



Sunday, December 1, 2013 Zapping-you Whenever Thoughts Flow

ROMANS^{Part 7}

Chapter 1:14-17



Rabbi Eli Achinoam

Saul of Tarsus,
age 21**Romans 1:14-17—**

To both Greeks and barbarians, to both wise and foolish, a debtor am I. Thus this eagerness of mine to bring the evangel to you also, who are in Rome. For not ashamed am I of the evangel, for it is God's power for salvation to everyone who is believing -- to the Jew first, and to the Greek as well. For in it God's righteousness is being revealed, out of faith for faith, according as it is written: "Now the just one by faith shall be living.

It is nearly unbelievable for an ex-Pharisee to admit to being a debtor to both Greeks and barbarians, to both wise and foolish. In other words, he is a debtor to everyone. A Pharisee considered himself the top of the heap, a debtor to no one. This was the Paul of old. Now, he lowers himself into the same boat as everyone else. Worse than that, he is a barnacle at the bottom of the boat. It's as if he is saying:

Friends, for many years I considered myself superior to all of you. I was a Pharisee of the highest order, a Hebrew among Hebrews. I was top of the heap. The rest of you were the heap—*my* heap. While I preened myself in Jerusalem, becoming supposedly smarter in the ways of God, you lived your lives in humble service to your families, your friends, your community, and the true God. Since Damascus, I have started from scratch. If only I had been like you all along. Instead, I had the disadvantage in life—yes, I said, the disadvantage—of being so advantaged. I see now the size and seduction of my former life. Please bear with me, friends, as I catch up on your kindness, mercy, love, and common sense.

This sentiment introduces one of the most spiritual letters ever written to humanity.

For the first time in his life, Paul felt relaxed. Retaining a top-of-the-heap reputation is hard work. This is not to say we should abandon excellence. We can strive sanely for it, however, while at the same time remembering our common human stock.

The spiritual nature of this letter begs an author familiar with humanity's common boat. Damascus broke the man. It was for this letter that Damascus occurred. No Damascus, no Romans. As you read Romans, keep your acquaintance with the new common man who is Paul. Otherwise, you will run the Christian risk of either putting Paul in stained glass, or making him a rock star. Next thing you know, you'll think you're the latest, great-

est thing. Then the great truths of Romans will escape you.

WHAT'S COMING

In verse 18 of chapter 1, Paul will launch upon a complete decimation of the human race. He will carry on what I call The Decimation, up until verse 20 of chapter 3. It is a lengthy decimation. (If you have not been humbled before Romans, you should be properly so following The Decimation.) I will elucidate every odorous detail of The Decimation, in due time. Christians, however, will manage to miss it. Christians are miraculous people in that they would miss an elephant in a cotton ball factory. The rose-colored glasses of the self-righteous Christian brigade rival the Hubble telescope and are shaped like Coke bottles. Christians imagine that The Decimation of 1:18 to 3:20 somehow doesn't include *them*. I can't explain it except to say it is proof of religious brainwashing.

The Pharisee Saul never could have written The Decimation. Wait until you read what he writes about his own stock, the Jews, in chapter 2. No wonder his countrymen hated him. His countrymen got wind of Romans and wanted its author dead. They wanted the man and the literature destroyed, like a good old Nazi book burning. It didn't quite work out that way. If you read this letter correctly, *your* fellow humans will persecute you. Your correct conclusions in Romans will invite the kind of persecution Paul suffered. This persecution is still available to those willing and able to read this letter "from scratch," that is, from the same boat as every other barbarian.

HOW TO PRAY FOR YOUR ENEMIES

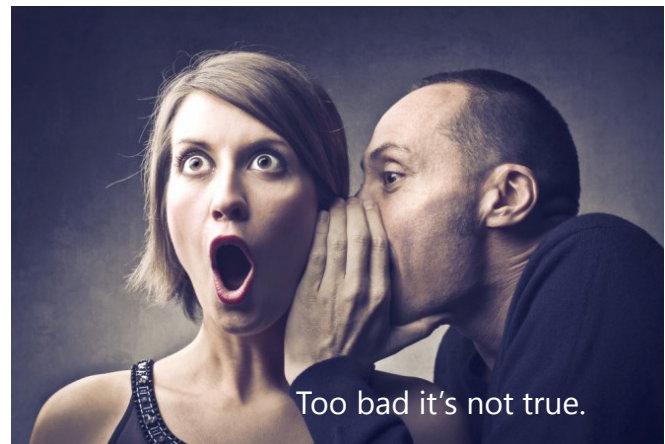
I wrote last week about our enemies. I said how terrible they were. By definition, enemies are people who fight truth by either inventing or believing lies, then publishing them via print or coffee klatch gossip. I unveiled for you the source of the enmity: Satan. At the end of Romans, chapter twelve, Paul tells us to bless and do good to our enemies. We'll be getting there eventually. For now, let's start simple. Today, I will tell you how to pray for your enemies.

