



ZWTF

Saturday, October 26, 2013 Zapping-you Whenever Thoughts Flow

ROMANS ^{Part 3}

Chapter 1:1

Romans 1:1— “Paul, a called apostle.”



You must remember throughout the book of Romans that Paul was a called apostle. He did not volunteer for a celestial appointment, any more than we volunteered. He continually reminds the believers in Rome that he invented neither his calling nor his teaching. On the day God called Paul, the Pharisee wanted nothing to do with Christ. Please keep this in mind at all times. While reading Romans, the spirit of the grace of God must also be kept in mind. After all, Romans is about the grace of God. The grace of God cannot be demonstrated except against the backdrop of an unworthy vessel. Paul exemplified the height of unworthiness the day God arrested his development on the Damascus road.

When the resurrected Savior beamed down on the man who was then known as Saul (He did it with a light brighter than the sun), Saul was the worst sinner on earth. In his first letter to Timothy, he *claims* to be the foremost sinner (1 Timothy 1:15). This testimony is true. Jesus Christ and God purposely waited until

Paul was sufficiently immoral before working their long-planned miracle.

I am not talking about the fact that Paul was *generally* immoral, which of course he was, but that he was as immediately immoral as a person could be just before Light hit. This means that, two minutes before Saul heard his name over the Divine Loudspeaker, he still had a few sins to commit. (It is sinners who are saved, not saints. Keep this in mind, also, throughout Romans.) Even a heartbeat before his transformation, Saul—who became Paul—still had yet to become God’s most celebrated backdrop to supernatural kindness. I believe this occurred in his thoughts, as I will soon share.

HOW WILLING ARE YOU
FOR GOD TO HAVE HIS WAY?

Would you let God have His way with you, even if it included becoming worse than you are now? What if God wants to demonstrate some amazing grace with you, but He needs you to be worse first? Worse than you are? Would you be willing to go with that flow? What if it ruined your reputation? What if it hurt other people? In other words, are you willing to birth an Ishmael so that God can produce an Isaac? I have repeatedly told God

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“Don’t tell them we failed. Tell them we decided to temporarily postpone our success.”



I am willing to provide him “idiot fodder” for a genius miracle. I don’t purposely want to screw up, but if I screw up while trying to do right things and God makes gold of it, so be it. I’ll accept it. I’ll do Him the favor.

In other words, when I think I have a good idea, it may actually be terrible. It may actually be sin. Abraham and Sarah thought that Abraham going into Sarah’s handmaid was a great idea. It wasn’t, but who can blame them for trying? God didn’t say not to. Do you think that, when Isaac finally arrived, Abraham and Sarah said, “I wish we had waited”? I don’t think so. It would have been a tempting thought, but they were spiritual enough to grasp the contrast principle and accept their part suppling the “before picture.” Are you willing to accept your part in the contrast principle? Are you willing to screw up royally, even immediately before God turns you *into* royalty?

BAD SMELLS

God’s most momentous grace-strokes await the limits of human stinkability. Therefore, even in the final moment before his celestial apprehension, Saul plumbed new depths of stink. I am not referring now to his physical odor, although I am sure that would have stopped a camel in its padded tracks. Anger makes a man reek like bad meat. No deodorant can overcome anger and vehemence against God and His Christ. An unhappy spirit smells worse than dog breath. Yet God and Christ can overcome a foul-smelling person and make them seem sweet, even if other people have to cover their noses in wet handkerchiefs.

