



Sunday, March 30, 2014 Zapping-you Whenever Thoughts Flow

ROMANS Part 22

Chapter 3:10-20



According as it is written, that “Not one is just”—not even one. Not one is understanding. Not one is seeking out God. “All avoid Him: at the same time they were useless. Not one is doing kindness: there is not even one! A sepulcher opened is their

throat. With their tongues they defraud. The venom of asps is under their lips. Whose mouth with imprecation and bitterness is crammed. Sharp are their feet to shed blood. Bruises and wretchedness are in their ways, And the way of peace they do not know.”

There is no fear of God in front of their eyes. Now we are aware that, whatever the law is saying, it is speaking to those under the law, that every mouth may be barred, and the entire world may become subject to the just verdict of God, because, by works of law, no flesh at all shall be justified in His sight, for through law is the recognition of sin.

In Romans 1:18-3:20, we are silenced by our own failings as we move toward a great symphony announcing the accomplishment of God. Before dawn comes the deepest, darkest night. In Romans, the deepest, darkest night occurs between 3:10-20. It never gets darker than this. It is the utter silence of human failure before the opening strain of what Christ has done for us.

Not one is just—not even one.

This is absolute truth. A person may be said to be just in relation to other sinning human beings, but here the standard is God. The standard is His righteousness. Before the righteousness of God, no one can stand. No one is right. “Just” means “right.” The gulf between humanity and God is greater than the gulf between the farthest galaxies of the universe; span it on a tricycle, for that would be easier. In comparison to Him, we are impossibly wrong. Christ is the Bridge between God and humanity. Jesus Christ did everything right. This is good news for us as we identify ourselves with Christ. God already does it (identifies us with Christ), so we may as well join Him. It’s the only escape chute out of despair. If you are despairing, Romans is the answer.

Romans first paints the despair, but don't stop there. Anticipate the escape chute; it deploys in 3:21.

Not one is understanding.

Jesus' disciples looked at Him some days as though He was crazy. "Not one is understanding." Human judgment is false. Israel looked at Saul and wanted him for a king because he was good-looking and tall. "Not one is understanding." Jesus Christ was disrespected as a person because He was ugly and from Nazareth. "Not one is understanding." Humans think that they can impress the Deity by going to church, giving up candy for Lent, and trying to behave themselves. "Not one is understanding." Clergy of every era imagine themselves geniuses because they confer degrees upon one another from schools of their own invention. "Not one is understanding." Humanity believes that it can act independently of God (free will). "Not one is understanding." We look up into heaven, and God seems so far away. "Not one is understanding."

Any human being who at last grasps God does so by an act of the very Being he grasps. It is the only escape from ignorance. Left to itself, "not one [of humanity] is understanding." No, not even us. The only reason we now understand is because God gave us faith and wisdom. Apart from God giving, nothing comes. Wait until your hair falls out, it won't come. You might as well expect flowers to sprout from a rock. Stand, stare at the rock, scream at it, challenge it, preach it hellfire—nothing will happen. Apart from God's purposeful breath, we all stare into space like dumb sheep. Yes, even us.

"Not one is understanding."

Not one is seeking out God.

We seek our own survival. We seek food, water, love. We seek for ourselves. Anything we seek outward is ultimately for the inward. We are black holes of consumption. Nothing can go outward and stay there unless God puts His love in our hearts for Him, and for others. God must plant His love into us before it can flower. Love is the first fruit of the spirit (Galatians 5:22). Spirit must be given, thus also love. We haven't this resource natively within us.

The love of God has been poured out in our hearts through the holy spirit which is being given to us (Romans 5:5).

Notice the active verbs: 1) "poured," 2) "given." Noticing these will change the way you think about "your contribution to God."



King Saul. Oooooooooo!

A man seeks God after being saved, not before. Before, it is literally impossible to seek God. I believe Romans 3:11. Humanity, on the other hand, claims to seek God apart from God (this is a euphemism for human free will). Satan convinces people that they can give God that which He has yet to possess. This is the ultimate deception. It is a satanic coup, this belief.

