s start by reading Romans 11:25-12:21. Page 844.**

**Now let’s playback Romans 12:1-2 thesaurus-style:**

“I appeal-beg-implore-entreat-plead with you therefore, brothers, in view of all the mercies-compassion of God, to make a decisive dedication-presentation of all your members and faculties as a living sacrifice, holy-set apart-reserved-devoted-consecrated and acceptable-fully agreeable and well-pleasing to God, which is your reasonable-rational-intelligent-logical-spiritual service-worship. Do not be conformed-fashioned after-adapted to this age’s superficial customs, but be transformed-changed by the entire renewal-renovation of your mind-intellect-understanding, by its new ideals and attitude, so that you may prove-discern-examine-try for yourselves what is God’s good, acceptable-fully agreeable, well-pleasing and perfect-complete will for you.”

### What’s “Therefore” There For?

### Romans 12:1a

12:1a “Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy …..”

QUESTION: Since He’s all-powerful, why doesn’t God force Himself on us instead of pleading? How is mercy a motivator?

Like a neon sign, Paul erects a blinking “therefore” atop ch. 12. It’s how he signals transitions: the end of God’s pursuit of fools (1:24); the end of our being sideways with God (5:1); the end of God’s holding our sins against us (8:1); the end of me-first living (12:1).

Ever the Gentleman, God opts to “urge,” to plead with us, when He could’ve gone to the whip. But He bases His urging on His mercy -- His restraint in not giving us what we have coming to us (Romans 2:4). God, being holy and sinless, can’t look at sin. Absent His mercy, we’d have no chance, Lance, of being with Him after we die.

God has proven His love for us by extending His mercy to us (1 John 4:9-11, 19). Here are just a few of His mercy bennies for believers:

• He’s pardoned our sins—even deleted them from His hard drive (Romans 4:8)!

• He sees us as being as sinless as His Son Jesus (Romans 4:3,5).

• He no longer associates us with Adam, but as being “in Christ.”

• He’s put us under grace, not Moses’ Law (Romans 3:28).

• His Holy Spirit, “the Comforter,” lives in us (Romans 8:9).

• He’s teaching us to think, act and speak like Jesus (Romans 8:29).

• He’s prepared an indescribable future for us, in His presence!

• He and we are now permanently inseparable (Romans 8:38-39)!

• His promises are unbreakable (Romans 11:29).

### Give Yo’ Bod To God

### Romans 12:1b

12:1b “…to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship.”

QUESTION: Why did Paul use the metaphor of a sacrifice?

**QUESTION: What would your life look like if you were to give your mind, will and body as a living sacrifice to God?**

When we give God our total trust, He urges us to give Him control of our bodies. This “pleases” Him since only Jesus’ sinlessness, put to your account, can make you acceptable to God (Romans 8:8).

What could possibly prompt us to cede control of our body to God (Romans 6:13)? Choosing to use neither guilt nor force, He puts all His chips on His mercies to persuade us, once we truly believe that they’re ours, once we know how deeply God loves us.

God’s no longer wants dead animal sacrifices; He wants your mind, will and body -- a lifestyle of submitting your ideas, desires and plans to Him, trusting Him to do His will in you. The Bible suggests some things we can sacrifice, as an act of worshipping God:

• Be considerate and respectful to your wife, treating her as a co-heir of God’s grace (1 Peter 3:7).

• Don’t get even with those who do you wrong (I Peter 3:9-11).

• Do the right thing, even when the opposite would feel so much better (Titus 3:1-2)!

• Jesus’ brother writes, “Out of the same mouth comes praise and cursing. My brothers, that should not be (James 3:5-10).

A great way to discover how God’s designed us to live is by reading one of Proverbs’ thirty-one chapters each day. In one short month we can uncover God’s wisdom for every situation in life.

### “There Is Power In The Blood”

June 6, 1944. 6,603 GI’s are killed, swarming French beaches, spilling their blood to save the world from a mustachioed madman. We honor those brave souls who gave their lives for our freedom.

The Creator, who spoke everything into existence, spilled His blood to save you and me from our sin-induced, everlasting torment, giving His life for our freedom to accept or reject Him.

You can honor His sacrifice now by telling Him, “God, I admit that I’m a sinner, lost without Your Son’s having taken my place on that cross. By faith I give You my trust, my life and my thanks for forgiving all my sin, and for welcoming me into your family. I’m ready to follow You from here to eternity. In Jesus’ name, amen.”

His Deal

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