

The Power of God's Mercies

Romans 12:1-2

TEXT/INTRO: I'm not a NASCAR fan and I have never watched a race from beginning to end, but I am sincerely glad to see that NASCAR has given the go-ahead for their events to start back up even without live crowds. There's something comforting about watching them get back into doing what they do. Just knowing that they're up and running makes me feel good.

The cars those drivers drive are incredibly powerful and the speeds they reach are unreal for your average driver like most of us are. And I worry about them because they're putting themselves in harm's way because of their speed and how close they have to be to the next car. Sometimes drivers are maimed for life and sometimes drivers get killed.

I was watching footage of a wreck that took place on the home stretch of a major race and the car involved in the wreck became airborne and actually floated through the air for probably 100 feet and I could see how the air was keeping it up in the air for the entire time. I was struck by the power of the air and how it more or less took control of the car once it went airborne.

What an odd source of power, air. But think about how we use air in our everyday lives, besides using it to breath. Pneumatic tubes, leaf blowers, vacuum cleaners, pressure washers, flying and the aerodynamic design of NASCAR's racers. Air is a fantastic source of power and energy.

Now, when I sat down this week and read Romans 12:1-2, I saw the ultimate source of power even though the word "power" never occurs in that passage. The source of this power comes from one of the characteristics of God's nature. It is His mercies.

Romans 12:1-2.

Therefore, I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. (Rom. 12:1 NAU)

Romans 12:2 *And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect. (Rom. 12:2 NAU)*

As I usually do, I'm going to make observations from this passage that demonstrate a particular manifestation of God's power, and it centers around His mercies.

My first observation is this, "The mercies of God remind us of the life-changing and redeeming power of God."

Romans 12:1 "*Therefore*" points us back to the mercies of God that Paul has just laid out for us in the previous eleven chapters of his letter. And they're almost immeasurable. When the student of the word goes through those first eleven chapters, he or she can't help but take note of how God describes the pitiful spiritual state of fallen humanity apart from Christ. And it's much worse than the word I just used, pitiful, it is abysmal.

The Reformers nailed the state of the lost by describing them as "totally depraved." But for those who are in Christ, the change God's mercies have brought about for us and in us, have changed us from being totally depraved to being moderately depraved. Remember, "nobody's perfect." So, taking the mercies of God as the source of all that is good about us, including the new birth, Paul now gives us a very reasonable command, "*present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God.*"

Paul's argument says that those who have been redeemed and forgiven and raised up with Jesus and reconciled to the Father and born of the Spirit can see the logic of living now in such a way that we are living and holy sacrifices that are acceptable to God.

And should anyone listening to this or watching the video should be tempted to think that he or she wasn't so bad before coming to faith in Jesus, let me drop a little reminder your way.

⁹ *What then? Are we better than they? Not at all; for we have already charged that both Jews and Greeks are all under sin;*

¹⁰ *as it is written, "THERE IS NONE RIGHTEOUS, NOT EVEN ONE;*

¹¹ *THERE IS NONE WHO UNDERSTANDS, THERE IS NONE WHO SEEKS FOR GOD;*

¹² *ALL HAVE TURNED ASIDE, TOGETHER THEY HAVE BECOME USELESS; THERE IS NONE WHO DOES GOOD, THERE IS NOT EVEN ONE."*

¹³ *"THEIR THROAT IS AN OPEN GRAVE, WITH THEIR TONGUES THEY KEEP DECEIVING," "THE POISON OF ASPS IS UNDER THEIR LIPS";*

¹⁴ *"WHOSE MOUTH IS FULL OF CURSING AND BITTERNESS";*

¹⁵ *"THEIR FEET ARE SWIFT TO SHED BLOOD,*

¹⁶ *DESTRUCTION AND MISERY ARE IN THEIR PATHS,*

¹⁷ *AND THE PATH OF PEACE THEY HAVE NOT KNOWN."*

¹⁸ *"THERE IS NO FEAR OF GOD BEFORE THEIR EYES." (Rom. 3:9-18 NAU)*

And this, ²³ *for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, (Rom. 3:23 NAU)*

And I think one more example should suffice, don't you?

Ephesians 2:1 *And you were dead in your trespasses and sins,*

² *in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience.*

³ *Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest.*

(Eph. 2:1-3 NAU)

I hope you caught the way the Spirit included every human who has ever lived, is living right now and will ever live in His description in those three passages. Sin and death and corruption are universal and timeless. The "none's" and the "we's" and the "you's" and the "all's"

leave all who are not in Christ without an excuse, without an escape hatch, without a loophole. “The mercies of God have been graciously applied to all whom God has justified by faith.” That leads us to those two words I have pointed out several times before that make all the difference for those who have been graciously called and saved and redeemed and reconciled to their Creator, the two words are “*But God.*”

⁴ *But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us,*

⁵ *even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (Eph. 2:4-5 NAU)*

It makes sense, doesn't it, that Paul would expect us to live in a manner that reflects the mercies of God?

Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. (Rom. 12:1 NAU)

BYZ Romans 12:1 Worship is the logical response to the grace of God.

Why the urgency? Why is Paul urging this action? Why is he practically begging the saints in Rome to do this? It's because those who have been redeemed by the blood of Jesus Christ and have been the recipients of the grace and mercy of God Himself, now have a responsibility to live like we've been redeemed and reconciled and recreated. It makes sense that those who have been saved out of darkness, bought with the precious blood of the Lamb of God, would live sacrificially in such a way that is worthy of the name by which we have been called.

Ephesians 4:1 *Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore, (beseech, urge, exhort) you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called, (Eph. 4:1 NAU)* Beloved, we have been called to glorify God the Father, Jesus the Son, and the Holy Spirit and one way

we do that is by living out our faith for all to see. No one is without sin, not even the best of the saints. And God intentionally left us like this that we might keep in mind the source of our salvation.

I close with this, ⁶ *For God, who said, "Light shall shine out of darkness," is the One who has shone in our hearts to give the Light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.*

⁷ *But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, so that the surpassing greatness of the power will be of God and not from ourselves;*
(2 Cor. 4:6-7 NAU)

In Jesus' name. Amen.