HOW DOES HUMANITY CALL UPON GOD?

Only an act of God causes a person to call upon God. God initiates the faith which we eventually return to Him and call, "our faith." It is ours only in a relative sense. No faith dwells within us. Human beings cannot generate such an amazing commodity. No receptacle or storage place exists in the human (in the soul, in the heart, or in the spirit) from which the stuff can be drawn. How can it be drawn, when it is not there?

Martin Luther one day realized this. He graduated from seminary without having learned it. Hallowed halls of learning failed him miserably in the department of faith. Because of formal religious learning, Luther sought something inside him that did not exist. But Luther would

answer God's bell. His instructors told him to listen and act. When nothing surfaced, he despaired. Then Luther realized that not finding anything was the great answer he'd been straining for. He then realized that the human was so void of presents for the Deity that everything was a present from His hand instead—right down to the faith necessary for salvation. It was this section of Romans that finally convinced Luther of his empty hand.

Luther got this key on the toilet. The German reformer was famously constipated. (A toilet serves well for both revelations and for battling constipations.) Luther always suspected his helplessness, but now here it was in his face—though he still could not properly process bratwurst. Romans 3:10-20 did it to/for him. It was the beginning of Luther grasping human insufficiency and the true importance of Christ.

Christianity remains ignorant of this. They think that God stands them at home plate, and that they are able to hit any pitch. Christians generate their own faith (they think), miraculously offering it to God as though God was in need of it. In their minds, God sits passively in the stands waiting for them to smack a home run.

The religious fail to realize the simple truth that "all is of God" (2 Corinthians 5:18). It is too simple.



Everything they have—even their faith—lands unexpectedly upon them. Faith is God's gift to them, not theirs to Him. Misapprehending this, the Christians necessarily insult the Giver. If they are giving to Him, He cannot at the same time be giving to them. If He does the giving, however,

then humanity cannot be exercising a freedom of will. Free wills cannot, by definition, be acted upon from without. Otherwise, they would not be free.

To insist upon human free will is to deny divine activity.

Christianity reads Romans 3:10-20 and then promptly believes the opposite. They stare at the verse, then deny it: they think they seek God. The verse says they don't, but they say they do. What a master deceiver Satan is. He's the father of lies, and the prince of making lies look good. Scripture says, "Not one is seeking out God." Satan says, "If you are a wise person, you *can* seek out God. God expects you to seek Him."

Christianity believes Satan rather than God. I thank God that He has spared me this deadly snare.

All avoid Him.

Not only do human beings not seek God, they actively avoid Him. In Jesus' day, people crossed the street to keep from encountering Him.