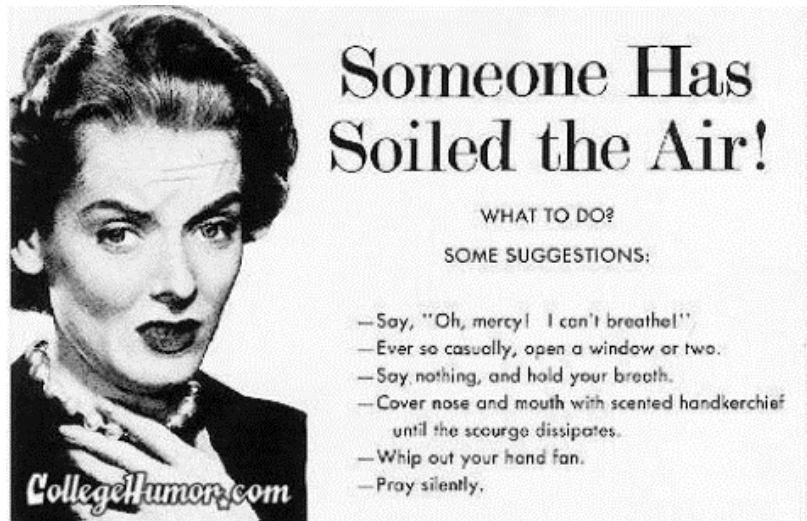
MORE ON THE SWEET ODOR OF CHRIST

The sweet odor of Christ can overcome many physical defects, including those attacking the nose. I am belaboring the point, I know. On the other hand, a nasty disposition detrimentally affects not only the person on which it sits and through whom it seeps, but all surrounding people. Even though the angry person wears expensive cologne and brushes his or her teeth after every meal, the attitude cannot help oozing over gums and out pores. Such is the value of a peaceful spirit. Only Christ can impart it. Don’t look for it at Wal-Mart or a Christian bookstore. Neither can it be bottled.

A peaceful spirit trumps every earthly odor. You can be standing in a sheen of your own sweat and misery, and yet people can detect the peaceful spirit and raise their eyebrows favorably at you, then go home to privately think more about you. The peaceful spirit can even make you sing or whistle in the face of hardship, as it did with Paul and Silas as they sat chained in an underground jail in Philippi, having been whipped with rods. The jailer couldn’t believe his ears. I can’t explain such things, myself, except to say God is showing off and throwing spirit around like confetti—at times.

Relatively speaking, if you’re Paul and Silas sitting in those stocks having been publicly rodged, you have to not

“An unhappy spirit smells worse than dog breath.”



care about even your spiritual reputation; that’s the hard part. Not everyone is going to consider a public beating great spiritual accomplishment. If you’re over-affected by what others think, and then consequently try hard to seem unfazed, the peace won’t come. Peace isn’t like a high-bar

at a track meet, where technique and springy shoes get you over the top. If you give up on looking spiffy, however, and rest in your own skin—no matter how unappealing that skin might be to you—peace comes completely unannounced. This doesn't mean people won't hate you. Ha. People will hate you plenty. Many people will hate you *because* of the sweet odor of Christ. As Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 2:14-16,

Now thanks be to God, Who always gives us a triumph in Christ, and is manifesting the odor of His knowledge through us in every place, for we are a fragrance of Christ to God, in those who are being saved and in those who are perishing: to these, indeed, an odor of death for death, yet to those an odor of life for life.

Your love and peace in the face of hate or personal brokenness will favorably raise the eyebrows of some, but many will try to kill it, not because it's detestable, but because they, themselves, don't have it. Most people envy the possessions of others. Those bereft of peace try pulling others down into their trench. Were it not for envy, the earth would spin off its axis. When God finally abolishes envy from the earth, He will have to perform a corresponding miracle in the realm of interplanetary physics.



BACK TO SAUL

During the final moments of his Pharisee life, Saul may have been thinking of how better to torture people back in Jerusalem, or how to better throw mommies and daddies against the walls of their own Damascus living

rooms. Whatever they were, his last thoughts before Light appeared were correspondingly (to the Light) disgusting. In other words, his thoughts were as disgusting as the coming Light was bright. Thus is demonstrated the extent and extremity of God's grace. It answers to the extremes within our own meatloaf souls.

As bad as you are is as good as God is—and then some. When you do something despicable and expect to die where you stand, God parts the clouds and the sun beams upon your face so gently, you can't keep from smiling. God is thinking precisely this: "I'm going to kill this person with kindness." It works. Why wouldn't it? God invented it. It's the burning-coals-on-the-head principle. God thought of it, ascribes to it, and practices it Himself. When God is good to bad people, it makes *Him* look good ("Wow, that Deity is a Grace Machine") and eventually melts the bad person's heart.

(The key word is "eventually." I don't care much for that word; hope deferred makes the heart sick.)

WHAT I TOLD THEM IN FAITH

When I was at the podium at the Faith, North Carolina conference earlier this month, I told the people that if I died violently in this life—from a car accident or some other shocking event—my last words would no doubt be a string of expletives with many well-placed italics. The Faith people laughed. I'm thinking they must have thought the same thing about themselves. When people laugh in the middle of a tragic story, they must be camping on some common ground. Contrast this with religious people who will fail to imagine a worse thing than exiting this life with f-bombs and other expletives a-blazing.