God convicted me concerning this after last week's writing. Everything I said last week about enemies was true. What was missing was praying for them. More than any other inhabitants of the planet, these people need prayer. Praying for your enemies is one of the hardest things to do. The only harder thing is giving them presents, but don't worry about that for a few more weeks. In

the meantime, here is a helpful hint for enemy-prayer: You must look forward to a time when your enemies realize truth and bow low to the ground in humility. One day, your enemies will realize they've not only withstood the very truth they claimed to love, but persecuted its announcers, of whom you are one.

PHARISHOCK

Try to imagine the shock of the Pharisees. They will be resurrected to stand before the Christ they crucified. Not one spotlight will be disabled then. Every elucidation shall be trained and focused. Hearts will be split apart and finally analyzed in a breathtaking light. If you want a glimpse into the ensuing weeping and tooth-gnashing, read the account of Joseph's brothers in Egypt. When they finally recognized the one they'd so envied and hated, their knees gave out. So aghast and ashamed were they, they fell to their faces begging for their lives.



This fulfilled Joseph's dream. He dreamed that his brothers and even his father would lose knee-power in his presence and worship him.

One day, your enemies will bow and worship you. I am unconcerned with how this pronouncement of mine comes across. I used to worry about being misunderstood, but I've quit that occupation. So many people misunderstood me, I gave up. There weren't enough hours in the day to accommodate so many misunderstandings. Most people can't tell the difference between self-exaltation and the God variety. They can't tell the difference between lie and truth. Most people are so into self-exaltation that, when true exaltation enters their ears from above, they discard that baby with their own

bathwater. Bathtub people of this ilk are so distrusting of themselves; they are afraid of becoming “too proud.” Thus occupied, they will be unable to see and revel in the real thing when God delivers it prophetically. Glorification is too good for them. *Oh, I’m not worthy.* Well, no kidding. Anyone staring at God’s promise to personally glorify them, who then says, “*Oh, I’m just not worthy,*” has yet to grasp The Decimation of Romans 1:18-3:20. He or she still fears the old humanity, which has been crucified. The old humanity was crucified. The bathtub people either fail to grasp this, or refuse to believe it. They live as if their old humanity never got condemned before Pilate, nailed to the cross, then shoved into a tomb. They still think they can get too big for their britches, so they stiff-arm any and all legitimate glorification. The old humanity is the skeleton in their closet. It rattles regularly.



I tried to help these people by writing, *The First Idiot in Heaven*. For some reason, not many people know about this book. For some reason, thousands of copies of it sit in boxes in a garage in California. I am so past The Decimation, so accepting of it, that I can read, grasp and revel in the prophecies concerning my own glorification. My old humanity was crucified, so why *shouldn’t* my new humanity be glorified? I love these glorification prophecies, and will continue to love them. I will dream of them. I can’t wait to be glorified. I can’t wait to see my enemies at my feet, then converted into friends when they see me weeping with love for them because they’ve

finally received The Decimation (Romans 1:18-3:20). Again, I no longer care how this sounds. These days, all I care about is truth. I also care about converting truth into words for consumption—with accompanying illustrations.

Let the misunderstanders misunderstand; they’re going to do it anyway. They get things wrong for a living. They can’t get past themselves. They “go with” their vaunted “gut,” but their guts are habitually wrong. They’d be better off with a Ouija Board. They bog down in self-analysis, then project this onto me. In psychology, it’s called, “projection,” and rightly so. Some days, I feel like a movie screen. People stuck in the old humanity imagine their self-occupied selves to be looking at me (that is, they think *I’m* self-occupied because I write, publish, speak, video, and gallivant), but they’re instead staring into a mirror. They can’t tell I’m on the other side of the cross, while they’re still trying to be worthy of Jesus. What can I do? I can only write books that languish in a garage in California, make audio shows, speak at conferences, make videos, answer thousands of emails, travel and teach people (gallivanting to and fro) and let cards fall where they will; they’re not my cards. I am only one guy. Neither is it my bathwater. I jumped from that tub years ago and am running metaphorically naked down the road, while other people’s cards fly helter-skelter in the wind while they wrestle with their metaphoric underpants.

JOSEPH

Joseph is a type of Christ, and Christ is our Fore-runner. If you want to know your history, look to Christ (you were crucified with Him; Romans, chapter 6). If you want to know your future, look to Christ (He is seated at the right hand of God). If you want to know your present, believe what Jesus Christ says of you in Romans and Ephesians. The reaction of Joseph’s brothers to Joseph’s presence, and the revelation of their own treachery and supposed recompense, is a picture of what will happen with Christ, with us, and with our enemies. I’ll be getting to that; but first, read this passage from Romans 8:28-30. If you don’t think that you, personally, will be glorified with the glory of Christ, pay special attention to the last phrase Paul wrote under inspiration of the holy spirit:

Now we are aware that God is working all together for the good of those who are loving God, who are called according to the purpose that, whom He foreknew, He designates beforehand,

also, to be conformed to the image of His Son, for Him to be Firstborn among many brethren. Now whom He designates beforehand, these He calls also, and whom He calls, these He justifies also; now whom He justifies, these He glorifies also.