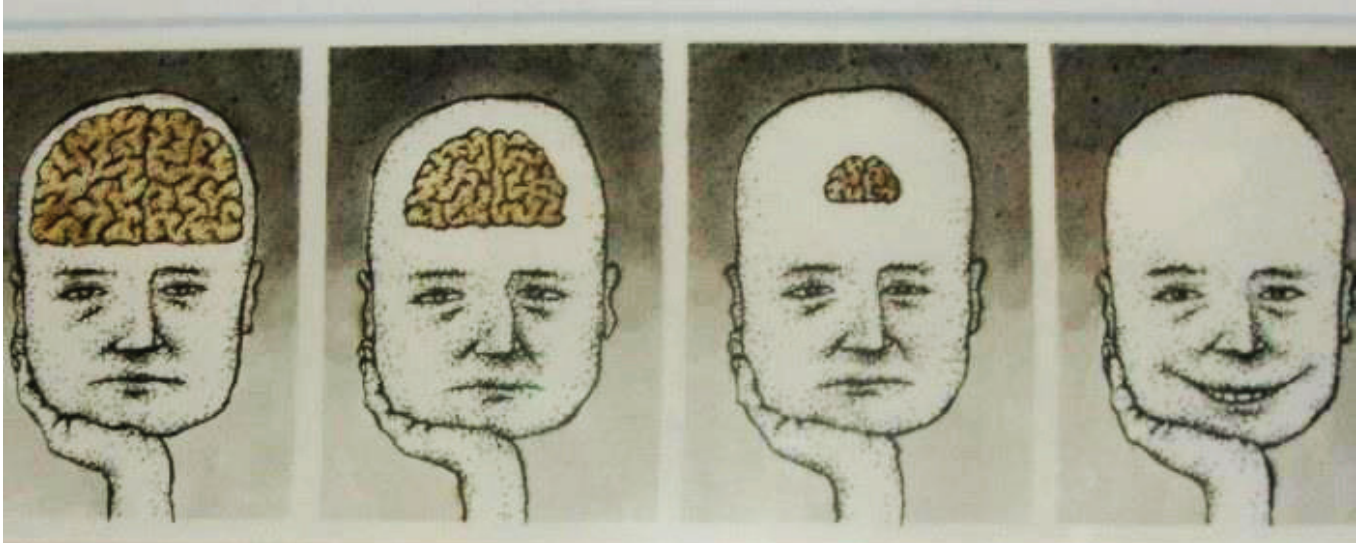
Please don't disturb us, God. We want to eat, to drink, to procreate, to sleep, to take our leisure. If we happen to see You out of the corner of our eye, we know that You will somehow disturb us, and our happy luncheon will be spoiled. We have a feeling that You will require something of us. Our waters seek their own level; they seek to be still. We want only to stay inside of ourselves. Comfort zones are happy homes. You discipline, and that hurts. There are such things as growing

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pains, so let's not grow, please. If given the choice, we, like Israel, choose to remain in Egypt. The reliability of prison is easier than faith strained in the wilderness. There, we must trust Your invisibility. We would rather stay jailed than rise without the bars and risk the unknown.

Ignorance is a life of sweet somnolence. Wisdom, on the other hand, beckons and then leads as a small light into scary-looking darkness. Ignorance truly is bliss. It is favored by those whose only desire is fun and a lack of care. A former acquaintance once said to me, "I just want a fun, carefree life." (This occurred at a Starbucks.) Fine, then don't know anything. Never try to solve your problems. Nothing could be less stressful than pure ignorance. The best way to attain such a dubious vacancy (a "fun, carefree" life) is to avoid God. Here is how you do it: drown out the still, small voice.

Wisdom sits alone on a plain table void of cloth napkins, void of cutlery, void of candles, void of ceramic angels, void of happy scents, void of even visible food. Yet here is the tastiest banquet available. Such a *sensually* dull table is easily passed, however. We quickly sidestep it, turning a blind eye. We seek more appealing presentations: a beer, a good night's sleep, a hot meal, a sexual encounter. The still, small voice can be drowned and stepped around. It is not called "still" and "small" for nothing. Just turn up the noises of life. (I used to tell my sons that my solution to disturbing engine noises from my car was to turn up the radio.) Stay busy. Keep the radio and



television on. Check your e-mail again. See who has new postings on Facebook. Play video games, because that's what these games are for: the avoidance of reality.

We prefer our own vomit, because we know it.

If anyone, even once, deviates from the above course, it is an act of God. God must violate the vaunted human will—supposed to be free—for anyone to change. Since human free will is a myth, however, then God—in reality—violates nothing. How can He “jump a fence” when no fence exists? Thus, God merely replaces human ignorance with light; He removes blinders. He does this whenever He wants. Since there are no actual walls, it's no big deal to Him. The incursion of God against human ignorance is simply and merely a matter of timing, as in: *when is He going to do it next—and for whom?*

At the same time, they were useless

Paul told the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers on Mars Hill:

The God Who makes the world and all that is in it, He, the Lord inherent of heaven and earth, is not dwelling in temples made by hands, neither is He attended by human hands, as if requiring anything, since He Himself gives to all life and breath and all (Acts 17:25).

