



Sunday, March 23, 2014 Zapping-you Whenever Thoughts Flow

ROMANS Part 21



For what if some disbelieve? Will not their unbelief nullify the faithfulness of God? May it not be coming to that! Now let God be true, yet every man 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.” Now if our injustice is commending God’s righteousness, what shall we declare? Not that God Who is bringing on indignation is unjust! (As a man am I saying it.) May it not be coming to that! Else how shall God be judging the world? Yet if the truth of God superabounds in my lie, for His glory, why am I also still being judged as a sinner, and why not say, according as we are calumniated and according as some are averring that we are saying, that “We should be doing evil that good may be coming”? -- whose judgment is fair.

The purpose of asking and answering these questions, besides satisfying our quest for truth, is to settle our hearts and prepare them for the grand announcement of Romans

3:21. The questions I have already answered at length will be touched upon again briefly (or not) for review purposes. Then I’ll rev the engines and answer the remaining questions.

1) What, then, is the prerogative of the Jew? (3:1)

In chapter 2, Paul has just raked Israel over some hot coals. His assessment of the favored nation knocks them to the canvas. The conclusion could possibly arise, “Israel is out for the count. God is done with her. Let’s all become Preterists and embrace ‘replacement’ theology, that is, a system of teaching making the body of Christ God’s replacement for Israel, and His excuse for reneging on all of His literal promises concerning the literal descendants of Abraham.” Paul answers his own question. “What is the prerogative of the Jew? *Much in every manner!*” (Romans 3:2).

So much for Preterism.

2) What if some Jews disbelieve? Will not their unbelief nullify the faithfulness of God?

Uh-oh. Some Jews disbelieve. What will God do now? According to Christianity, He lives or dies with the ability or lack thereof of His creatures to give Him His proper due. If some disbelieve, then God’s hands are tied. See how many people disbelieve. See how many knots God’s hands are in. I bet God now wishes He never gave anyone a free will. Once the only sovereign will in the universe, God then gave every single person on earth his or her own sovereign realm. Once a Deity like Him surrenders absolute sovereignty, there’s no getting it back—for what if none of the new sovereignties want to give it back? God’s very own creation, therefore, has painted Him into a corner of frustrated desire. He wills to save all (1 Timothy 2:4), but much of humanity wills otherwise. In the battle of the wills (God wills to save; humanity wills not to be saved), the



human will wins. God is thus eternally foiled. I bet He's kicking a lot of cans now. Maybe He can take up knitting; He needs something to do with the hands that can no longer direct the affairs of humanity.

THE MIRACLE OF UNBELIEF

Forget the aforementioned nonsense. Nothing could be further from the truth. God is operating all in accord with the counsel of His own will (Ephesians 1:11). As far as the human faith needed to believe the evangel of grace, only God can impart it (Romans 12:3). The only way anyone could lack faith, therefore, is if God actively refuses (for the time being) to impart it.

To impart faith, God needs only to exhale His spirit upon someone's head or into their heart. Why does He refuse this for so many? Simply, it is not His plan for every member of the human race to believe now. Thus, He actively prevents such a thing. He actively prevents it by purposely withholding it.

Withholding such magnificent breath is difficult. I contend that God works harder at holding His breath than releasing it. See how small is the planet and its inhabitants. Compare this to the depth, height and breadth of God's exhalative powers. Breathing faith upon the world would be, for Him, like blowing out a single birthday candle would be for us. Or disrupting an over-ripe dandelion with a single puff. God could impart faith to the world in His sleep on the exhalation of a single snore.

He needs vessels of dishonor, however, to persecute

the future rulers of the universe—that's us. So why would He now breathe on the vessels of dishonor, when He needs them to be dishonorable?

The future glory of vessels of honor require that they share the sufferings of the persecutions of Christ in this life (2 Corinthians 1:5; Philippians 3:10). As I wrote last week, suffering fits vessels of honor (members of His body) to bring God's grace to wicked celestial beings. We must teach them without killing them; killing them would ruin our testimony as ambassadors of grace. Thus, we need patience to deal with them—patience which can only come—at present—via evil human beings and the opportunities they provide.

Future rulers and reigners of the universe, therefore, must suffer persecution at the hands of unbelievers. To maintain unbelievers in their unbelief, God must purposefully crank His head ninety degrees and refuse to breathe His deepest spirit into these individuals. The miracle is not that there are believers in the world, but that there are so many unbelievers. Unbelief is an active miracle sustained minute-by-minute by God. This active miracle ensures that we members of Christ's body are continually vexed by able persecutors.

"LAZARUS, COME FORTH"

Consider Jesus Christ and that dead man—Lazarus. Jesus said He was the life (John 14:6). In other words, life dwelt madly in Him, and radiated ridiculously from Him. So there He is one day outside of the tomb of Lazarus. He calls forth Lazarus from the grave—calls the man by name. Jesus Christ is so able to raise the dead that He has to name the particular dead man He wants out ("*Lazarus* come forth"), or else every tomb in the world cracks opens and preempts the resurrection. The Lord of Life must control the power.

