



Sunday, April 6, 2014

Zapping-you Whenever Thoughts Flow

ROMANS Part 23

Chapter 3:10-20 (again)



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.

When last we visited, all humanity was useless. I hope you are fine with that. I like it here. This information stops me from striving in the flesh. I can still strive for things, but now I do it because I’m working for the Lord in the might of His strength, and not for myself. What a difference between this and hoping to pass a test. Romans 5:6—

For Christ, while we are still infirm, still in accord with the era, for the sake of the irreverent, died.

Christ did His best for us (He wrestled our sin and died), while we were at our weakest, that is, “still infirm,” in other words, “useless.” Romans 3:12 says, “At the same time, they were useless.” Sounds like a recipe for despair, until we realize that Jesus Christ *saves* the useless (Romans 6:6). Being useless, then, is a prerequisite for Christ displaying the amazing grace He’s famous for. What can we now do to improve upon His best?

Saving worthy people is boring. Christ saves the useless, the infirm, those unable to help themselves or even praise Him. This makes *Him* look good, which is the idea.

The book of Romans is about Jesus Christ, not about us. I know. Weird, huh?

We still work, of course. But the work we do subsequent to this revelation assumes new meaning. The purpose of the work is no longer to please God. The book of Romans mercifully establishes the fact that, in the flesh, we’re unable to please Him. The revelation of Christ’s work puts us in a reclining, “I give up” at-

titude. If we're strutting *our* accomplishments upon the stage, we'll miss Christ's award-winning performance. If we're putting up arguments as to why He should be good to us as opposed to, say, our brother-in-law, then *His* arguments get easily lost. We really should let Him talk. While we're trying to tell Him how passable we are through working, He's trying to tell us how perfect we are without having to do anything.

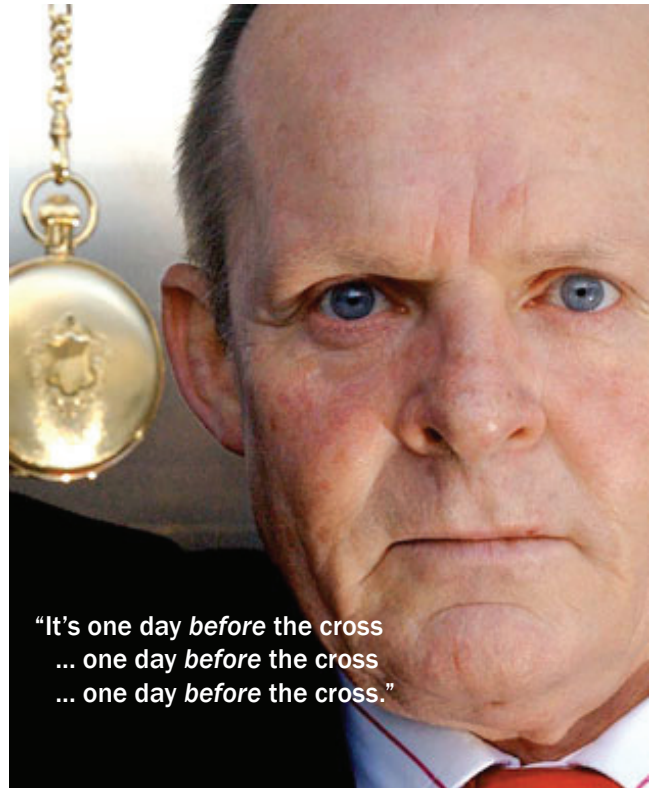
He saved us while we were useless and infirm. Since we're thus finished before we start, everything we now do is bonus. The cake is made, the rest is icing. Before we've taken a single step, we've already "made the grade." We're already justified. We're already sons and daughters of God.

Who tells it to us this way? Christ does (but who listens?) Who presents it as a done deal? Who tells you of the wealth you're *born* with? Who tells you that you were in Christ's mind, in His eye, and in His body on that cross? Who tells you that, when God roused Jesus Christ from the dead, you were roused with Him, eventually to join Him at God's right hand? Who then tells you that this monumental event occurred 2,000 years before you could even prepare your little court case?

