

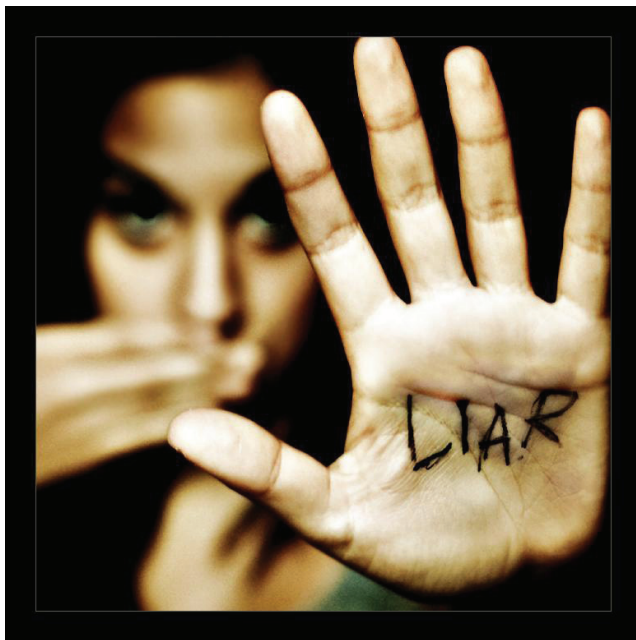


Sunday, March 16, 2014 Zapping-you Whenever Thoughts Flow

ROMANS Part 20

Chapter 3:4 (again)

Now let God be true, yet every human a liar, even as it is written: ‘That so Thou shouldst be justified in Thy sayings, And shalt be conquering when Thou art being judged.’



FALSE WITNESS

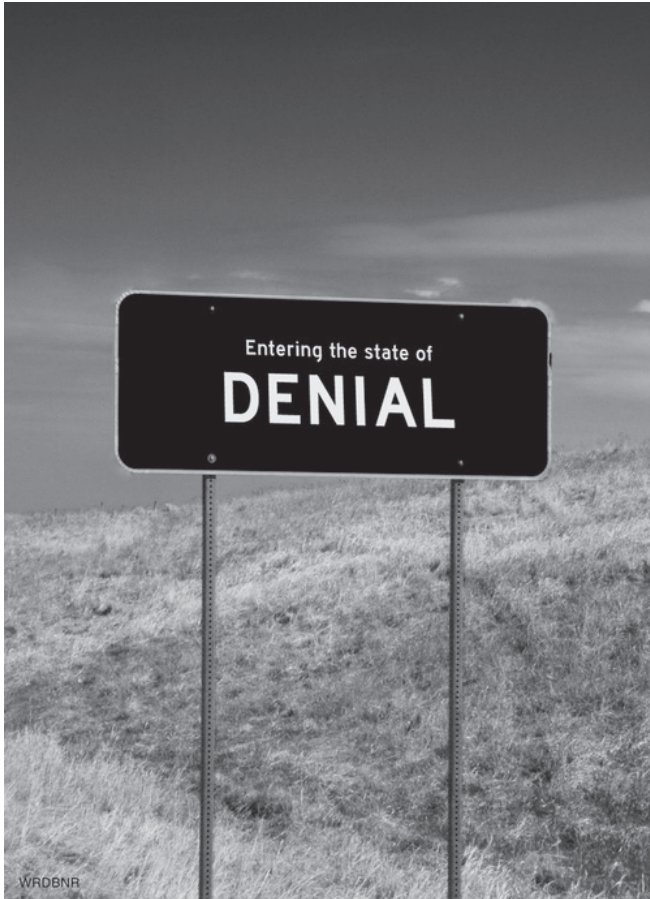
I promised a couple weeks ago that I would answer eight questions Paul posed in Romans 3:5-9. I have not forgotten this promise. (I lie. I did forget it. It slipped my mind like a trained

theologian slips hard questions—or easy ones—about the Trinity. But if the truth of God abounds in my lie, why am I still being judged as a sinner?) I promised you last week that I would wring our collective hands over how badly God hates false witness. Why? So that we can hunger for truth, detect and dismiss liars, and thus prepare our heads and hearts for the greatest revelations available to humanity, a la Romans 3:21 and onward. In the interest of keeping you guessing (and possibly grouching), I will fulfill my latest promise at the expense of my former one—for now. If this seems counterintuitive, simply think the other way.