The mental picture of these religious people is as follows: They imagine God scooping up their angel-body from the burning highway, whisking it to the pearly gates, sizing them for halo and harp, and summoning the Golf Cart of Glory for an introductory tour. But then St. Peter steps up and says,

"My last words would no doubt be a string of expletives with well-placed italics."

"Well, God Almighty, you may want to consider that Cussie here's last words on earth were a profane megablast rivaling anything *I* uttered in the midst of all my fishing and evangelical mishaps." And God says, "Well, I *was* going to give old Cussie a really nice mansion here

in heaven, but now that you've told me this, I think I will put Cussie on kitchen duty, Now, Peter, go fetch me a really big bar of celestial soap, and we'll teach old Cussie here a lesson."

Here's how it really works, however: The words spewed by poor Cussie at life's bitter end are reported to God by Peter, and God says, "Well, of course Cussie said that.

"Why would an ignoble person suddenly embark on a nobility career when their Mazda CX-5 is on fire?"

What else would Cussie say? She's *Cussie*. I made Cussie the way she was, and is, and shall be. It pleases Me to call the lowlifes of the planet, as well as the verbally creative. It makes Me look good to bless the worst, not the best. I get all the credit. This way, I get to show off my grace. I call

unwise, weak, ignoble and stupid people. Why would an ignoble person all of a sudden embark on a nobility career when their Mazda CX-5 is on fire? That's the worst time to start on a nobility career, if you ask Me.

"Peter, if someone can manage to say, 'Sweet Jesus Sas-safras' while their Mazda CX-5 is on fire and their head is coming off, then such faith is surely artificially inseminated—so to speak—by a Faith CD, or some such nonsense as the hypnotic induction practiced by many Pentecostal establishments, not the least of which would be Joel Osteen's sad little affair. My dear fisherman friend, nothing but self-manufactured faith could ever say 'Sweet Jesus Sas-safras' into a flaming airbag. In fact, I have not seen a single instance of it in over two and a half eons."

As for me, I came into the world naked, and naked I shall leave it. I am totally depending on Christ to save me.

HIGH NOON

I am of the disposition that Paul was called at noon. I don't believe this because it is aesthetically pleasing to me, although it is. I lean here because Paul said the light of Christ was "brighter than the noonday sun." The best time of day to display light brighter than the noonday sun, would be noon. Besides, Paul told King Agrippa it happened "at midday," which is noon.

Paul was on his way to a town called Damascus, which is the same Damascus we know today. Damascus is the oldest and most celebrated city in Syria. It is not

celebrated because of the apostle Paul. The city currently produces textiles and cement. Lots of tourists go there for the weather and the religious history. Few, I think, relate the religious history to Paul. Rather, they like the fact that the Rashidun Caliphate conquered the countryside in 635 CE during the reign of Caliph Umar.

The majority of Damascenes are Muslim. The city contains 2,000 mosques. Only 10% of the population is Christian. Of the 10% who are Christian, it is my educated guess that not a single one belongs to the body of Christ. If anyone does celebrate Paul, he or she makes him an artificial saint, imposing upon him an equally saccharinized morality. These people probably can't resist attending one of the Christian churches dedicated to all the holy blasphemies. Here, they will light candles and kneel their knees off to St. Whoever of the Holy Sepulcher.

NOW ARRIVING

When Paul finally arrived within the Damascus city limits, he was blind—blinded by the Light of Christ. He never saw the city until a disciple named Ananias prayed over him and restored his sight. Then, instead of touring the churches and mosques, or dragging people to Jerusalem by the hair, Saul went about proving to everyone, out of Scripture, that Jesus Christ was the Messiah. The believers could scarcely believe it. They were afraid of Saul. They'd correctly heard he'd come to Damascus to take them away to Jerusalem by the hair. Ananias had to call off the dogs on his behalf, and did. For that, I say Ananias gets a star on the Pauline Walk of Fame. Though the city of Damascus is famous for cement, it has yet to develop a Walk of Fame. Perhaps we can build it here in downtown Windber, Pennsylvania, next to the Beer Cave.

The point of all this is that God changed Saul in a Syrian second. Who needs "the sinner's prayer" when God shines His Light and changes people at His whim? We don't need sinners' prayers, and in no letter does Paul recommend them. Paul simply heralds Christ, and God turns on the Light. Paul's light was literal; the light we receive out of heaven is figurative, although the effect is the same: *onto the ground you go.* ■ (To be continued ...)