“These He glorifies also.” He glorifies *these*. This is *personal* glory. You, *personally*, will be glorified by God, Who is the World Expert on Glorification. I taught on this in Sacramento two years ago. I’m not sure how many people got it. Some did, for sure. These looked surprised and happy. Others gave me blank stares and throat-clearing. I think people were embarrassed to hear of personal glorification. It made them fidgety. They’re not worthy of it, you see. They miss the whole point. I am so used to it, so I must occasionally project my “used-to-it” attitude, wrongly, upon other people. “Hi,” I say. “My name is Martin Zender, and I am going to be glorified, *big time*.”



In come the blank stares. People wonder how I can say this. They think I am so full of myself. They still haven’t come to the cross, whereas I am a couple of eons past it, sprinting and jumping around. They must not think The Decimation applies to them, whereas I arrived at Romans 3:21 two decades ago. I inhabit it as a turtle does his shell.

Here is the Joseph account I promised. This first part of this passage, Genesis 44:14-20, is when Joseph finally decided to reveal himself to his brothers. Before revealing himself to his brothers, Joseph vexed them to teach them a lesson. He put his cup in their brother Benjamin’s bag, then sent them away. Then he sent officials to arrest them en route for stealing his cup, which they didn’t steal. He knew this would despair his brothers, and it did. He wanted them to taste the medicine of their former treachery against him, for their own good. Here is the passage from *The Message*:

Joseph was still at home when Judah and his brothers got back. They threw themselves down on the ground in front of him.

Joseph accused them: “How can you have done this? You have to know that a man in my position would have discovered this.”

Judah as spokesman for the brothers said, “What can we say, master? What is there to say? How can we prove our innocence? God is behind this, exposing how bad we are. We stand guilty before you and ready to be your slaves—we’re all in this together, the rest of us as guilty as the one with the chalice.”

“I’d never do that to you,” said Joseph. “Only the one involved with the chalice will be my slave. The rest of you are free to go back to your father.”

Judah came forward. He said, “Please, master; can I say just one thing to you? Don’t get angry. Don’t think I’m presumptuous—you’re the same as Pharaoh as far as I’m concerned.”

Finally, Joseph couldn’t take it any more and revealed himself to his brothers. This is Genesis 45:1-8, 14-15:

Joseph couldn’t hold himself in any longer, keeping up a front before all his attendants. He cried out, “Leave! Clear out—everyone leave!” So there was no one with Joseph when he identified himself to his brothers. But his sobbing was so violent that the Egyptians couldn’t help but hear him. The news was soon reported to Pharaoh’s palace.

Joseph spoke to his brothers: “I am Joseph. Is my father really still alive?” But his brothers couldn’t say a word. They were speechless—they couldn’t believe what they were hearing and seeing.

“Come closer to me,” Joseph said to his brothers. They came closer. “I am Joseph your brother whom you sold into Egypt. But don’t feel badly, don’t blame yourselves for selling me. God was behind it. God sent me here ahead of you to save lives. There has been a famine in the land now for two years; the famine will continue for five more years—neither plowing nor harvesting. God sent me on ahead to pave the way and make sure there was a remnant in the land, to save your lives in an amazing act of deliverance. So you see, it wasn’t you who sent me here but God. He set me in place as a father to Pharaoh, put me in charge of his personal affairs, and made me ruler of all Egypt.

Then Joseph threw himself on his brother Ben-

jamin's neck and wept, and Benjamin wept on his neck. He then kissed all his brothers and wept over them. Only then were his brothers able to talk with him.

It was several minutes before the stunned brothers could form words. Their lips didn't work.

All of Joseph's family returned to Egypt to live with him. Eventually Jacob died, and Joseph returned to Israel with his brothers to bury their father Jacob. Then they all returned to Egypt. Now his brothers were really worried. Now that their father was dead, they thought Joseph would finally enact the revenge they knew they had coming. From Genesis 50:14-21:

After burying his father, Joseph went back to Egypt. All his brothers who had come with him to bury his father returned with him. After the funeral, Joseph's brothers talked among themselves: "What if Joseph is carrying a grudge and decides to pay us back for all the wrong we did him?"

So they sent Joseph a message, "Before his death, your father gave this command: Tell Joseph, 'Forgive your brothers' sin—all that wrongdoing. They did treat you very badly.' Will you do it? Will you forgive the sins of the servants of your father's God?"

When Joseph received their message, he wept.

Then the brothers went in person to him, threw themselves on the ground before him and said, "We'll be your slaves."

Joseph replied, "Don't be afraid. Do I act for God? Don't you see, you planned evil against me but God used those same plans for my good, as you see all around you right now—life for many people. Easy now, you have nothing to fear; I'll take care of you and your children." He reassured them, speaking with them heart-to-heart.

