



ZWTF

Sunday, July 13, 2014 Zapping-you Whenever Thoughts Flow

ROMANS Part 30

Chapter 3:24-28



Napping is critical to understanding the book of Romans. Unless you are well-rested, you won't even care about the book of Romans, let alone understand it. The tired mind simply cannot grasp, retain, or even care about information as efficiently as the rested mind can. This includes Scriptural information—*especially* Scriptural information.

In Luke chapter eight, what was Jesus doing on the storm-tossed boat? He was napping, of course. He napped around two or three o'clock every afternoon, as did most Israelites. When the body and mind wore down after lunch, Israelites went up to their roofs and laid down. If no roofs were available, then the shade beneath trees would do, or the cozy nest of a hammock. I've often wondered how Jesus managed to sleep on a tossing boat. The answer is the hammock. The hammock stayed put while the boat swayed. The genius of the hammock is its simplicity. In this simplicity, hammocks are beautiful—and so are naps.

Napping was and is natural to the human. Natural cultures still do it. Unnatural cultures like our Western culture discourage it and ignore all science touting it. The results have been catastrophic. So advanced is our culture that many of our citizens who actually do nap do so unintentionally while driving cars. According to the Division of Sleep Medicine at Harvard Medical School, and in a national poll by the National Sleep Foundation, 250,000 drivers fall asleep at the wheel every day in the United States. According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, drowsy driving is a factor in more than 100,000 crashes, resulting in 1,550 deaths and 40,000 injuries annually. Again, this is just in the United States.

If you dare to nap in this “go-get-em, gotta-get-somewhere” culture, you're thought to be weak. If you risk to rest your weary head after lunch, non-nappers will publicly deride your “lack of ambition.” (It will not occur to them that you are ambitious concerning healthy rest. Such ambition counts for nothing to the classic nap criticizer.) Anyone caught curled up beneath his or her desk will be labeled a deviant, then fired. Those who fall asleep and die while driving home, on the other hand, will be celebrated at the funeral as responsible employees. They will then be sent flowers.

When he wasn't inventing the light bulb, the phonograph or motion pictures, Thomas Edison napped beneath his desk. Edison's napping habits are well-documented, as are those of Winston Churchill, Napoleon, Albert Einstein, Stonewall Jackson, John F. Kennedy, Ronald Regan, Salvadore Dali, Leonardo DaVinci, J.D. Rockefeller, and Jesus Christ—but never mind these people: you have important things to do and many places to go. After all, you are a member of the famous Rat Race. I think this dubious race is misnamed, as even rats nap. Not even rats are stupid enough to join this race; they decry all association with it.



In our day, nothing natural is natural, and since everything natural is beautiful, then very few things are beautiful. Because He rose before the sun, Jesus needed the mid-afternoon nap. Jesus got up before everyone else so that He could pray without being hassled by friends, Pharisees, and those who would criticize His naps. Being a man, His body was subjected to natural circadian rhythms. The following Wikipedia excerpt describes these rhythms. Just because Jesus never talked about the things doesn't mean He didn't know them. He knew them, all right. He invented them. The following could easily be attributed to Him (I can hear Him saying this to Peter):

The timing of sleep in humans depends upon a balance between homeostatic sleep propensity, the need for sleep as a function of the amount of time elapsed since the last adequate sleep episode, and circadian rhythms which determine the ideal timing of a correctly structured and restorative sleep episode. The homeostatic pressure to sleep starts growing upon awakening. The circadian signal for wakefulness starts building in the (late) afternoon. As Harvard professor of sleep medicine Charles A. Czeisler notes¹, "The circadian system is set up in a beautiful way to override the homeostatic drive for sleep."² Thus, in many people, there is a dip when the drive for sleep has been building for hours and the drive for wakefulness has not yet started. This is, again quoting Czeisler, "a great time for a nap."²

1. Jesus would say, "... will eventually note two-thousand years from now ..."

2 Lambert, Craig, PhD (July–August 2005). "Deep into Sleep. While researchers probe sleep's functions, sleep itself is becoming a lost art". Harvard Magazine. Retrieved 2008-02-25.

