



Saturday, October 19, 2013 Zapping-you Whenever Thoughts Flow

ROMANS^{Part 2}

Chapter 1:1-4

Romans 1:1-2—

Paul, a slave of Christ Jesus, a called apostle, severed for the evangel of God (which He promises before through His prophets in the holy Scriptures) ...

Paul was set apart to God on the road to Damascus, yes, but he speaks here of the time he and Barnabas lodged in Antioch (Acts 13:2), and the holy spirit called them apart to take the gospel of God's grace to the nations.

The text says, "Now, at their ministering to the Lord and fasting, the holy spirit said, 'Sever, by all means, to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.'" The holy spirit is not a separate person in a supposed Trinity, but rather the power through which God works. God works through different kinds of things and people. In the case of Balaam, for instance, the spirit spoke through a donkey. It used to be a miraculous thing for an ass to speak. Now it's a miracle if one shuts up.

I don't believe a donkey spoke to Barnabas and Saul in Acts, but yes, it could have been a donkey. The more likely scenario, I think, is a human being. It's a figure of speech, I believe, to say, "the holy spirit said," when in fact it could have been a man named, "Fred." Whoever spoke had the authority of God upon him, her, or it. This person (or donkey) channeled the spirit of God perfectly, and everyone knew it.

It doesn't happen like this today because the Scriptures are complete. Don't let anyone—man, woman, or donkey—tell you, "Thus saith the Lord." Those days are

past. Today, the Lord saith to you what He needeth to saith in the Scriptures. For everything else, you have your conscience (a miraculous, built-in "feels-right" detector) and all the circumstances of life compelling you toward decisions. Every one of these circumstances are ordered by God. So see? God still does everything, but acts through circumstances and your conscience. These paint you into corners where you can't help but



accomplish the pre-determined dictates of God. Not to mention you were knit together in your mother's womb by the Supreme Knitter of Beings. Here, clung to a wall of rich, red blood, every last thing concerning you got cemented to the ladder of the double helix, also known as DNA.

Besides all that, God knows everything ahead of time—Isaiah 46:10.

In other words, if Paul or anyone else thinks they decide anything independently of divine dictate—including being separated via spiritual revelation to accomplish a task set apart since before the disruption of the world—they're mistaken. Or, as I like to put it, they are blessed beyond measure with the ultimate comfort of a loving Daddy controlling all life's circumstances.



LOCUST-FREE GOSPEL

Up until this time, only Jews and hangers-on to Judaism like Cornelius (Acts, chapter 10; such people are called, “proselytes”) heard any kind of good news about God. The only good news available then was the gospel of the Circumcision to Israel, which in a nutshell was/is this: “Behave yourself, or else. Produce fruit worthy of repentance, or the forgiveness of your sins will be revoked and you may end up with very large locusts in your kitchen.”

Cornelius was a good man of the nations, but this was the best he could get under Israel's gospel: forgiveness; keep doing good acts; watch out for locusts. This was not at all Paul's gospel. Paul's gospel is locust-free. Paul's gospel is this: “You are right with God simply by believing what God says about you, namely, that you are just fine in His opinion, without you having to behave yourself. You don't even have to be forgiven,

because it is impossible to forgive a person who, in the eyes of God, has done everything right.” The theological term for this is, “justification,” but I do not generally like theological terms. I certainly don't like them here. This business of God liking you is far too important to trust to a theological term.

The Hebrew Scriptures hinted at this thing about being right with God, but never realized it. David hinted at it when he said, “Happy the man to whom the Lord by no means should be reckoning sin” (Psalm 32:2). Habakkuk hinted at it as well (2:4): “The just shall live by faith.” Note the “shall.” It was future. Paul was the delivery boy.

This good news of being right in God's opinion is different than what is known as the “secret evangel” (Romans 16:25-27) which is “the Conciliation.” There's another theological term I am not fond of. I'll get to it when I comment on chapter five.

Romans 1:3-4

“... concerning His Son (Who comes of the seed of David according to the flesh, Who is designated Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection of the dead) ...”

The evangel is not concerned with the sinner, but with God's Son. This is the biggest sentence in Romans, and possibly in the entire Bible. If you get this, you've got practically everything. Here it is again: “Severed for the evangel of God, concerning His Son.” The good news is about what God's Son did.

Have you ever heard that? You've never heard it in church because the institutional church makes the evangel about you. It's all about your reaction to it, both before you are “saved” and after. Before you're saved, you have to get saved. After you're saved, you have to stay saved.

But the gospel has nothing to do with you either getting saved or staying saved. It has nothing to do with sinners at all—nothing. Sinners only sit there receiving benefits.

