



Sunday, December 29, 2013 Zapping-you Whenever Thoughts Flow

ROMANS

Part 10

Chapter 2:1-3



Romans 2:1-3

Wherefore, defenseless are you, O man! everyone who is judging, for in what you are judging another, you are condemning yourself, for you who are judging are committing the same things. Now we are aware that the judgment of God is according to truth against those who are committing such things. Yet are you reckoning on this, O man, who art judging those committing such things, and art doing the same, that you will be escaping the judgment of God?

In Romans, chapter 2, Paul launches upon the topic of judgment and the hypocrisy of humans executing it. Every single inhabitant of earth is a hypocrite. Paul knows this, and uses it to further mire the race in a morass of moral helplessness.

(He is going to rescue the race in 3:21, but we're not there yet.) The case against humanity is that not a single member of the race is worthy to stand next to a righteous God. The *most* unworthy among this ignoble group are those who *think* they are able to stand next to a righteous God. These are hypocrites (not to mention idiots), and they prove themselves such by judging other people over the same things of which they themselves are guilty.

This is not to say that we of the body of Christ cannot execute judgments. After all, Paul writes to the Corinthians in 1 Corinthians 6:1-6:

Dare any of you, having business with another, be judged before the unjust, and not before the saints? Or are you not aware that the saints shall judge the world? And if the world is being judged by you, are you unworthy of the least tribunals? Are you not aware that we shall be judging messengers, not to mention life's affairs? If indeed, then, you should have tribunals for life's affairs, the contemptible in the ecclesia, these you are seating? To abash you am I saying this. Thus is there not among you one wise man who will be able to adjudicate amidst his brethren, but brother is suing brother, and this before unbelievers!

The judging of 1 Corinthians chapter 6 is different than that of Romans chapter 2. The judging of 1 Corinthians concerns the affairs of life. Since we will one day judge angels, it is expected of us to make decisions concerning relatively minor squabbles here on earth among ourselves. The judging of Romans chapter 2, on the other hand, is the judging of condemnation. It is the judging which assumes one person to be better than another, and worthy of more preferential treatment by God. If I could put Romans 1:18-3:21 into one handy little nutshell of a phrase, it would be, "As far as comparing ourselves to God goes, we are all in the same boat—and it is sinking."

DO AS I SAY ...

For instance, here is a Christian man who judges another Christian man for drinking alcohol. He accuses this other man of “lusting after the flesh.” He, however, is overweight. He’s so addicted to sweets he’d give Dracula diabetes. What is the difference between this man’s passion and the man he is judging? Nothing. The judging of Romans chapter 2 is the judging that condemns itself even as it points the finger at others. The person indulging in the judging of Romans chapter 2 assumes that he or she is better than other people. The irony is that this assumption actually makes this person *worse* than other people.

God hates hypocrisy.



The judging of 1 Corinthians 6, on the other hand, is practical: “You stole this guy’s car; we have deemed this to be wrong; give it back.” This is the sort of judging exercised by those of us who teach God’s Word. We bring the light of Scripture to the hypocrisy of others. We do this, not to condemn these others, but to illumine them and bring them to the truth. The judging for which Paul condemns all of humanity in Romans chapter 2 is the judging which says, “You do this bad thing that I don’t do, therefore God likes me better than He likes you.” This is a clever little rhyme, but believing it is a crime. Everyone has compulsions, prejudices, lusts.

It’s the old, “Those who live in glass houses ought not to throw stones,” adage. Here’s another helpful maxim: “When you are pointing your finger at someone else, there are three more fingers pointing back at you.”

(Thumbs can’t point, so they don’t count.)

Since Paul uses the word “defenseless” here to describe the people committing this hypocrisy, and prefaces it with, “O, human,” we can be sure that no one earns exemption from the accusation. You may say, “But Paul himself is judging and condemning.” Yes, but Paul is judg-

ing and condemning himself at the same time. He will wind up this section by saying, “There is no one righteous, no not one” (Romans 3:10). It is fine to judge when you have been trained by God to see something someone else can’t and can use your wisdom to bring a fellow human to light. It’s as Jesus says in Matthew 7:1-5—