When we are revealed as the sons of God and sovereigns (rulers and reigners with Christ), those who vexed us in this life will themselves be vexed. They will throw themselves at our feet and worship us. It will be so refreshing to see these former mean, selfish people drained of their burden and finally humbled, via medicine-tasting. This will make us want to weep for them. At first, we will check ourselves, but then weeping will come freely and easily. Enemies will be made friends, and nothing will make them or us happier.

Anticipate that day. Read the Joseph account again, this time putting yourself in the place of Joseph, and your enemies in the place of his brothers. Be bold. Once you've envisioned this future event, come back to this day and feel sorry for your enemies. No people need this more.

God will save them, but not before they weep in angst over their role as necessary antagonists.

POTIPHAR'S WIFE

In Egypt, years before the events written above, Joseph served the home of the captain of the palace guard, Potiphar. The great man's wife was a hot tamale and continually flirted with Joseph, who had a six-pack. She wanted to have sex with the young Israelite. Joseph, however, rebuffed her every time. Hell hath no fury like a woman scorned—so goes the rumor. Potiphar's wife falsely accused Joseph, telling her husband that Joseph had assaulted her.



It was the farthest thing from the truth, but so what? Liars get their way in this life because, for some reasons, liars gain more of a ready audience than truth-tellers. As Mark Twain said, "A lie travels halfway around the earth while the truth is still putting on its shoes." So off went Joseph to jail.

This woman, too, will be at Joseph's feet one day, where her treachery will at last be exposed. Everyone will watch as God trains seventy times seven spotlights upon it. The treachery will say, "TREACHERY," in capital letters, as you see here. Won't this be wonderful refreshment? I can't wait to see it. It is so different from how things work today. Then that woman will weep in her reduction,

and Joseph will show her softness. He will gather her into his arms and weep with her in his deep love for her, as we will do with those who have lied about us and about our God and Christ.



JESUS AS JOSEPH

Jesus Christ Himself practiced this principle. In dark hours, He anticipated future glory and reminded Himself of the future place of His enemies at His feet.

The darkest hour sees Christ accused by the priesthood at His illegal trial. He is mock-tried and delivered to the Roman procurator. Jesus said to the chiefs of the religious establishment

that night, "Henceforth, you shall see the Son of Mankind sitting at the right hand of God." Here is the entire passage, Matthew 26, 59-64:

Now the chief priests and the elders and the whole Sanhedrin sought false testimony against Jesus, so that they should be putting Him to death, and they found it not. At many false witnesses approaching, they found it not. Yet subsequently two false witnesses, approaching, said, "He averred, 'I am able to demolish the temple of God and, during three days, to rebuild it.'"

And, rising, the chief priest said to Him, "Are you answering nothing? What are these testifying against you?"

Yet Jesus was silent. And, answering, the chief priest said to Him, "I exorcise you by the living God that you may tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God."

Saying to him is Jesus, "You say it! Moreover, I am saying to you, Henceforth you shall be seeing the Son of Mankind sitting at the right hand of power and coming on the clouds of heaven."

Jesus said and will do this, not only for His sake, but for that of His enemies. It comforted Him to think and speak this way. This event will testify against the priests and Pharisees, bringing them a future breaking. Do you not think that they will see this film, rewound, at the Great White Throne judgment? Yes, they will see it.

Christ's statement is the equivalent of Joseph's dream of his brothers bowing at his feet. Jesus paints the dream for his enemies. Surely Joseph fortified himself with memories of his dream, even while mired at the bottom of the pit dug by God in the path of wandering Ishmaelites.

NIGHT TIME IS THE RIGHT TIME

The only time I am able to forgive my enemies, at present, is at night. Night, like death, is an equalizer. All human bravado dies to a whisper when darkness covers the actual earth as well as my interior landmass. I pull the sheet to my chin and bring to God's mind the names of people about whom I wrongly murmured at daybreak. I ask God to bless them.

I am no better than they, in constitution. The difference is that God has favored me with truth, wisdom, revelation. But without love, I am nothing. I pray for love. In my bed at night, I articulate it. I want to love everyone. No one can hear me

except God, the angels, and my own ears. It is good for my ears to hear what I say. I imagine that my enemies, too, are in bed somewhere. At night, in bed, is when and where semi-normal people stare up at ceiling tiles to take honest stock. Perhaps I give too many people too much credit. Most enemies probably revel in their own darkness, which they call, "light." I don't know whether Caiphas ever doubted himself, at bedtime. I like to think that he did. Did Paul's chief enemy, Alexander the Coppersmith, ever doubt his course in the presence of ceiling tiles? I am un-

"All bravado dies when darkness covers my interior landmass."





convinced of it. At night, however, I can *almost* imagine it. I am probably wrong, but it helps to think that I'm right. Even during the day, it is night somewhere else. It helps me to think this. I'm glad the world is round, because otherwise everything would be day.

