**Paul's Letter to the Romans**

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

**Romans 15:1-16:27**

**“Arrividerci, Romans”**

I

f all roads really do lead to Rome, we should all burn our Triple-A cards because it’s taken us four years to navigate this letter!

Its author was Paul, once a leading Jewish Pharisee named Saul who was miraculously transformed from a flaming zealot who terrorized Jesus’ followers into God’s first envoy to the non-Jewish world.

Saul’s spiritual eyes were zapped open by God’s blinding light as he took his “Crush Christ” campaign on the road to Damascus, the oldest capital city in the world. ‘til then he’d relied on a knockout resume’ and his strong-armed derring-do to win God's favor. Not ‘til he surrendered his life to Christ did he find peace with God.

Now called Paul, he suffered endless torture and calamities in taking God’s "Good News" throughout the Roman Empire. He was arrested by Roman authorities in Jerusalem, jailed for two years, extradited to Rome, then decapitated there in 68 A.D.

While in Corinth taking a breather from his grueling tour in the winter of 55-56 A.D., he dictates this famous letter -- arguably the clearest, most logical assertion of God’s view of sin and salvation.

***Racing Through Romans***

***Chs. 1-4***

God leaked to Paul what He wants us to know about who He is, who we are, and how much He loves us. Like any good presenter, Paul opens by stating our #1 need. With no-frills frankness he documents man's sins and God's right to punish sinners. It’s grim, granted, but it paves the way for God's bold forgiveness move.

Just as there’s only one God, expressed in three Persons (Father, Son and Holy Spirit), God has provided only one way for both Jews and non-Jews to be welcomed into His eternal family, and that’s just by believing in His Son Jesus, not by striving to earn salvation.

Everyone since Eden has known at some level that God is. But, opting to steer our own ship, we resist acknowledging Him as our supreme Ruler. Like Burger King, we want it “our way.” So, we serve up our own gods: career, fame, wealth, family, sex, drugs, booze, hobbies, even religion. We rationalize, “Surely God will see that my pluses outweigh my minuses and let me in.” Dream on.

But not one to leave us without hope, God generously offers us total, permanent forgiveness, solely because His Son Jesus Christ stood in for us as the perfect Sacrifice for our sin (Romans 3:10-20). That’s the ONLY possible solution to our #1 Problem.

***Chs. 5-8***

When you say “yes” to God, you’re permanently at peace with Him! Will you keep on sinning? Yup! But will you sin less? We can only hope since God’s Holy Spirit now lives “in you” as your personal On Star system. It’s His job to align your thinking and actions with Christ’s. While this develops, tension exists between (a) your “Position” of God’s seeing you as perfect and forgiven, vis a vis (b) your “Practice” of screwing up! Remember, God has already defeated the grip sin once had on you. And as we understand more of His truth, our desires will change for the better.

Oh yes, God won’t keep us guessing ‘til we die to discover if we have eternal life. No, He’s already affirmed that when we’re “born again,” we’re forever “SAVED” (1 John 5:11-13)!

***Chs. 9-11***

God plans to set up on earth “the Kingdom of God” with Jesus, His Son, as King. Two thousand years ago Jesus came down here to sit on that spiritual throne. But He was violently rebuffed (John 1:11).

Because the Jews traded the life of Barabbas, a convicted felon, for the life of their sinless Messiah, God has temporarily ceased dealing with them as a nation, waiving His prior heavenly entrance requirement of obeying Moses’ Law. Now God is directly accessible to *all* people, regardless of race, gender or social standing!

This unprophesied era we’re living in now will conclude, says Paul, when Jesus returns to “rapture” (or catch away) His followers just prior to the seven-year, Great Tribulation. At that time God will resume dealing with the Jews as a nation, sending Jesus back to earth to imprison Satan and his angels for 1,000 years following history’s final war at Armageddon. Then Jesus takes the throne in Jerusalem, and the Kingdom of God finally comes to earth.

***Chs. 12-14***

As it dawns on us that what God wants for us is the best that could ever happen, we’re drawn to put His priorities above ours, making our lives completely available to Him.

How do you face reality? Do you say, “Just one more slice of Dutch Apple; *then* I’ll do Weightwatchers.” “My annual physical? Oh, about four years ago.” Reality, says Paul, is this: *All* things come *from*, *through* and *to* God who’s holding the universe together by His spoken word (Romans 11:36; Colossians 1:17; Hebrews 1:3).

One way Christ’s folks honor God, as citizens of both earth and heaven, is to obey governmental authorities who, Paul says, have been placed there by God to maintain order, not anarchy. As Paul wrote this, he was facing possible arrest, imprisonment and execution by wicked Nero, one of those “authorities” God says we’re to honor. Paul’s crime? Speaking reality.