The effort is not in raising the dead, but in keeping from raising *all* of the dead.

God parts the Red Sea, and we gape in awe. Jesus walks on water—our chins hit the bottom of the boat in amazement. *Why?* These things are normal. Glory is normal. God is glory, and His glory fills the universe. How can it *not* fill it? Yet it is strenuously restrained. The dark side of contrast isn't over yet. It is not yet time for God's glory to fill everything. God needs both vessels of honor and dishonor to fulfill His purposes. In bringing many sons to glory, He skillfully works the contrasts of darkness and light, death and life, sin and salvation, peril and pain.

As Jesus said to His disciples in Matthew 13:11,

To you has it been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of the heavens, yet to those it has not been given.

There you have it: “To those it has not been *given*.” Faith is an active giving by God. You don’t work it up yourself, you receive it. The absence of faith is just as active; it’s *negatively* active, that is, it’s *purposely* not happening, that is, it’s *not* happening.

CHRIST ENCAPSULATED

Do you realize just how hard it must have been to downgrade the glory of the Christ so that God could stuff Him into a tiny human form suitable for bloody propulsion from the uterus of a teenage girl? Don’t you think that was *hard*? Don’t you think it would have been easier to dispatch Christ to earth in his natural, God-like glory, to bathe the world in that supernal light which Christ *is*, and which God *is*? Such a feat (not such a feat, really) would have been simpler. But no. It fails to suit God’s love. It fails to demonstrate the proper contrast. To be appreciated eventually in all its resurrected magnificence, the glory of Christ first must be downgraded, de-pixelated, then reconstructed into a human-shaped vessel stuck to the wall of Mary’s womb.



My God. Imagine trying to package your entire wardrobe into a carry-on-sized suitcase. You stuff and stuff, and roll all of your clothes, then you sit on the case and try to zipper it. It’s very hard. It’s awkward and barely meant to be. Maybe now you can grasp the emptying of Christ and the difficult downgrading of divine power. It is hard for God to downgrade the Son of His right hand, to *not* give everyone faith now, to *not* manifest His glory, to *not* snatch away the body of Christ this minute, and to *not* remove the spirit of stupor from His favorite nation (Romans 11:8, “God *gives* them a spirit of stupor,” speaking of Israel) and therefore to *not* illumine that nation, making way for Paul and the body of Christ.

All of this is harder than bench-pressing a bank safe.

Therefore, how can we say that humanity’s unbelief will nullify the faithfulness of God, when humanity’s unbelief is *evidence* of the faithfulness of God? Humanity’s unbelief subserves God’s greater purpose: creating contrast before the “big bang” of glory that will make the millennia of doom and gloom look like the genius-stroke of God that it truly is.

4) If our injustice is commending God’s righteousness, shall we declare that God, Who is bringing on indignation, is unjust? (3:5)

We shall see more in chapter 9 about how God purposely makes unjust people (“our injustice”) to backdrop and thus display His righteousness (“is commending God’s righteousness”). If God purposely makes morally ugly people that way (He didn’t make them good and watch them go bad of their own volition, or free will), then how can He be indignant with them? Isn’t that unjust? It might be unjust for a human to do this, but we’re not dealing with a human: we’re dealing with God. Since all is out of, through, and into God (Romans 11:36), how can anything *not* be out of Him—including evil people? God Himself creates evil (Isaiah 45:7).

Theologians and other stupid people (Romans 1:22) try to remove “I create evil” (Isaiah 45:7) from God’s resumé. Why? They assume eternal torment to be true. Eternal torment, however, is false teaching (a “teaching of demons”—1 Timothy 4:1) promulgated upon careless people by careless people habitually violating principles of consistent translating. Once we realize that all of God’s creation eventually returns to Him (Romans 11:36 again), we can then stomach the fact that God *temporarily* requires vessels of dishonor to vex, defame, cheat and persecute His chosen vessels of glory. These honorable vessels must learn to show bad people grace. Only this will prepare them to ably administer the same grace to the bad spirits above.

THEY NEED WISDOM, TOO

Earthly vessels of dishonor must one day be brought to a realization of the truth. They, too, must learn of the great God of heaven and love *Him* rather than the caricature presented of Him by Christendom. God gives these vessels of dishonor not a single chance to believe in Him in this life. He destined them from the beginning to be what they are. They cannot be anything else, not a chance. Eonian life is not of chance, and neither is vessel-of-dishonordom. Vessels of dishonor are chosen to vex the chosen.

Someone may think this unfair of God. This objection can neither silence nor sidetrack the truth. How dare anyone question God in the first place. If eternal torment was true, I could understand the objection to God purposely hardening vessels of dishonor: God would then be responsible for the unending torture of the majority of human creation; but since eternal torment is a lie, we can take a breath and regroup.

To ensure that these vessels of dishonor eventually need God and receive Him into their hearts and minds, God visits indignation upon them. Please stop seeing indignation as wholly negative. It is negative only in the short term. In the long term, God's indignation cures and restores. The indignation of God is righteous. Never forget that we are dealing with a Being Who does nothing out of spite, frustration, or a desire to punish. God's indignation brings vessels of dishonor to a realization of the truth.

