

## God's Mercy and Our Response

There have been many times when I have considered where I would be without the mercy of God. Have you ever stopped to think back through time and consider the grace and mercy God has shown you? Consider the everyday things. Where did they come from? Who designed them? Who gave those designers, Christian or not, the designs for the materials that they made that you now have? How did man ever discover how to make any of the technological items that we have? For example, I cannot even fathom how anyone would be able to design a computer that recognizes a person's voice and follows his commands. But we see this sort of thing even in a TV remote control/recording system in peoples living rooms and in computers for personal home use. Let's get even more basic though. Let's consider our lives and the world and universe we live in. What makes us stay alive? What makes the sun continue to shine and the planets to stay in their orbit? I know that there are scientific laws that define how they work, but why do they work? Who is to say that those laws of science should stay the same? These questions and thoughts may make you dizzy, but consider the answer. Everything you have, see, are, will be is by the mercy of God. ~~Any~~thing can be traced to God's mercy.

But what if God's mercies suddenly stopped? Imagine that God has already done everything He has already done, but

He just discontinues His grace and mercy for the future. You no longer have the guarantee of a future with Him. Salvation is no longer worth anything. Nothing can be relied upon. Laws of science won't necessarily hold true. There would be no absolutes! Without the mercy and grace of God all would be chaos that would run into oblivion within no time at all. Thankfully, we have a merciful God.

Let's now read from our text for today which is Romans 12:1-2.

We have already talked about the dizziness of our reliance upon God's mercies. However, let's put those mercies in a box to help us understand them better. First, there is God's mercy as shown in nature, the earth, and the universe. God made all that is and said that it was good. He made the earth able to support man. He also gave man dominion over it. Second, God shows His mercy in the man. God provided for the well being of man. Well being includes mental, physical, material, and spiritual well being. Just as a good father provides for his children in every way possible, God provided for His children.

On a more specific note, in Romans 12:1-2 Paul urges his readers to do some things "in view of God's mercies." In one commentary that I read, the word "mercies" was said to be translated plural because the Septuagint used a Greek plural to translate a Hebrew word that was plural in form but singular in use.<sup>1</sup> The significance of this would be that for the

mercy shown in Christ's death on the cross we should follow the heading of Paul. After all, this is God's greatest show of mercy to mankind. Several other commentaries addressed it as "mercies" of God in the plural form. Paul in the past several chapters had been speaking to them of the mercies given to them by God.<sup>2</sup> It is only logical to think of him referring to them as plural mercies. The mercies he has been speaking of are:

1. Justification-pardon of guilt
2. Identification-identified as a member of Christ's body
3. Under grace, not law
4. The Spirit Indwelling
5. Help in infirmity
6. Divine Election
7. Coming Glory
8. No separation possible
9. Confidence in God's faithfulness<sup>3</sup>

To understand all of this, contemplate this scenario. Long ago you had a very good friend. He made you everything you were. He gave you food to eat, a place to live, and everything you needed. However, you chose not to continue your relationship with Him in the way He had provided. You wanted to be as great as He was. Later, He sent his Son to reason with you. Instead of listening to the Son, you killed Him. Rather than seeking revenge upon you for what you had done, your Friend counted His Son's death as the payment for all the wrongs done to Him by you. He restored all the gifts you had including the relationship you had with Him. He also promised that the wrongs you did to Him would not be remembered or acted upon.

That is the scenario of God's mercy towards us. He gave you everything you had, provided a way back to Him even though you rejected Him and killed His Son, and returned the gifts He gave Adam in the garden. My biology teacher in High School often used to say, "Many times people cry for justice when what they really want is mercy." God knew that if mankind was given justice, they would be worthy of death everlasting. Instead of giving us what we deserved, He gave us mercy. Hallelujah!

Knowing the mercy we have been extended by God, how are we to respond? Paul tells us in verses one and two of Chapter twelve of Romans that we are to respond in two ways: 1) present your bodies a living sacrifice, and 2) do not conform to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. (NKJV) There are several things to note about each statement.

First, let's look at the phrase "present your bodies a living sacrifice." Here the word "present" implies a willingness to serve God with a focus on the mercies He has extended to the person.<sup>4</sup> Alva McClain says, "The mercies of God are the basis of all that is really holy."<sup>5</sup> The word "bodies" here speaks of the whole physical, emotional, spiritual person. As such the verse speaks against gnostic dualism which held that the material body was evil.<sup>6</sup> Paul also says that the presentation of our bodies is to be living sacrifice unlike the dead sacrifices of the Old Testament.<sup>7</sup> DeGarmo

and Key came out with a theme for an album they did. It said, "He died for me, I'll live for Him." This living sacrifice is a living for Him.

Paul also directs us to "not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind." Alva McClain points out that the word for "conformed" in the Greek is only a surface change while the word for "transformed" is an inner change.<sup>8</sup> This is an interesting way to put it. It is like Paul is saying, "Don't even look like them on the outside, rather let God change you to the core of your existence to be like Him."

Paul goes on to say that presenting the body to God is a worship to Him. That is what it is. We can give nothing else of value except ourselves. Becoming like God makes us want more and more to surrender ourselves to Him. Surrendering ourselves to God makes us more like Him. It goes on ad infinitum. It is a chain of grace that God made possible for me, for you, and for the whole world. In summation, remember that nothing we have or are is possible without God's mercy and grace and responding to that mercy creates in our life a chain of grace that makes us more like Him.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>Howard Rhys, The Epistle to the Romans, (New York: Macmillan, 1961), p. 153.

<sup>2</sup>Alva McClain, Romans: The Gospel of God's Grace, ed. Herman A. Hoyt (Chicago: Moody, 1973), p. 206.

<sup>3</sup>William R. Newell, Romans: Verse by Verse, (Chicago: Moody, 1938), p. 448.

<sup>4</sup>Newell, p. 448.

<sup>5</sup>McClain, p. 207.

<sup>6</sup>Rhys, p. 153.

<sup>7</sup>McClain, p. 207.

<sup>8</sup>McClain, p. 208.

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