Tell God to bless your enemies. This is intelligent prayer, because it's His will eventually to do so (1 Timothy 2:6). You must overcome evil, not with evil, but with good. Again, this is harder in the daylight. I speak for myself. Light exposes too many creases in my being. But at night, defenses fall like curtains revealing masterpiece statuary. There is something about darkness. We have all groped in the darkness. Paul told the Athenian philosophers on Mars Hill: *You're groping in darkness* (Acts 17:23-29). Here in Romans, Paul puts himself in the same boat as those philosophers—even lower. Throwing himself into the pot with the Athenians does not preclude Paul from telling these people how ridiculously religious they are (Acts 17:22). It is the same with his fellow Jews: Just because Paul was once one of them doesn't mean he can't call them "the maimcision" (Philippians 3:3). It means he

can. Now he is operating from a high place of revelation. True revelation humbles, never falsely exalts. That is, it never exalts ahead of time. Otherwise, it is not true revelation. This does not preclude God exalting and glorifying us above our contemporaries, because He will. It happens in due time. God gets full credit for doing so much for—and with—barbarians.

TO BRING THE EVANGEL TO YOU ALSO WHO ARE IN ROME

Never forget that Romans is a letter written to real people. I used to think the Roman ecclesia was a giant church. I now realize it was two dozen people meeting in Priscilla and Aquila's living room. It may have been three dozen people. They served coffee and dished up snacks. Everybody brought something to the meeting, as people do today. The Roman ecclesia was anti-establishment. It's the same today with true gatherings. Everything the establishment *was*, the Roman ecclesia *wasn't*. Big? Nope. Recognized? Nope. Reputable? Nope. Certified? Nope. Crowded? Not unless Priscilla and Aquila occupied a single-bedroom gig. I don't know what their house looked like. None of the photos have survived. It may have been an apartment.

If I could crawl into a time machine and play with the dials, I would love to be standing outside this house when the letter arrived—the letter; the one and only copy of Romans on the face of the earth.

HISTORY OF ROMANS

Paul wrote the letter to the Romans from the city of Corinth on his third missionary journey. At the time, he was collecting money from the gentile believers for the starving Jerusalem ecclesias (Romans 15:25; Acts 24:17). This would mean that Paul wrote Romans around AD 56. I'm not sure what people were driving back then, but it wasn't Fords or Chevys. Neither do I know the most popular movie of that day, or how much a gallon of milk cost. All I know is that it was a long time ago, but not so long ago that it did not belong to our earth. This earth we now walk upon held and witnessed these events. Wander the ruins of ancient Corinth today, and at some point you will stride directly over the site of the home and the desk and the chair where Paul's scribe Tertius wrote furiously to keep pace with a pacing apostle.

We know Paul wrote this letter from Corinth by the mention of three people: Phoebe (16:1), Gaius (16:23), and Erastus (16:23). Phoebe lived in Cenchrea, the main Co-

rinthian port. Cenchrea was probably one of the unnamed churches “in the whole of Achaia” (2 Corinthians 1:1). It was a village within the greater Corinthian municipality. I’ll get back to Phoebe in a second, because you’re not going to believe what happened with Phoebe. I thought I loved Tryphena and Tryphosa (Romans 16:12), which I surely do (I am planning on greeting them first during the snatching away, I am not joking one bit, ask the Pilkingtons how much I talk about Tryphena and Tryphosa; I am going to hang with them for the eon), but Phoebe is now a new favorite. If there were early believer trading cards, I would trade you two Tituses for a Phoebe. Even three Tituses. You would have to pry Tryphena and Tryphosa from my dead fingers, so I won’t fret the impossible possibility of losing their trading cards, because I’ve no plans to die.

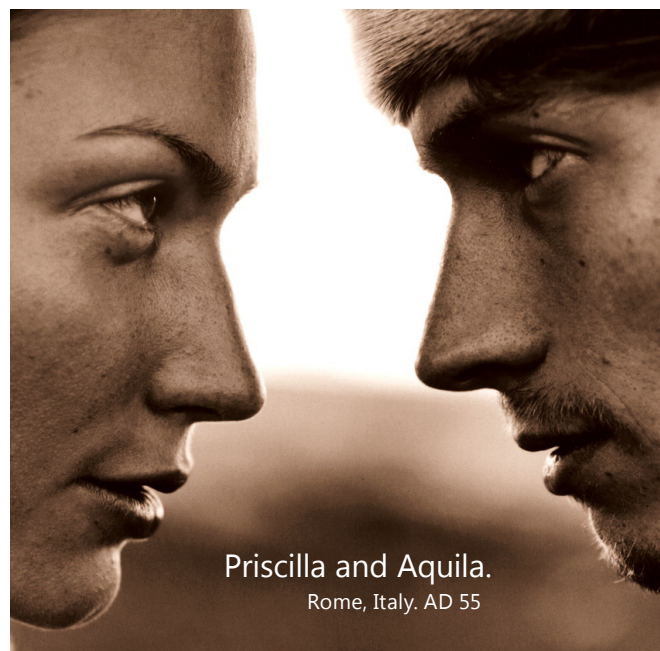
Paul references Gaius in 1 Corinthians 1:14, so this man was decidedly a Corinthian. According to Paul in Romans 16:23, Erastus was “the administrator of the city.” I just discovered that, in Corinth, an inscription has been discovered referring to a certain “Erastus” as the official in charge of public works.