Jesus’ people in Rome found some nagging spiritual pebbles in their sandals. Jewish Christians (formerly the “insiders”) clung to religious traditions, dietary laws, feast days et al. But Gentile Christians (formerly “outsiders”) saw no value in these, causing a few dust-ups (John 8:32, 36; Colossians 2:16-17; 2 Peter 2:19).

Here’s how Paul urges unity on the basics and non-judgmentalism on non-essentials (1 Corinthians 8:9; Galatians 5:13):

1. *Since God has accepted you, welcome your brother (vv. 1-3)*
2. *You answer to God, not to each other, and God has guaranteed His approval of you both, thanks to your faith in Christ (v. 4).*
3. *Don’t wobble on your own Holy Spirit-led convictions (v. 5).*
4. *Your convictions should honor God in all you do (vv. 6-9).*
5. *Let God do the judging; He has the technology (vv. 10-12).*
6. *Don’t cause a brother to trip in his walk with Christ (v. 13).*
7. *If it’s right for you but wrong for him, don’t push your values on him, or be cowed into caving in to his (v. 14).*
8. *If your practice is a problem for your brother, exercise your love option, and cease and desist (v. 15).*
9. *Don’t get hung up on minutia; God’s game is peace, joy and living together in ways that please Him (vv. 16-18).*
10. *Take a seat on God’s peace train; better yet, grab an overhead strap and give your seat to a brother. (v. 19).*
11. *Don’t mess with what God’s doing in your brother’s life; keep your differing convictions to yourself (vv. 20-22).*
12. *If you can’t do it with Jesus watching, guess what (v. 23).*

**Now let’s read Romans 15:1-33 (p. 846).**

***“You Say ToMAYto, I Say ToMAWto”***

***Romans 15:1-13***

“Weak” believers see rules and rituals as central to a Christ-focused life. As they understand more about God’s grace, they’ll realize that their stature in God’s eyes is not based on performing for Him.

“Strong” believers understand this, but their judgmental spirit and freedom-flaunting may cause a weaker brother to stumble. Beyond what’s covered in Scripture, God gives the believer elbow room to make wise choices (1 Corinthians 6:12, 6:20, 8:9, 9:19-23, 10:23; Galatians 5:13-14; 1 Peter 2:16-17).

Paul calls on both strong and weak to give God’s no-strings love, forgiveness and acceptance to each other (2 Corinthians 5:14-19).

***Every Goyim Has His Day***

***Romans 15:14-22***

Trailblazer Paul took the Gospel where it had never gone, i.e., to *goyim* (Gentiles) (Isaiah 52:15). After all, their eternity was at stake.

**QUESTION: Where in your world has God’s great love story not been told? At work? Home? To friends, relatives? Who could blaze that trail to tell them? How would you do that?**

### No Place Like Rome

***Romans 15:23-33***

Now Paul chips in his third reason for writing to Italy. Here are all three: (1) To announce he’s coming to Rome for his first visit, after a drop-off in Jerusalem. (2) To put in writing the fundamentals of faith in Jesus Christ. (3) To request their prayers for his success and safety until he sees them, on his way to Spain.

**Let’s read Paul’s sign-off in Romans 16:1-27 (p. 847).**

***Give My Regards to the Appian Way***

***Romans 16:1-16***

What a Rolodex Paul had! He hadn’t yet seen Rome’s seven hills, yet seems to know many believers there. Some are slaves, local dignitaries, his relatives, others he’d known along the way. People of all walks were important to him. To God, too.

***Final Thoughts***

***Romans 16:17-27***

Paul warns that “holy-sounding” deceivers will tempt believers to doubt what he’d taught them. To prepare for that, he urges them to be grounded in Christ (Colossians 2:6-15; Philippians 1:6-13; John 8:32, 36; Ephesians 3:14-21; James 5:7-8; 2 Peter 1:3-8).

**QUESTION: How does one get firmly established in Christ?**

***Way Down On The Trevi***

A 1954 Oscar winner, “Three Coins In The Fountain,” tells of three American working women looking for romance in Rome. They discover answers by tossing coins into the Trevi fountain. For us to tattoo Romans indelibly on our minds, let’s use these three coins:

1. We were all born with that fatal sin virus (Romans 3:23).
2. Left alone, it means missing God’s best for your life, and, what’s worse, unending torment, isolated from Him (Romans 6:23).
3. By welcoming Jesus to be your Savior and Lord, you’re permanently in His care, forever (Romans 10:9, 10).

Have you picked up that third coin? If not, please tell God right now: “Father, I need You in my life. Your Son took all my sins to the cross, and paid a debt He didn’t owe, one I could never pay. As of now, I’m with You, Father. And thank You, Jesus.”

His Deal

July 11 & 25, 2006

www.HisDeal.org

george@HisDeal.org

Copyright © 2019. George Toles. All Rights Reserved.