* * *

The most important thing in the world is truth. It is so important that Jesus Christ personified Himself as truth with the following words: “I am the truth.” I like how He got to the point. If Jesus is the truth and you love Jesus so much that you want to hug Him, then you must also hug the truth. Sorry. The two are not sold separately. If perchance the truth comes your way and you hate it (you reject it in favor of tradition), I can only conclude that you don’t love Jesus as much you say you do. If you loved Him, you’d love the truth. Remember? God packages them (Jesus and the truth) as a unit.

What is right? Please take a moment today to forget about everything else and ask God for truth. Tell Him this: “No matter what it costs me, I want truth.” I realize the hard thing I’ve just asked of you. God is going to honor it, though. (That’s what scares you, I know.) People like comfort zones. As the saying goes: “I’ve got my mind made up, please don’t disturb me with facts.” Facts are often large stones dropped into the peaceful pool of ignorance. One minute you’re floating along on the pink air mattress of your personal reality, then the next thing you know you’re rocketing toward



a strange shore on a tidal wave (the truth) threatening to drown you. Relax and ride. You're not going to die. Truth doesn't kill, it thrills. You can only be better off. Everyone eventually gets the glorious truth poured over their heads, so it's a "pay me now or pay me later" kind of thing. Truth hurts and scares in the short term, but small, incremental shots of it inoculate against the wham-bang clobbering of the guaranteed, future megadose.

God is refining our desires so that we crave truth above all else. Once you get used to it, learning the truth about yourself and about God will eventually make life easier. It will save you the work of constantly presenting yourself as someone you're not, or presenting God as Someone Who, deep down, you know He can't be. Denying the essential self (either yours or God's) is hard work. This is why the glorified Christ said to Paul, "It is hard for you to kick against the goads" (Acts 26:14).

In his former life, Saul strutted his stuff upon the stage as the perfect Pharisee. It cost him dearly, however—blame the conscience. Saul constantly stiff-armed the nagging inner voice (truth) banging for attention, saying, *something ain't quite right here*. This is harder or at least equal to fighting gravity. Gravity pushes from

without at 2.14 pounds per square inch. I theorize that truth pushes from within at significantly higher pressure. It pushes up from the conscience. We end up expending as much or more energy pushing truth down as we do pushing gravity up.

No wonder we're exhausted and need a drink.

Get it over with. Jump off the cliff of truth; the landing will be fine because it ends in the arms of Jesus Christ.

THE SERIOUSNESS OF FALSE WITNESS

Be a decent human being and stop relaying disparaging "tidbits" about other people without looking hard into the case and then determining the value of spilling your guts. Please show God the same courtesy. Don't babble things about Him unless you can prove your assertions from a proper translation, having grasped fundamental rules of interpretation, language, and common sense. The following passage from Deuteronomy demonstrates just how deeply God hates false witness. I could wish we were subject to the Mosaic law in this particular, as it would spare so many people so much pain. Deuteronomy 19:16-21—

If a false witness rises against any man to testify against him of wrongdoing, then both men in the controversy shall stand before Yahweh, before the priests and the judges who serve in those days. And the judges shall make careful inquiry, and indeed, if the witness is a false witness, who has testified falsely against his brother, then you shall do to him as he thought to have done to his brother; so you shall put away the evil from among you. And those who remain shall hear and fear, and hereafter they shall not again commit such evil among you. Your eye shall not pity: life shall be for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot.

In other words, God so hates the life-destroying crime of false witness that, if on the heels of a careful inquiry a person is found to have been bearing false witness, the accuser receives the consequence due the accused had the accused actually been found guilty of the crime. What a righteous law. Bring on the stones; say good-bye to hands, feet and eyes. Were such a law applicable today, far fewer unfounded accusations would unnecessarily torture people.

Anyone with a grudge against another can, nowadays, simply accuse that person of wrongdoing. There are no

consequences today for accusers found to be liars. Apparently, it takes God to devise and employ the simple but effective deterrent of disciplining false witnesses. Since such a thing is of God, we've naturally discarded it. Anyone with a grudge can sling whatever mud they want, *carte blanche*. If it all turns out to be lies? Oh, well. Damage done—and the accuser skates. For some people, damage is all they want. They so hate another

“No one was to be condemned by the single testimony of a crazy person.”

(or they so wish to excuse or even project their own crimes upon an innocent person), that lies become an acceptable means to dubious ends. Why not, if there are no conse-

quences? (But isn't the damage to the conscience its own consequence? Yes—assuming the conscience to be alive and well.) I know we're living under an administration of grace, but God still hates false witness as much as He does murder. (Since we're under grace, does God now love murder?) In God's mind, slandering someone is akin to sticking a knife into the victim's heart and twisting it.