HOW TO UNHINGE IT

To unhinge this beauty—and I mean unhinge it until the door falls off—listen to Christian radio or Christian television. Attend church. Christian radio, television and church are Satan's media outlets. Here, every accomplishment of Christ will be negated. It won't be presented as negated, but negation will be the practical result.

Standard Christian teaching starts people at pre-Calvary truth, that is, pre-Calvary disaster. We're useless, irreverent sinners. Well, yes. But—hey, Satan—you're a day off. Something happened on the cross. *You* know it, but your victims don't. You've tricked them out of it. You've sidetracked them by one day. You've ingeniously convinced your media outlets (Christian radio, television, and church) that pre-Calvary truth outweighs the post-Calvary variety. Because of your ingenious teaching, Christianity camps and broadcasts night and day from an empty hill in Jerusalem the night before "Good Friday." The Savior has not even been arrested yet, and Christians are off to the races. This is where they put us—on an empty hill. We're still doomed. On the night before the cross, we're still in our sins. Something must still be done; one little detail, miraculously undetected: *this was our lot the day before the crucifixion, not the day after it.*



Wake up and smell the six hours of torture on the cross, idiots. But no. The oversight (*missed the magnificence by a day*) cannot be explained apart from a Satan-inspired stupor. He mesmerizes and blinds until Christ's death is as good as His non-death—until the practical result of the cross is the same as the practical result without the cross: *we're all still doomed, useless, irreverent; something must still be done about sin.* If something *was* done concerning sin on that terrible hill, then why am I still being judged as a sinner? Why am I still starting from scratch? Why am I still on probation? Why am I still hoping to have my sins forgiven? Why is my default setting still a sinner bound for hell? Why *must* I work up the proper belief and crawl to the altar to say prefabricated prayers that Jesus somehow never thought of on the cross?

My God. If we're *starting* at the dubious place that humanity occupied the day before the crucifixion (death-doomed, useless, infirm), then what actually happened at the cross? Here is the answer: *Nothing.*

I live to expose your nakedness, Christianity. I will risk my neck (Satan wants me dead) by exposing Satan's lies and the vehicle through which he broadcasts them—you. I live to expose the depth of your drunkenness. It may someday cost me my life. It has already cost me much of my nervous system. All the glorious songs you sing with your red faces and tears about Jesus being "A Savior," and "the King," and the "glorious, precious, grace—*whatever*"

of God, is pure whitewash. The bones still rattle in the tomb: *I still have to save myself.*

Nice job, Satan. Not really. You have somehow made one day *before* Calvary the greatest Christian holiday, bigger than Christmas. You've cemented that day in Christian lore and teaching. We're all still doomed. Now they're all broadcasting from the empty hill (Pilate is still in bed) the terrible lie that sin still keeps us from God.

SOMETHING NEW

Change your mind. My message is that we come into this world already esteemed by God. We've already been delivered from working for Him. This happened because of the cross. My teaching focuses on the cross and its results. I don't give a crap about the day before the cross. It sucked. Something happened when Jesus died, though. This is what interests me. This is the day I want to know about. Jesus took our sins upon His back and walked from the tomb without them. This is significant. This is where I pitch my tent.

HOW TO WORK FOR HIM

Knowing how complete you are in Him, you want to work for Him. The difference between "have to" and "want to" is "lots." Motive is everything. You don't work to succeed now, you work because you're already a success. Whatever you now do for Him sparkles in the light of correct motive. The irony is that realizing you can fail makes you want to succeed. The cross did this. This happened three day after Jesus' death, not the day before. Now you can take more chances. Why not try cartwheels on the high-wire when the "high-wire" is an



inch off the ground and wide as a highway? Jesus suffered so that you can dance without worrying about how you look. It was not this way the day before the cross.

I, Martin Zender, have been accused of making salvation cheap. Whenever this happens, I correct the record. I say, "I did not mean to make it cheap. Perhaps I expressed myself incorrectly. I meant to make it free."

"Not one is doing kindness: there is not even one!" (Romans 3:12)

But Martin, people do kind things all the time. Remember that the standard throughout these critical ten verses of Romans 3:10-20 is the righteousness and kindness of God. Compared to the kindness of God, no one is kind. Even when people are kind relative to one another (or kind to their relatives), selfish motives underlie it, bringing us short of God's perfection. I help an old lady across the street because it makes me feel good. I like being helpful. It fuels my need to feel moral. "Not one is doing kindness" touches upon motive. God's kindness is the only brand dodging this taint. It loves, not for personal recompense, but because it's a one-way flood of affection. God did this in the dark before anyone could see Him. The only way for humans to approach such selflessness is if God's spirit is shed abroad in their hearts (Romans 5:5)—and it is.