The gospel concerns God's Son. Paul says so right here at the beginning of a hugely important book setting things straight right out the



gate. If you blink here and miss it, you'll miss all subsequent blessings.

IN THE CENTER RING ...

Picture a circus. Everyone attends the circus to watch amazing performers. The circus is not about the audience except to provide inert bodies containing eyes a stupendous performances upon which to gaze. For instance, here is a guy in shiny tights doing back flips in mid-air off a trapeze bar. Just as he finishes flip three, he's caught on the wrists by his brother, who "just happens" to be in the right place at the right time.

Or consider the woman being shot from the cannon. People actually do get shot from these things, and for some reason—my observation here—women are particularly prone to it. I saw one of the actual cannons from which women once emerged at high, smoking speeds, at the Ringling Brothers museum in Sarasota, FL. Nothing like the smell of gunpowder and Chanel No. 5.



Not one audience member at a human-cannon-included circus will volunteer to be shot several hundred feet from a giant gun to hopefully land in a net rather than, say, three feet past the net. Audience members simply inhabit their bleachers and stare in stunned awe. The circus is not about them. The spotlight does not shine on them, except to embarrass them. How pedestrian to spotlight an overweight guy eating popcorn and cotton candy. It doesn't happen. How dull compared to young ladies exploding from cannons.

The gospel is all about what Christ accomplished on the cross. When He was pinned there, we were "sitting in the audience, slack-jawed." And yet Christianity—crazy as this sounds—makes the gospel to be concerned with the sinner and what he or she can do for God and Christ. As if sinners can do anything but sin.

The word about town ("Christiantown") is that the sinner has to "accept Jesus Christ." What madness. They are asking a "completely helpless" person, debilitated by sin and death, to help him or herself and to stop being debilitated long enough to make a stupendous, life-changing decision. This makes *everything* concern the sinner. But Paul says the gospel does not concern the sinner, but rather Jesus Christ. I will believe Paul, and I exhort you to do likewise.

WHAT ABOUT BELIEF?

Now, concerning belief. When you are at the circus, the twenty clowns emerging from the tiny car will do so whether you believe they can or not. Your belief has nothing to do with the mass of ridiculously-dressed people exiting that crazily-small car. The clowns come no matter what. Their magic doesn't concern you, except that you stare dumbly at it. You couldn't do what they do. You're not a clown. You have no training. You did not go to clown school. Your joints and sinews are incapable of such tricks. You can barely get out of your own car. And yet Christians insist you can contort your way into Christ's presence with sincere, elegant wording.

"Your belief has nothing to do with the mass of ridiculously-dressed people exiting that crazily-small car."

Wait a minute. Am I comparing Jesus Christ's sacrifice to a circus? Yes. Sorry.

Jesus Christ was tortured on a cross and subjected to six hours of Satanic fury at a time when He couldn't even swat gnats. This is when He took away your sin. Are you sure you still want to say this gospel concerns you? It concerns you as to benefits, but not as to execution. You were not even existent when the benefits accrued to your account.

The gospel concerns Jesus Christ.



What a revelation, right in the first two verses of Romans. Sit down and listen to it. Stop working. Paul isn't asking you to do anything until chapter 12, long after announcing the considerable list of benefits. So sit down and listen. Paul is spending nearly three chapters here in Romans saying, "Sit down and listen." It is very hard for a Jew to sit down and listen. Christians are equally challenged here. Martha couldn't do it, and most so-called believers are a muddle of Marthas, forking up fancy food for what they think will be an appreciative Christ. Instead, He rolls His eyes. He doesn't need our work. He really only wants us to sit down and listen. It happens so rarely to Him—people sitting down to listen to Him—that it thrills Him to see it. Make it happen for Him. Bring a smile to His face by sitting at His feet. Everyone wants to cook, dance, squeeze in and out of cars, do mid-air back flips, be fired from cannons of their own design. Stop it. It's embarrassing. You're going to hurt yourself. Many have. It's all so unnecessary. It's all so finished. Jesus has the training, not you. If you must do something, summon the peanut vendor. Grab a box of popcorn.

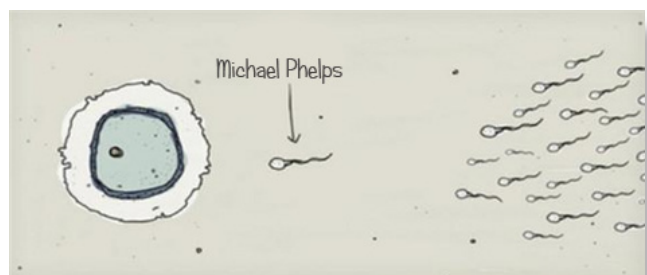
THE COMPOSITION OF CHRIST

Like all human beings, Jesus Christ was a union of two elements: flesh and spirit. I'm talking now about, "the seed of David according to the flesh" in Romans 1:3. It is important to know God fashioned His Son of the same substance as David, and thus the same sub-

stance as you. David entered Eon 3 by normal means, that is, through the womb of his mother. This made Jesus' flesh like any other. To say His flesh was some odd flesh would be disastrous as an assertion, tragic as a fact. If so, He'd have been unable to feel your pains and heartaches. But no. He was of the seed of David. He came through fleshly lines. His mother fed Him through the umbilical cord of His discontent; that was Mary's deal. His Father's situation was different. Now it gets tricky.