This is why, in the Mosaic law, “by the mouth of two or three witnesses” every matter was to be established. No one was to be condemned by the single testimony of a crazy person, or a person with a grudge, or a person vested in self-defense or personal advancement at the expense of another. You can see that, with such a righteous law in place, you had better be sure of your facts; they had better *be* facts. An esteemed panel of righteous judges would be standing by to investigate your claim. If your claims were bogus, you were going to be found out. (In which case, why would you do it? You don't mind losing an eye? A tooth? You like big hard rocks?) If your claims were true, then there would be no need to tremble while sauntering past the stoning pit.

BIG ROCKS DO HURT

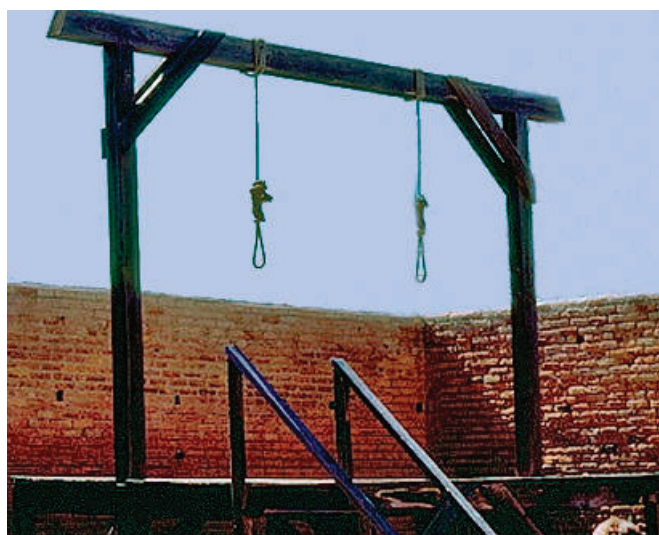
False prophets, for instance, were stoned. If, back in that day, you accused Jeremiah of prophesying falsely (every prophecy would be tested), you'd find yourself kneeling blindfolded in the stoning pit you'd imagined for the righteous man you detested. Did you notice what happened to Haman in the book of Esther?

The king hung him on the same gallows he'd designed for Mordecai. Done properly, it's hard but sweet justice. (God will re-institute such a principle during the thousand-year kingdom. It will happen again at the Great White Throne.) Treachery is accounted for and answered for either now or later at the Great White Throne. I'm not saying Christ didn't die for sin. Of course He did. Christ's sacrifice is what keeps the race from dying and staying dead. In the meantime (that is, in the interim between now and eternal life for everyone—1 Corinthians 15:26-28), God rights wrongs. He does it both for the sake of the accuser and the accused. Whatever means He employs toward this end are righteous means—He's God.

I wish this righteous rule existed not only in our modern courtrooms, but among the ecclesia. Would-be accusers, facing such real risk, would have to objectively analyze even small bits of mud before arming their slingshots. Believers are not immune to hasty (and haughty) judgments. Paul mocked the Corinthians for being too weak-kneed and wishy-washy to judge among themselves (1 Corinthians 6:1-6). Believers also hastily judge God—if you can believe that. They are so audacious as to put God on the witness stand. (“Why do You act the way You do, God?”) I can't recommend this practice. Paul puts it this way:

“That Thou mayest be conquering when Thou art being judged.” (Romans 3:4).

You want to judge God? Go ahead. Me? I'll be standing over *here*.



Beware for whom you prepare the gallows.



DILIGENT INQUIRY

Notice that God required all judges in Israel to exercise ‘diligent inquisition.’ Here’s Deuteronomy 13:12-15,

If you hear someone in one of your cities, which Yahweh your Elohim gives you to dwell in, saying, ‘Corrupt men have gone out from among you and enticed the inhabitants of their city, saying, “Let us go and serve other elohim” ‘ — which you have not known — then you shall inquire, search out, and ask diligently. And if it is indeed true and certain that such an abomination was committed among you, you shall surely strike the inhabitants of that city with the edge of the sword -- utterly destroying it, all that is in it and its livestock, with the edge of the sword.

And again, in Deuteronomy 17:2-5

If there is found among you, within any of your gates which Yahweh your Elohim gives you, a man or a woman who has been wicked in the sight of Yahweh

your Elohim, in transgressing His covenant, who has gone and served other elohim and worshiped them, either the sun or moon or any of the host of heaven, which I have not commanded, and it is told you, and you hear of it, then you shall inquire diligently. And if it is indeed true and certain that such an abomination has been committed in Israel, then you shall bring out to your gates that man or woman who has committed that wicked thing, and shall stone to death that man or woman with stones.