"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" (Romans 3:13-14).

Paul borrows this lovely poetry from Deuteronomy 32:33 ("their wine is the poison of serpents and the cruel venom of asps.") and Psalm 5:9. The following is Psalm 5:9, from the NIV:

There is nothing reliable in what they say; Their inward part is destruction itself. Their throat is an open grave; They flatter with their tongue.

All of the references have to do with speaking. James writes concerning the tongue:

Lo! The ships also, being of such proportions, and driven by hard winds, are being steered by the least rudder, wherever the impulse of the helmsman in intending. Thus the tongue, also, is a little member and is grandiloquent. Lo! What amount of fire is kindling what amount of material! And the tongue is a fire, a world of injustice.

The tongue is constituted among our members that which is spotting the whole body, and setting the wheel of our lineage aflame, and is set aflame by Gehenna. For every nature, both of wild beasts and flying creatures, both of reptiles and those of the salt sea, is tamed and has been tamed by human nature. Yet the tongue can no man tame — a turbulent evil, distended with death-carrying venom. With it we are blessing the Lord and Father, and with it we are cursing men who have come to be in accord with God's likeness.

Out of the same mouth is coming forth blessing and cursing. There is no need, my brethren, for this to become thus. No spring out of the same hole is venting the sweet and the bitter. No fig tree, my brethren, can produce olives, nor a grapevine figs. Thus neither does brine produce sweet water.

STUPID HOLE



This picturesque language comes from the *Concordant Literal New Testament*. Humanity says one thing and means another. (How picturesque.) Whatever we do, we do it to help ourselves. (Lovely.) Apart from the spirit of God, this is our default setting. We bless other people because *we* feel good blessing them. (Poetic.) We curse people for the same reason. (Who wouldn't?) No matter what we say, our sentences U-turn to water our own gardens.

Religious dichotomy is the worst. (Here I go again.) Out of the same hole (I love the word "hole") comes out "God loves you," and "God may send you to hell forever." (Stupid hole.) Out of the same hole comes, "You

are saved by grace," and "Here is what you must do to be saved." (This hole needs filled in.) From the same hole comes post-Calvary talk, but pre-Calvary reality. (Don't fall into this hole.) From the same hole comes blessings to God and rejecting His truth in favor of human traditions. (The hole of the human ass is noble by comparison.)

None of these contradictions can possibly flow from the same spring. In humanity exist two springs: a good one and an evil one. The tendency in humanity (I misspeak; it's a guarantee) is for evil to overcome good. God reverses this. Through His spirit we adopt the lovely principle when realizing post-Calvary truth. The cross was the greatest display ever of good overcoming evil. Stare at it until you get it. Don't move until you see it.

COMPLAINT DEPARTMENT

Besides this, our mouths are crammed with bitterness. All we do is complain. We easily forget our blessings. I enjoy the miracle of indoor plumbing, but when the water comes forth unexpectedly at the wrong temperature, I curse it. "Damn water," I say. Eggs are a miracle, too. Chickens ovulate once a day for my dining pleasure. I fry the result it, boil it, sometimes make an omelet of it with onions, mushrooms, spinach. The chickens never could have conceived of it. It is a miracle.

Electricity is another miracle allowing me to cook chicken eggs without building a fire. I also have a frying pan and a spatula. Additionally, someone picked and squeezed olives for me, poured the resultant oil in a glass bottle, and sold it to a store. The store then sold it to me. The oil God used to anoint kings keeps my eggs from sticking to the pan. It's a miracle. Yet sometimes I will turn my eggs in the pan with the spatula and forget right away to turn them back. I will get distracted. When I return to the task, I've fried the egg so hard that the delicious yellow juice is gone. So I curse it. "Damn egg," I say. As though it's the egg's fault. I may question God, saying, "What the hell?" The venom of asps is under my lips. At these times, I forget miracles. Instead, my mouth is crammed with imprecations. Even the chicken would say of me: "Your throat is an open sepulcher."