Wow, maybe the Bible is true after all.



Erastus Inscription

In 1929 this inscription was found mentioning Erastus as the one who paid for the paving of the street in return for his appointment as a city officer. It is likely that this is the same Erastus mentioned by Paul as sending greetings to the church at Rome (Rom 16:23). If so, Paul’s influence apparently extended to wealthy and influential Roman citizens of Corinth.



All of this to prove that Paul wrote *Romans* from Corinth.

Back to Phoebe, one of my new favorites. Listen to what Paul said about her in Romans 16:1. She is the first person mentioned in this wonderful list of Paul’s fellow-believers and fellow workers.

Now I am commending to you Phoebe, our sister, being a servant also of the ecclesia in Cenchrea, that you should be receiving her in the Lord worthily of the saints, and may stand by her in whatever matter she may be needing you, for she became a patroness of many, as well as of myself.

Good. God. Almighty. Paul selected Phoebe to take this letter—the letter—from Corinth to Rome. *Phoebe* did this; she carried it; she alone; for several hours, it was Phoebe and *Romans* on a boat together. One of two things happened. Either Paul arranged to meet her at the port in Cenchrea to hand her what he wrote, or he gave her the letter at one of the meetings, she took it home, left it on her dresser overnight, then tucked it away on her person the next day when booking passage to Rome.

What an unimaginable honor. Not only was Phoebe a contemporary of Paul’s, she believed his message. Not only did she believe his message, she helped Paul take it to the world by giving him money. This is the meaning of, “patroness.”

I know how this works. It is a beautiful, inspiring thing. Someone comes up to me after a meeting, or before I am about to leave their home. They touch my elbow to stop me, then look me in the eye. Something big is about

to happen, and does. They extend their hand, and they hand me an envelope. They say, “I just want to do something to help.” It may be five dollars, or it may be a check for \$500 dollars. I don’t look until later. It doesn’t matter; the miracle is the same. The point is that this is how the Word goes forth. It is neither an altar call, nor a public, weeping, plea for money on my part. I make my needs known, yes, but subtly. The giving is just as subtle. The man or woman giving wants no fuss made, refusing all trumpet blasts. It is quiet, profound, necessary. The celestial world takes note; few others do. In one marvelous exchange, the work Paul began two thousand years ago trudges on.



My Phoebe trading card.

This is the only way you and I have a Bible, because people like Phoebe gave money to Paul. This is the only reason you and I know the truth of our celestial calling. It is because people like Phoebe stopped Paul, gently touched his elbow, and with tears handed him an envelope. She did this, not only for Paul, but for all the men of God heralding in that day. There were not many to care for. According to Clyde Pilkington, there were nine. Nine men on the face of the planet stood at the forefront of teaching. (It’s no different today.) Phoebe financed them. So

did Lydia (Acts 16:14-15). It was gentle, humble, pure as Mt. Ararat snow. It came from the heart, not compulsion. So did the gospel. Today, nothing has changed. The great work continues in shadows of doorways. If Phoebe were alive, she would be smiling. If Paul were alive, he would nudge her, point at us and say, “That’s just what we did.”

What is Phoebe’s reward at the dais? I can’t wait to see. The light will blind us. But our lovely Phoebe received recompense here on earth as well. For a few short days, between Cenchrea and Rome, she carried *it* in her personal possession. There was no safer person on the face of the planet than our dear Phoebe. All divine protection was hers. No doubt she carried it on her person, next to her heart. Should that original manuscript ever be located, it will bear upon it the human, feminine aura of a woman whose name is recorded for all time, yet unknown to most barbarians.

Dear sister Phoebe, I, and the saints of my household, salute you. We carry on the work. You did not labor in vain. Several *million* copies of the letter you carried to Rome, which sat on your dresser overnight, are enshrined in God’s bound revelation to us. We study it every day. Few people understand it, but don’t be discouraged. Some day, everyone will understand it. I am writing a series of newsletters about it now. You died not knowing any of this. You died having not received the promise of a glorified body. I shall see you in the resurrection. You will be radiant, Phoebe. You will rise first, then you and I will be with our Savior, together—forever. Then you shall be acknowledged before the universe, at the dais of Christ, as the patroness that you were of God-sent truth, and the carrier, protector—and yes, the lover—of the most profound writing granted to humans. I can’t wait to see this. I can’t wait to see you.

I love you, Phoebe. Dear Phoebe, I will see you in the morning.



GOD'S POWER

“For not ashamed am I of the evangel, for it is God’s power for salvation to everyone who is believing—to the Jew first, and to the Greek as well.”