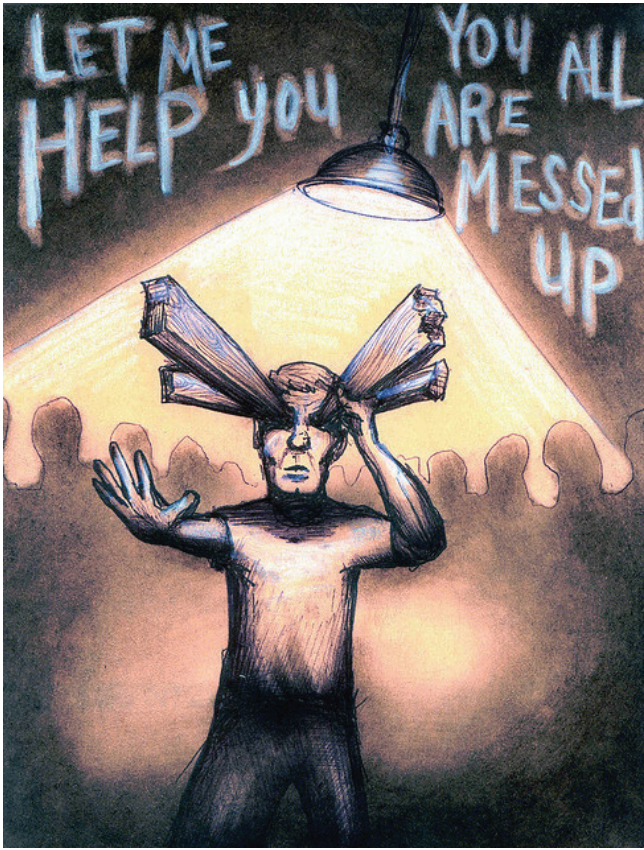
Do not judge, lest you may be judged, for with what judgment you are judging, shall you be judged, and with what measure you are measuring, shall it be measured to you. Now why are you observing the mote that is in your brother’s eye, yet the beam in your eye you are not considering? Or how will you be declaring to your brother, “Brother, let me extract the mote out of your eye,” and lo! the beam is in your eye? Hypocrite! Extract first the beam out of your eye, and then you will be keen-sighted to be extracting the mote out of your brother’s eye.

Of course, the above is taken from the gospel to Israel, so don’t worry about being judged by God. We of the body of Christ are saved by grace, and have passed out of judgment. We’re saved by Christ. Were it not for Christ, this is the standard to which God would hold us. Now that Christ has died for us, *Christ* is the standard to which God looks. When He sees Christ, He sees us. Isn’t that nice?

It is one thing to help someone who needs adjustment. It’s another thing to condemn someone and send them to the Christian version of hell because they fail to meet your behavioral standards. Paul would say, “Take a look in the mirror.”

Judging without a mirror is a common human trait. Lacking the wherewithal to confront our own faults, we project them onto others. In other words, we condemn others for *our* issues. Paul isn’t saying that we should strain to fix this. These first three chapters of Romans are not a self-help program. Christians treating this section as a “how to” book for moral behavior are missing the whole point. The point is not, “Here are a bunch of things you people need to work on.” The point is, “Everybody does this stuff—even you, Christian condemner—and there is no hope for anyone apart from Christ.”

Yet you are reckoning this, O human, who are judging those committing such things, and art doing the same, that you will be escaping the judgment of God?



Christians reading this passage emphasize the phrase, “the judgment of God.” Do Christians ever love the judgment of God! True to form, they apply this judgment to all but themselves. This was the way of the Pharisees. The Pharisees embodied it. The chief characteristic of the Pharisees was self-righteousness. Self-righteousness is a standard-issue trait of most of humanity, although Christians have perfected it. The self-righteous of all stripes—religious and worldly alike—believe themselves to be exempt from the judgment of God. Why? They are goody-two-shoes. People with only one good shoe are going to hell. Christians claim to be saved by grace apart from works of law, but then damn other people to hell for not doing the particular works of law they pride themselves on doing.

If this was any more hypocritical it would pound its chest and eat bananas. Oh wait. It does.

JUST LIKE SANTA CLAUS

It is two days after Christmas as I write, and I saw a particularly juvenile church sign on Christmas day at a Baptist church here in the city I’m visiting. The sign said, “God is also making a list and checking it twice.”

Technically, this is true. God has a list bearing each of

our names. He knows everything we have ever done in our lives. He knows all the naughty things, and all that was nice. In the spirit in which this sign was intended, however (it was intended to challenge people to be good boys and girls and to quake in fear if they haven’t), this church sign is as wrong as can be.

