**ROMANS 12**

**“THIS IS THE LIFE!”**

A

1st grade teacher in Bend is a big Oregon Ducks fan. “If you are too, raise your hand,” she tells her class. Not knowing what a Duck fan is, Tim doesn’t move. “If you’re not a Ducks fan, Tim, what are you?” she snaps. “My folks say I’m a Husky fan.” “What if your folks are idiots?” Tim: “Well, *then* I’d be a Ducks fan.”

**Romans’ “Starting Eleven”**

Into the corrupt splendor of 1st century Rome comes news that a Jewish carpenter’s Son has flipped religion on its ear. Paul’s letter to Jesus’ people there features salvation-by-faith-alone (Romans 1:18-20, 3:20-24). Despite His virgin birth, miracles and dynamic teaching, most Israelites snub Jesus, so God has temporarily stopped dealing with them as a nation (Acts 28:25-28; Romans 11:25-29).

The “mystery” Gospel, revealed first to Paul by Jesus, reveals that at the cross God forgave all the sins of all people (Ephesians 3:1-11). To be forgiven, you accept it by *faith* (Romans 5:1; Ephesians 2:8-9).

When Israel vetoed Jesus as Messiah, God extended mercy to Gentiles whose only choice had been to convert to Judaism’s thousands of laws, rituals and annual atonement – with no way to have their sins *forever* forgiven (Romans 11:30-31). No longer in a temple, God’s Spirit lives in each believer (1 Corinthians 6:19-20)!

Each of us is born a sinner, unable to obey God’s Ten Commandments. So God’s sinless Son became the Sacrifice to save us from hell’s unending torment (Romans 4:22-25). Once put right with God, He’ll *never* hold your sins against you, but you’ll suffer their natural consequences in this life (Romans 8:1, 33-39).

God has not forsaken Israel. Through them by way of His covenants, laws, prophets, the Tabernacle and a flood of religious rituals, God had disclosed His plan for all creation. His Son Jesus fulfilled Judaism’s demands perfectly by keeping all of the laws, as the spotless Sacrifice for our sins.

Many Jews cling to their familiar religious do’s and don’t’s. Many choose to follow Christ; others settle for a hybrid faith: part law, part grace. Today devout Jews still look for Messiah who will bring home to Israel the scattered Jews and set up His worldwide throne in Jerusalem (Genesis 28:10-15; Jeremiah 30:7-10; Romans 11:25-27).

From 1948, when Israel was officially recognized as a nation, through 2010 more than 3 million Jews immigrated to Israel – 1.2 million from the former Soviet Union. One-third of those Russian Jews came in 1990-1991 (source: [www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org](http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org)). As God promised, He’s drawing the Jews together as a nation again. Seattle’s Steve Lightle led 150,000 Soviet Jews to Israel, as detailed in his thrilling books, *Exodus II* and *Operation Exodus II*.

The present grace age ends as Christ comes *in the air* to take living and dead believers to be with Him always (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18). He returns *to earth* seven years later to lock up satan and rule His kingdom on earth for 1,000 years (Acts 2:17-21; Revelation 20:1-22:6). **Let’s read Romans 12 (p 844, NIV).**

**What’s “Therefore” There For?**

**Romans 12:1-2**

The street says what you *do* is who you *are*. But with God, who you *are* determines what you *do* (Ephesians 2:10; 5:1-2, 18-20; 1 Thessalonians 5:12-24; Titus 2:11-14). Declared right with Him, God gives you a fresh start, frees you from sin’s prison, free to please Him, eagerly awaiting Christ’s return. THEREFORE, it makes sense to trade “me-first” for “God-first,” to dedicate your whole person to *live* for Him (1 Corinthians 6:19-20). You were headed to unending destruction when He loved you, **found** you, died for you, gave you faith to believe, and saved you. The believer owes Him *everything*! You couldn’t and didn’t earn or deserve it (Romans 4:4-8).

Paul warns us not to adopt the world’s ways, like the oblivious frog in the kettle (1 Corinthians 1:20-21). We need a spiritual mind-soak in God’s transforming Truth about the all-new person *HE* says we are so that we can think and act all-new (Romans 8:29; Ephesians 4:22-24; Philippians 2:5; Colossians 3:9-10). His plan for you is PERFECT!

DISCUSSION: How do you distinguish the world’s ways from God’s?

**Unwrapping Your Gift**

**Romans 12:3-8**

To survive, we need the synchronization of our body’s 7.5 trillion cells (each with 200 trillion protein molecules), 200 bones and 600+ muscles and systems. If all your DNA molecules were joined, they’d reach the sun and back 400 times! Amazing creations we are!

As Denny Fitzpatrick puts it, “God doesn’t love anyone more than He loves you.” Given a new, ironclad hope to be with Him always, Christ’s followers are members of His Body, the *church* – not a building or denomination, He being the Head (Ephesians 4:15-16).

When Christ enters your life, He gives you faith, His Holy Spirit and spiritual gifts (1 Corinthians 12:12-31). Empowered by Him, we can serve, encourage, lead, be generous and kind, not comparing ours to others’ gifts. How could you, in your wisdom and strength, live like this! No one can! Only “Christ in you” can live His life through you.

DISCUSSION: How can you discover the specific gifts God has given you?

**The Look of Love**

**Romans 12:9-13**

Driven by loyal, self-sacrificial, unconditional *agape* love, believers will hate evil, embrace good, honor others, be productive and patient, serve God joyfully, help the needy, and “preet” (pray-tweet) Him throughout the day (1 Corinthians 13; Philippians 2:1-4).

DISCUSSION: What could divert us from living the life Jesus calls us to?

**Making Nice**

**Romans 12:14-21**

With Christ, we can even bless our enemies with uplifting words (1 Peter 2:23-25). We can share others’ sorrows and joys, walk humbly, leave revenge to God and conquer evil by doing good. Doing wrong is never right; doing right is never wrong.

DISCUSSION: How could you bless someone who’s hurt you? How might that affect you both?

Paul writes, “You’re ‘complete in Him…fully equipped’ to do what He’s called you to do” (Colossians 2:9-12). How God uses you is up to Him. Being available to Him is up to you.

DISCUSSION: How could you “live at peace with everyone?”

**Get On The Peace Train**

By placing your trust in Christ, you have PEACE with God (Romans 5:1). The fear of any dreaded punishment by God becomes groundless. No longer are you doomed to spend eternity apart from Him (Jude 24,25). He loves you so much that He’s making you this offer through Paul: “Whoever calls on the name of the Lord will be saved” (Romans 10:13). If that’s your desire, tell Him, “Father, I *am* calling on You. Thank You for the cross where You wiped away all my sin. I humbly accept Your forgiveness and put all my confidence in Your Son Jesus as my only Hope, my Savior. AMEN!”

His Deal

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www.HisDeal.org

george@HisDeal.org

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