—Romans 1:16

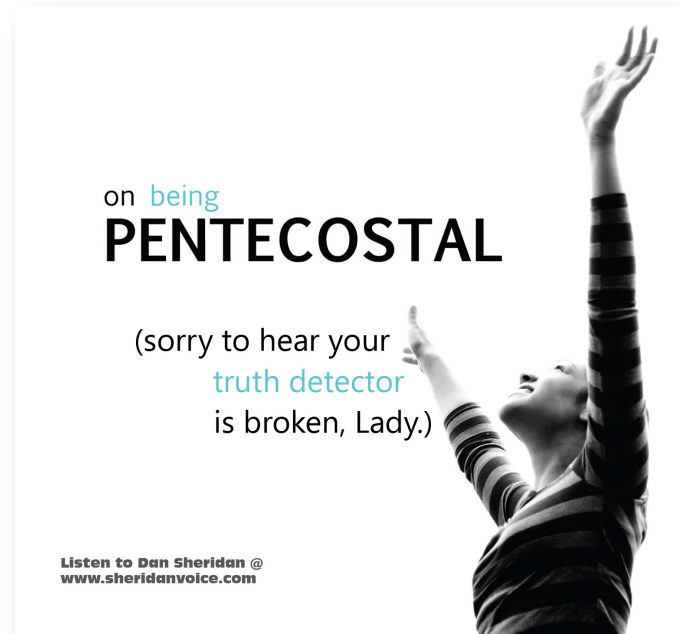
It is easy to be ashamed of a gospel giving human beings no credit whatsoever for salvation. This is why Paul says, in Romans 1:16, that he is not ashamed of it. Christians need not say this, as they believe in a gospel which does indeed glorify human beings. They never say, “don’t be ashamed of this,” because their message assassinates that possibility. How can it inspire pride when the power for eternal life with God comes, not directly from Jesus Christ (He only made it possible to be saved), but rather from a person’s free will. “Free will” is a euphemism for “salvation by human will power.” Not one in this camp ever says, “salvation by human willpower,” of course, because that’s too plain a declaration of the sick, proud thing.

Romans is an elaboration of the announcement of what *God* has accomplished concerning sin and death. Nothing else can take the place of this announcement. Paul announced the elements of this evangel—or good news—in his first letter to the Corinthians. Here is the evangel in all its simple yet profound glory:

Now I am making known to you, brethren, the evangel which I bring to you, which also you accepted, in which also you stand, through which also you are saved, if you are retaining what I said in bringing the evangel to you, outside and except you believe feignedly. For I give over to you among the first what also I accepted, that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures, and that He was entombed, and that He has been roused the third day according to the scriptures ...

—1 Corinthians 15:1-4

Saving us from death is the death, entombment, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Nothing can take the place of this announcement. There is no other power in the universe which can make people turn to God, to love Him, to want to be with Him. All modern substitutes fail. Ironically, the substitutes for this simple message come from Christianity. Christianity believes that the answer to sin and death is a clean life—they want us to clean up our lives, stop sinning, be baptized, go to church, avoid every evil thought—and then maybe God will like us. After we’ve exhausted ourselves personally with impossible burdens, Christianity then tells us we must forward a “social gospel,” that is, a



gospel that not only talks, but walks. Our faith is worthless, they say, unless we feed the poor and house the homeless. These things are not forwarded as a result of the Christ-life within, but rather as a prerequisite, or proof, of one’s salvation. Thus, philanthropy, rather than Christ, becomes “God’s power for salvation.”

It is so not the case.

The Christian religion so abuses the word, “power.” Power is thought, by them, to come with impassioned oratory or emotional excitement. When people swoon and get “that special holy ghost feeling,” *then* they know the power of God is upon them. This is all a lie. Such manifestations are in fact anti-power. The noise and oratory signify great weakness and error.

A friend of mine tells of a friend who listens to Dan Sheridan on the Internet and says, “This man does not have the anointing.” This same woman attends a Pentecostal church. Her church, she says, “has the anointing.” By “anointing,” she means emotional excitement, impassioned oratory, and goose bumps. She listens to Dan Sheridan, and does not think he’s exciting. Dan announces the true evangel every day on his Internet show. It is neither sexy nor exciting. Dan quotes the word of the evangel (the death, entombment, and resurrection of Jesus Christ). It is these words—*by themselves*—that pack all power to change people. People are changed upon apprehending the completeness of Christ’s work. It’s the death, entombment, and resurrection of Jesus Christ—*plus nothing*—that saves. Dan is spiritual and anointed enough to leave the words alone. The anointing drips off that man.

Like Israel, Christianity stumbles at the stumbling stone. The stumbling stone is the simplicity of the announcement of what God has done to abolish sin and death. Again, it is the announcement itself that has power.