Don’t let those rosy cheeks fool you; Santa Claus condemns people for disappointing his big fat self. If you’re nice, rejoice. If not, fear. Instead of candy canes and Radio Flyer Wagons, Santa slams naughty people with lumps of coal. (If only God was this reasonable. God promotes nice people to heaven, and sends naughty people to hell for eternity. Kind of makes lumps of coal look like a real treat. In not one Christmas television special that I have ever seen did Santa Claus ever send anyone to hell for eternity—not even the Grinch. Good thing for the Grinch he was born again at the end of the show. He was never baptized, however. Whoops. This was a major oversight on the part of the Christians in Whoville. I now therefore believe the Grinch to be headed to hell for eternity, right along with the elder elf who mocked Hermey for wanting to be a dentist in *Rudolph*.)

Santa Claus scared the heck out of me when I was a kid. I pictured him checking his infamous list (it was miles and miles long), going over every one of my acts of that year. The phrase, “gonna find out who’s naughty and nice” made me quake in my flannel Batman jammies. In one of Santa’s hands was a candy cane (if you’re *nice* Santa gives you diabetes), in another a lump of coal. Who wanted a lump of coal for Christmas? Who could ever live that down? How could you live down your siblings and all of the neighbor kids getting awesome presents, while you got coal? Throughout my childhood, I thought that this would happen to me. For some reason, I assumed

everyone else was nice and I was the naughty one. (I was a reverse hypocrite.) I wanted a drum set, but I always had the feeling that Santa would give me coal instead. The neighbor kids would come over on Christmas day and say, “Did Santa give you your drum set?” and I would have to say, “No, but I did get three big lumps of this very dark colored bituminous substance.” Then I would hit the coal chunks using pencils for drumsticks. I would play “Wipe-out” on the coal chunks. I would make the best of it.

“Santa made me quake in my flannel Batman jammies.”



The Santa Claus of tradition has a mean streak. In spite of his reputation, he is petty, vindictive, and bitter. Something bad must have happened to him as a child. His dad must have beat him over the head with Yule logs from Christmas fires, or made him shovel reindeer crap in the snow. In later years, Santa probably had indigestion from eating too many cookies made with margarine and Splenda. But Holy Moses: If Santa has indigestion, the God of Christianity must have acid reflux. He can't eat anything. He beat *Himself* over the head with Yule logs. He's so mean, He sits around just waiting to pull rugs out from naughty people.

"God! Why am I going to hell?"

"You were naughty. (Burp!) Next!"

You may get away with your little naughtiness after God checks His list once. But when He checks it twice (the second time around He wears glasses), He's "gonna find out" how naughty you really were. He's "gonna find out" what the fine print says. Then *you're* gonna find out just how hot it is at the "south pole" of God's righteous indignation.

That Baptist church has no qualms painting God in the same light as Santa Claus. God is petty. He can take or leave people, depending on how they treat Him, and others. To determine the eternal destiny of children that He, Himself, has created, He does not consult His Son, Who died for the sake of these children. Oh, no. Rather, He consults a list of petty crimes committed by sin-afflicted people thrown into a cauldron of evil and death. No one can stand, so down they all go. Well, why not? If God checks twice (*twice*, for crying out loud) to see if people are naughty, how does anyone *not* go to hell? *Everyone* is naughty. The people who think they *aren't* naughty are the naughtiest of all because hypocrisy is the granddaddy of all sins.

"God, why am I going to hell?"

"You're naughty."

"But I didn't do anything wrong."

"Thanks for telling Me. Now you're a hypocrite as well. Bye-bye, now!"

Those who would use the first three chapters of Romans to condemn other people fail to realize one important thing: This section of Romans is meant to condemn *all* people. It is not meant, designed, or written to save anyone, let alone everyone. Romans chapter five does that. These chapters are meant to lock up all humanity in moral helplessness—apart from the saving work of Christ. Apart from the saving work of Christ, everyone dies. With the saving work of Christ, everyone lives—eventually. This is the testimony of Romans, chapter five, and I can't wait until we get there. —MZ

Martin, my brother, **ALL CYLINDERS ARE FIRING!** You are effectively firing me up with this blessed series of messages! Thanks for putting meaning to real faith, and squelching the syrupy seasonal noise of the commercial X-mas nonsense. —J.B.

This Roman series? Absolutely amazing. You've been moving toward a solitary and unique voice for some time now. You've arrived and, God willing, you will continue moving forward. Thank you, Martin. Grace and peace. —P.D.

Dear Martin, I've read your books *The Really Bad Thing About Free Will* and *Martin Zender Goes To Hell*. I've got one more to go, *First idiot in Heaven*. I don't know what is happening to me ... OMG. I am in AWE. No words can describe my thanks to you. I've locked myself up for almost 2 weeks now. Never happy before. I am now a believer! GOD selected me ... OMG. He has given me Faith as a gift ... Reading the Scriptures for hours. Martin, thank you! —E.K.