Jesus' Father was God, Who is invisible. The power of God animated Mary's inter-utero baby-making apparatus. Joseph had nothing to do with it. Don't be led to think His flesh was some strange "God flesh." There is no such thing. His flesh was all too human. According to flesh, He was of the seed of David. According to spirit, He was generated by God, not sperm.

I don't know how it happened, exactly, because Scripture doesn't say. I like the nuts and bolts, and if I knew them, I'd tell you. Is sperm any less miraculous than God breathing life into Mary's uterus? In my opinion, millions of tail-wagging, apparently intelligent sperm cells swimming intuitively toward a tiny egg cell



is no less miraculous than an exhalation of God. In fact, it sounds a little more miraculous to me. It is easier for me to believe God breathed than to believe millions of sperm swim like fish toward the almighty egg and congratulate the winner. And yet I saw the film in high school health class. There they went, all in the same direction. Yet the breath of God—*poof*. That's easy compared to eyeless, serpentine cells finding paydirt the size of the gnat eye through uterine mucous the consistency of mud.

THE SOURCE OF HIS LIFE

John 5:26 is a lighthouse to me: "*For even as the Father has life in Himself, thus to the Son also He gives to have life in Himself.*"

I wish I had this kind of sustenance. Instead, I have to eat fried eggs and drink nine glasses of water a day. God gave His Son life directly. This is why He had to consciously give up His life on the cross. No one could take it from Him.

"Spirit wafted from His epidermis like pings from a tuning fork."

Our life comes from breathing and the air oxygenating the blood. This happened with Jesus as well, but it's not what sustained Him. The spirit of God did that. We

have the spirit in measure; He had it without measure. This doesn't mean He never thirsted, needed a nap, or was ready to quit. He still shelled nuts and went to the well, but even *were* He to stop eating and drinking, His life would have continued. The spirit would have kicked in, much as your computer battery kicks in when you unplug it. It does mean His lifeforce (spirit) had no "kinks in the hose." We have kinks galore. A very small measure of spirit, have we. But not always. We will someday enjoy full spiritual sustenance.

Each time He entered the presence of death, death vanished. Life vibrated from Him. Sometimes I think it helped other people more than it helped Him. Don't quote me. It did keep Him going. It wafted from His epidermis like pings from a tuning fork. He could tell when it left Him ("Who touched Me?" —Luke 8:45).

I think it left Him constantly, but good for Him. He had a bottomless well of the stuff. This is how He raised people from the dead. The spirit vibrated off Him

with absurd authority, and He steered it. I am thinking specifically of Jairus' daughter (Mark 5:35-42), the widow of Nain's son (Luke 7:11-16), and Lazarus (John 11:44). He had only to steer the spirit, and will it where He would. If you got in its way, lucky you.

All this proved He was God's Son.

No one raises the dead these days. They claim to, but don't. The key word in the phrase, "near death experience" is "near." There are Satanic imitations today, as those animating the staffs of Jannes and Jambres, the Egyptian magicians hassling Moses. I will not discount, however, the possibility of our nearing the thousand-year kingdom, at which time Pentecostal-type miracles will again validate divine authority. But I believe these miracles, for the most part, will occur via the hands of the two witnesses and the 144,000, who have yet to appear for the great concluding drama known as the Day of Indignation. ■

(To be continued.)

ONE YEAR INTO PA

As I write, it is one year to the day (October 17) since I flew to Pennsylvania following one of the hardest days of my life. The propeller plane landed at the little Johnstown Airport at 11 p.m., and there they all were: Clyde and Cindy, Janet, Clyde Lynn, Nathan, and Aaron Locker. I came here with a two-way ticket, intent on returning to Colorado in a week. I never went back. Emotionally, I couldn't. The Pilkington family took me into their home, making me a family member. Our lives are intertwined forever.

Life's challenges continue. The balm of family, however, soothes the over-traveled soul. It is warm here; there is love.

Thank you for seeing me through a hard year. No one knows what the immediate future holds. I still believe we are five minutes from the snatching away. It cannot happen soon enough. In the meantime, there is the work. By God's grace, He will engage me to the end. Let's get real. ■