Parents become indignant with children, then discipline them to correct them. The motive is love. God's motive cannot be anything but love, because He is love (1 John 4:8). Remember Who we are dealing with. Some people compare God to human beings. This is a bad mistake; He is not a human being, He is the Sovereign



of the Universe. Whenever you see God doing something that seems to you to be distasteful or crass, just remember that His underlying motive is love. It can't be anything but. Everyone ever born will eventually return to Him—some come early, some come late (1 Corinthians 15:22-24), but all come.

5) How shall God be judging the world? (3:6)

Exactly. Begin thinking of judgment as corrective, rather than simply bad. God's judging is ultimately

corrective, and therefore good. I can say this without watering it down. I'm not saying that judgment is not scary, it's just not crazy. When a judge awards someone a one- million-dollar settlement in court, that's a judgment, isn't it? When a judge sends someone to prison temporarily to adjust their behavior, this is also a judgment, but a negative one. Both the positive and the negative judgment—even among humans—ideally lead to good. The court hopes to reform the criminal. The murderer needs to be broken harder than the double-parker. I know it doesn't often work. But with God, it always works.

God gives us times of rain and gloom, does He not? He disciplines us as sons and daughters. These times are necessary to humble us and prepare us for the sunshine and happiness of future days. Since you realize He does these things for you for your ultimate benefit, why rob Him of doing it for other people later on in His program? So what if He has to lean harder on the vessels of dishonor than He does with you? What would you expect? The only reason you get off easy is because you are a vessel of honor, and they are not. The only difference between you and them is that God chose you now, but will not give them life until later.

We will review all of this when we get to Romans, chapter 9. Please do not apply your standards of "fair" and "not fair" to God. God is not you, and vice-versa. This revelation may shock some who may happen upon this writing. I am sorry to ruin anyone's day. Better for me to ruin it now than for God to ruin it later. (Being delivered of God-hood should come as a great relief. Realizing one's habitation in Creatureville removes pressure not meant to ride upon human shoulders. Some people may actually be able to dance again.)

The judgments of God are good. If He can't righteously judge people whom He makes either hard or soft, then He can't judge anyone, because He makes *everyone* either hard or soft. (Read that previous sentence repeatedly, if you would. It is one of the most sensible, most compact, and most understandable sentences I've ever written.)

“We are dealing with a Being Who does nothing out of spite, frustration, or a desire to punish.”

6) If the truth of God superabounds in my lie, for His glory, why am I also still being judged as a sinner? (3:7)

Paul is merely taking the principle explained above—which applies to all humanity—and applying it personally to his tribespeople. I don't think that when Paul says "why am *I* also being judged as a sinner", he is speaking literally of himself, that is, in his present condition as writer of the epistle. Members of Christ's body do not come into judgment. Rather, Paul refers to his previous life when he walked the ranks (and the files) of the disobedient nation.

God judges Israel and the individuals thereof to bring them to glory eventually. We will see this in detail in Romans, chapter 11.

7) Why not say, "We should be doing evil that good may be coming"? (3:8)

Keep in mind Paul's major premise: "our injustice is commending God's righteousness" (Romans 3:5). This is a most amazing premise. It aligns with Romans 5:20, "Where sin increases, grace superexceeds." Rather than frustrating God's plans, human injustice actually commends them. God's plans cannot be either fully implemented or appreciated without the necessary backdrop of human injustice.

That the objection "we should be doing evil that good may be coming" is even stated proves that the objector has at least grasped Paul's point, that good results from every evil. Evil provides the necessary backdrop for the coming good. With good at last displayed, evil is abolished. The last enemy being abolished, is death (1 Corinthians 15:26). It stands to reason (only to reasonable people), that if the last enemy is eventually abolished, all previous enemies will have gone before. The biggest enemy besides death? Every other evil.

Concerning any who could promote such a principle as enacting evil to produce good, Paul says, "his judgment is fair" (Romans 3:8). Anyone suggesting such a course surely does not actually follow the course. It is merely an argument aimed at derailing Paul's point and disqualifying his truth. Paul says, "If, in order to derail a tenet of God that offends you, you would be so petty as to insist upon that which you would never do—you deserve whatever divine judgment relieves you of your stubbornness."



8) Are we privileged? (3:9)

Paul speaks of the Jews here, and his answer is, "Undoubtedly not." This is a different question than in 3:1 when Paul asks, "What is the prerogative of the Jew" and the answer is "much in every manner." "Prerogative," in the Greek (*perisson*), means "excessive." In other words, what excessive gifts and blessings have the Jews?" The answer is: *many*. Here in 3:9, the question is of privilege. That is, when it comes to subjection to the righteous judgment of God, is the Jew advantaged over a man or woman of the nations? Here's the answer:

Undoubtedly not, for we previously charge both Jews and Greeks to be all under sin (Romans 3:9).

Just how *much* under sin we all are—and how *much* we need the blessed solution of Romans 3:21—will be disclosed next week. —MZ