It is not the *way* the words are spoken that matters. The words simply must be cleared of all extraneous excrement. Unload the odorous freight, present the truth as it is, then get out of the way. This is what Dan Sheridan does (sheridanvoice.com). It is what Clyde Pilkington does (studyshef.com). It is what I do. It is what Paul did. It is what



Timothy did. It is what Titus did. It is *not* what the Jews of Paul's day did. It is not what his enemies did. It is not what either Joel Osteen or Billy Graham do today. Rather than clearing away excrement, these people shovel it on in smoking heaps. These modern men, like the ancient ones, fail to grasp the power of the evangel itself. It is God's power for salvation, yet these men feel driven to heighten the power with big microphones, large stadiums, fast music, impassioned pleas, clever words, bestselling books, well-groomed hair. It's junk food. Rather than helping the truth, they kill it. None of it can save, and none of it does save. The truth gets lost, if ever it was there. None of the people eating this "cardboard" get saved, any more than

people eating real cardboard get nourished. It's a false salvation. It looks real, but it's false. Graham, Osteen and millions like them don't know the truth. Not only do they not know it, but what kernel of it might grow within walking distance, they slather in cheap peanut butter and chocolate frosting. The essence is lost, not that it was ever there. It's double-loss, double-disaster, double-unbelief. Those imbibing the non-food become double the sons and daughters of unbelief as these charlatans.

None of these things can save or make human beings right before God. The evangel alone—sans addition or apology—is able to justify anyone who believes.

"To the Jew first, and to the Greek as well."

—Romans 1:16

This gospel, this evangel, is available to all. Paul can say this only after having pronounced himself, a few verses earlier, as a debtor to all. The Jews are privileged in that they received the Scriptures. Like Phoebe, they were the caretakers. Unlike Phoebe, they "fumbled the ball." Now, the most valuable Scriptures in the world are ours. We, the nations, own the greatest treasure on earth. These are Paul's letters, beginning with the letter to the Romans.

Romans is the Magna Carta of our faith.

"For a righteousness which is of God is being revealed in it, out of faith for faith, according as it is written: 'Now the just one by faith shall be living.'"

—Romans 1:17

Back in the old days, after Israel had failed miserably to do law and drowned in apostasy, the prophet Habakkuk reverted to God's unconditional promise made to Abraham, uttering the immortal phrase, "The just by faith shall live" (Habakkuk 2:4). Now that Israel is again in full-blown apostasy, the faith principle once again supersedes law. For the nations that never had law, this is easier to accept. The Jews, steeped in law, can't unhand that baggage. If you've never been dragged through a hard-core religion (i.e., Christianity), where the centerpiece is law, thank God for it. It is much easier introducing a barbarian (a "heathen," a non-religious person) to faith, than a church person.

"Out of faith, for faith," means out of Jesus Christ's faith, into (for) our faith. Our faith has a source, and it is God. Our faith is not based on nothing, but rather on the faith our Lord demonstrated in giving Himself up to the death of the cross, for the sake of us all. We shall speak

more on this when arriving at Romans 3:21, when Paul finally stops silencing every mouth, slicing every folk-stem, and at last unfolds the truth of how much God likes us. ■

ROMANS SERIES

I'm so grateful for everything you are doing. Your shows and newsletters are my carrot on a stick ... every day, I can't wait to get home to listen to you. Paul's letters used to make me cry because I couldn't make sense of them and would get so frustrated (I used to read the NIV). Finally, I'm understanding him thanks to the CLNT and your teaching ... I've learned SO MUCH from you (or from God, through you) in the past year that sometimes I'm overwhelmed trying to catch up... but that's a good thing.

—HB

Martin, I cannot express in words what these messages mean to me, just when I am feeling the hurt, the loneliness and anxiety of living with so-called "Christians" who do nothing but mock and smirk at what I have found through you, Martin—you send this. I keep telling myself "I, John, a slave of Christ Jesus"... and man, it works. Oh what joy, what amazing relief and stunning peace..

Peace and love to you brother,
—JK



THE MARTIN ZENDER SHOW.
MONDAY THRU FRIDAY.
12 MINUTES.
LIFE-CHANGING TRUTH.

Dear Martin,

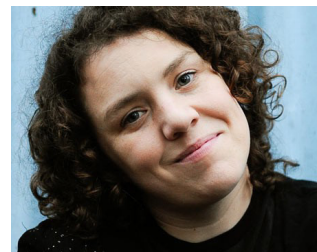
I just listened to Zender Special #245: *God Loves Faith*. I don't think you fully understand how very important your "talks" are to us in the Body of Christ. They are a lifeline. Without them, I would drown. They keep me from giving up—not turn my back—just give up.

This world scares the heck out of me. I need more of God's gift of faith, because living as a human being is the hardest thing I have ever done.

Sometimes, I don't think I will make it. Then, I hear one of your audio shows (Zender Specials) and it turns me around. I was reluctant to write to you. I fully realize that you are not responsible for me, or anyone, and I never thought you were nor expected you to be. But I realize how vital your job is for the rest of us and for those to come.

You are *not* my Savior. You are my instructor, blessed (or cursed, perhaps) with the ability and knowledge to explain those vexatious verses of which I cannot make heads-or-tails. I could never do what you do. I can't even explain to others what knowledge I have been given. I can't quote verses, but I definitely know the truth. And you help me understand it more thoroughly.

I can't thank God enough for giving you this ability. I know it's hard on you. At times, your life must be tough and a little lonely. Please don't give up. Remember what you teach—the end will be so much better than what we have now. And thank you for helping me remember that, too. —PG



http://www.martinzender.com/new_zender_sheridan/home.htm