Humans are so useless that they refuse to believe verses describing their uselessness. The first thing they refuse to believe is that God does not dwell in temples made by hands. The nuns used to tell me that Jesus lived in the little gold box on the altar. I banged on the thing later, but no one answered.

God is inherent of heaven and earth; He is everywhere. He used to condescend to manifest a token of His presence in the holy place of Israel's temple, but those days are gone. Now, God's spirit dwells within humans of His choosing.

Are you not aware that your body is a temple of the holy spirit in you, which you have from God, and you are not your own? (1 Corinthians 6:19).

Elvis has left the building—and so has God.

USELESS

“Neither is He attended by human hands, as if requiring anything.”

Do we really think that God needs stuff from us? No thinking could be more juvenile. (I like Paul's use of “as if.” I am hearing it in my mind as modern teenagers say it: “... as *if*!”) Yet I know grown people who think this way. They actually believe that God needs stuff from us—“as if.” As if He lacks something that only we can give. As if our vaunted independence delights Him. They—*they* are going to laud God with shiny trinkets missing from His curio shelf. They shall render unto Him an idea He has yet to entertain. God will be so surprised, so happy, so full. Let us prepare for Him a luscious meal of untasted delights. Let us listen for Him to expel the air of satisfaction from His gorgeous lips—for surely He will. Now, perhaps, He will smoke a pipe and contemplate all that we have done for Him.

He will laud the amazing giver to His attending angels, saying, “Look what I have received from Martin

Zender. He has given Me the gift of faith. I did not think the man had it within him, but look. See how he has produced it from deep within himself! He pulled it from the well! I shall press this man's faith into My holy scrapbook, next to the three-leaf clover illustrating the Trinity, and think fondly of it when e'er I care to caress it. And now look! Martin Zender is dressing some gold, frankincense, myrrh, and Cuban cigars. I am feeling pacified toward Martin, because of these gifts. Do we have any of these kinds of cigars? No? We have only the Honduran variety? Did we even realize that the Cubans *made* cigars? Then splendid! How this escaped Us these many years, I am not aware. Please send Martin Zender a card of thanks, as he has added to Our knowledge of the human condition, as well as the tobacco habits of Cuban farmers. Let Us promote this man to Regular Correspondent. Gabriel, procure his telephone number."



Whenever God presents Himself as requiring things, it is the relative viewpoint. Absolutely speaking, He needs nothing. He condescends to need things to help us work. If we think He *actually* needs them, we have reduced Him to our own level and simultaneously denied Romans 3:12, "At the same time they were useless."

Absolutely, God does not need us. He chooses to need us, so that we may need Him in return and find our all in Him. He appeals to the young by presenting Himself as a God who can be assuaged and informed. I liken this sort of condescension to a parent goo-gooing a baby. The language is not real—it is not inherently the adult's—but is put on for the baby's sake. Once the baby attains maturity, the parent speaks in his natural voice.

Thus God speaks to us. When we are ready, we hear Him as He really is: He does everything; He knows everything; everything is already His; the world's course is pre-determined; He is the sovereign of the universe. We are useless—except that He loves us extravagantly and gives His only begotten Son for our sakes. He does everything for us.

This is His inherent voice. Hear it.

THERE IS MORE

There is more, but this is enough humiliation for one day. May it liberate you. Stay seated upon your throne of porcelain, where humiliations come easily. Grasp fully your creaturehood; deliverance will come. God is about to rescue us all—Jew and Greek—from despair. A few more somber sips from the cup of humanity remain, however; I want us to drink whatever God gives.

Let us taste bitterness to the dregs, that we may more deeply appreciate the coming sweetness.

I am tired, and living yet again in a different place here in Florida. All is by the grace of God. At the same time, I am flying in spirit and thrilled to God that the work goes forward, and that you are listening and reading. Thanks to all of you who have sent support, both financial and emotional. It keeps me going. I will be back in Pennsylvania in May. I remain your friend and servant in the faith, —Martin