If ever we become content, it is a miracle of God.

"Sharp are their feet to shed blood. Bruises and wretchedness are in their ways, And the way of peace they do not know" (Romans 3:16-17).

We want to hurt people who hurt us. It's known popularly as revenge. Not many of us shed blood, but we shed feelings. We rip people apart with our thoughts and words. If we happen *not* to bruise anyone physically, we feel righteous. Yet we fail to consider how we bruise them spiritually and emotionally. Sticks and stones may break bones, but names never hurt—so they say. It's a falsehood. Names hurt terribly. I would rather be shot in the heart and die instantly than be spoken ill of repeatedly. Evil conversation fouls my marrow, rotting me from the inside out. This is wretchedness. When will we stop it? Not until God sheds His love abroad in our hearts. I keep saying this, but it keeps being the key. It keeps being Romans 5:5. Until then, retribution remains our default setting. As for peace, forget it. Peace rises occasionally but never overstays its welcome. We sprinkle disquietude on our oatmeal for breakfast and pour it over our meat at night. Nothing is peaceful for long. We fight and look for fights. Does it make us happy or something? I don't understand. We wage the worst battles within. We battle the ways we've failed. Our thoughts writhe together like snakes in a pit. The snakes are my figure for self-accusation and worry.

Peace is one of the nine fruits of the spirit. "Love, joy, PEACE ..." Peace is when our thoughts sleep soundly. For several hours, we stop condemning ourselves. The soundtrack within is finally silenced. Because of Christ's opinion of us (if only we can believe it), we can stand our own company. To stop condemning others, we must first stop condemning ourselves. None of this is possible without the spirit of God being shed abroad in our hearts (Romans 5:5), which I believe I have mentioned. This is why we need rescued. First and foremost, we need rescued



from ourselves. I misspeak. First, we need rescued from death.

"There is no fear of God in front of their eyes" (Romans 3:18).

Because God is invisible, we forget His power and majesty. We forget that the world coheres by His power. He could vaporize us in a second. Look at the sun. It is a giant ball of hydrogen that, were it to belch, would incinerate us. What is this compared to the power of God? His might and majesty, unfiltered, would incinerate us. God toned Himself down through Israel's tabernacle system. It did, however, suggest to us His unapproach-

able nature. He deigned to fellowship with creatures wearing underpants.

Yet now, through Christ, we have complete access to Him (Romans 5:2; Ephesians 2:18, 3:12). Christ teaches us this through a man (Paul) whom God inspired to write it down. I used to talk to God flippantly. I don't do much of that anymore. It's more familiarity now. I am trusting Him as Father. Now I rest my head on His bosom in the manner of John upon Christ at the Passover dinner. Christ is the image of God, so God is this gentle.

Still, we have to learn contrast.

The "fear" of this verse (Romans 3:18), is the fear of His majesty, not the fear of *Him*. He is a Father to us, as I said. Someday we will appreciate this miracle of love. We will realize how crazily unapproachable He would be apart from Christ. Christ will explain this to us when we see Him. Then we will realize the majesty of God. Just because God condescends to speak to us in human terms, we should not think that He is like us. This would be a mistake.

"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" (Romans 3:19-20).

In God's program, there are those with law (Israel; the law of Moses) and those without law (the nations.) The law of Moses shuts up all of the Israelites because none of them can do it. None of them are meant to do it. Israel was meant to try and fail. That nation becomes to the rest of us an example of how, by works of law, no flesh can or will be justified in His sight. I love this verse. "No flesh at all, justified." In other words, no human effort makes a man or woman right by Him. Try it and see. You'll get the classic vaudeville cane. You'll be yanked off stage where you will learn to be quiet and listen to Him explain how perfect you are.

"That the entire world might become subject to the just verdict of God" (Romans 3:19).

This is the point toward which Paul has been driving: "The entire world." The entire world is now finished. It hasn't a prayer. Night has come; the gig is up; humanity, both religious and worldly, sits inert in the dust of its own composition, hopeless. What can remedy it? What will happen now?

Next week, the tide is turned. Dawn breaks. Something *has* happened. Something has happened on the stage of earth that pivots us, instantly, from loss to light.

We have just been delivered from endless death.

—MZ

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