This is Old Testament truth, but the principle of due diligence applies today and is equally rewarding and just as ultimately damaging when ignored. Luke writes in Acts 17:10-11,

Now the brethren immediately send out both Paul and Silas by night into Berea, who are away, coming along in to the synagogue of the Jews. Now there were more noble that those in Thessalonica, who receive the word with all eagerness, *examining the Scriptures day by day, to see if these have it thus.*

In the Circumcision gospel, judgment begins at the household of Elohim. 1 Peter 4:17,

For the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of Elohim; and if it begins with us first, what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of Elohim?

The Pauline equivalent would be 1 Corinthians 6:2,

Do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if the world will be judged by you, are you unworthy to judge the smallest matters?

The principle behind God’s use of judgment is consistent throughout Scripture. All judgment is preceded by diligent inquiry. Does God follow His own principles? He does. Note the proceedings at the Great White Throne judgment (Revelation 20:11-12) before a single soul can be cast into the lake of fire:

And I perceived a great white throne, and Him Who is sitting upon it, from Whose face earth and heaven fled, and no place was found for them. And I perceived the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne. *And scrolls were opened. And another scroll was opened which is the scroll of life. And the dead were judged by that which is written in the scrolls in accord with their acts.*

THE PURPOSE IN ENDURING LIES

Many of you have been lied about. It hurts. Satan wishes to destroy you, as he destroyed Christ before you. He sought to destroy the Author of our salvation by means of false witnesses. These were gathered against Him before the chief priests, and succeeded in condemning Him. What Satan did not bank on was that the death of Christ was God's means of conciliating the world to Himself. Thus, there was a greater, righteous purpose behind the unrighteous act that, in fact, could not occur apart from the unrighteous act.

The same principle applies to those who believe (or invent) and disseminate evil, unfounded things about you. These lies can only ultimately benefit you. For one thing,

God is working all together for the good of those who are loving God, who are called according to [His] purpose.

For another thing, we members of the body of Christ are called to reconcile the heavens to God (Colossians 1:20; Ephesians 1:10; Ephesians 3:9-10). The heavens, like the earth, are distended with wickedness (Ephesians 6:12). To administrate in the midst of such an environment (of deceit, innuendo, vileness, selfishness), God trains His future administrators to endure similar environments here on earth. We train for adjudication among the celestial beings by enduring similar evil from fellow humans. Since we are to exercise grace among the celestials, we are called upon to exercise it here. Thus, we are exhorted to not only endure evil at the hands of false witnesses, but to answer evil with good (Romans 12:21), and to actually bless those perpetrating the crimes (Romans 12:14).

One cannot endure deceit and overcome deceivers with good (the method such rulers will employ in the celestial realm) unless one becomes a victim of that very deceit. God carefully arranges this. He is doing this for us, not to us. Thus, the need for liars now. (There is no shortage.) Thus, the need for false witnesses now. (They are so easy to come by; damaged people of seared conscience abound.)

Thus, when you find yourself a victim of false witness—of accusation without inquiry—try to find it within yourself to thank your God and Father. He is preparing you for a mighty task beyond.

For the vessels of dishonor?

Not so much. —MZ

A CASE FOR LITERAL INTERPRETATION OF SCRIPTURE

—Andy Woods



Why should biblical interpreters employ the literal, grammatical, historical method of interpretation? J. Dwight Pentecost cites four dangers when such an approach is not used. First and foremost, the authority transfers from the text

to the interpreter. In other words, the basic authority in interpretation ceases to be the Scriptures, but rather the mind of the interpreter. Early church father Jerome warns, "that the faultiest style of teaching is to corrupt the meaning of Scripture, and to drag its reluctant utterance to our own will, making Scriptural mysteries out of our own imagination."

F.W. Farrar adds, "... once we start with the rule that whole passages and books of Scripture say one thing when they mean another, the reader is delivered bound hand and foot to the caprice of the interpreter." Bernard Ramm observes, "The Bible treated allegorically becomes putty in the hands of the exegete."

Walvoord observes: "It's not too difficult to account for the widespread approval of the spiritualizing method adopted by many conservative theologians as well as liberal and Roman Catholic expositors. Fundamentally its charm lies in its flexibility. The interpreter can change the literal and grammatical sense of Scripture to make it coincide with his own system of interpretation."

Thus, Scripture becomes held hostage to whatever seems reasonable to the interpreter when the literal, grammatical, historical interpretive method is dispensed with. The text becomes swallowed up in the personal theology of the interpreter rather than allowing the one's theology to be built from the text. ■

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