It is a great time for studying Romans as well.



Romans 3:24-28

Being justified gratuitously in His grace, through the deliverance which is in Christ Jesus (Whom God purposed for a Propitiatory shelter, through faith in His blood, for a display of His righteousness because of the passing over of the penalties of sins which occurred before in the forbearance of God), toward the display of His righteousness in the current era, for Him to be just and a Justifier of the one who is of the faith of Jesus. Where, then, is boasting? It is debarred! Through what law? Of works? No! But through faith's law. For we are reckoning a human to be justified by faith apart from works of law.

JUSTIFYING THE JUST JUSTIFIER

It is critical that our Justifier be just. Why would we believe the words of an unjust God? Some people I know don't even believe the Just One. God declares them to be justified, but they're still straining to be worthy of His affection by attending church, feeding the poor, giving up things like cigarettes, and witnessing to the world.

They're doing this, not out of a spirit of thankfulness for what God has declared them to be, but rather as a means of maintaining His favor and justifying *Him* for choosing them for heaven. Did you hear that? Millions of religious people are today working very hard to justify God for picking them. This is the opposite of the message of Romans. God is already just. Duh. He chose us when we were mired in sin (Romans 5:6). How dare anyone seek to justify Him? It's as if these unbelievers are saying, "You backed the right horse, God. We won't let you down. We will prove to You that Your choice of us for salvation was justified. You didn't pick losers, God!"

“Millions of religious people work hard justifying God for picking them.”

Oh, boy. God waits with bated breath to be proven right. His happiness for the rest of the afternoon depends upon His creatures proving to Him His inability to make mistakes.

This is so not Romans. The message of Romans is that God purposely picks losers. It is also the message—to one extent or another—of every other Pauline letter. God picks losers who will then become thankful for what He did for them. I have told you that Christianity is wrong about everything. Never is this so evident than in the case of Christians sweating their lives away trying to justify God for choosing them. He doesn't need the justification; *they* do. But the Christians can't hear what has already been accomplished for them because they're too busy telling God what they have accomplished for Him. They simply can't shut up long enough to realize that He is just *and* a Justifier. Where are any of them in this statement? Nowhere. Romans 3:26 is all about God. Watch it again: *He* is just, and *He* is a Justifier. God is the subject of this activity, humans are the predicate. Romans is an account of Who God is, and what He has done. The gospel is about God, not us. When this realization finally hits, you will be so happy that you will want to take a nap. This will occur, ideally, at approximately 2:30 in the afternoon.

OF THE FAITH OF JESUS

“For Him to be just and a Justifier of the one who is of the faith of Jesus” (Romans 3:26).

We are of the faith of Jesus. This means that Jesus' faith comes first, and is passed down to us. That's right. I hate to break this to you, but you have used faith. Jesus believed that God would raise Him from the dead. Hmm. We *also* believe that God will raise *us* from the dead. What a coincidence? No, not really. It is evidence of used faith. Jesus Christ has leftover faith from the cross, and He passes it down to whomever He wishes. I call it, “trickle-down faith.”

In the eastern U.S., weather comes from the west. This is due to the prevailing winds. When I lived in Ohio and a storm came in, I used to say, “Wow, it smells like Indiana.” The “prevailing winds” of faith go from Jesus Christ to you. You will never invent your own “faith weather.” Stick your nose in the air and take stock of what you believe about God: kinda smells like Jesus Christ, doesn't it? Of course. You get all of His “weather.” You get what He has a couple minutes after He wafts it “westward” into your otherwise desolate psyche.



Stop trying to drum up faith from a special pool of faith within yourself. There is no organ or duct inside you containing faith. All you have there is blood and digestive juices. Not an ounce of faith resides in the human liver. There is no “faith gland” secreting belief in God. The human heart contains blood, not faith. Surely the mighty human brain contains faith. No, it doesn't. It contains neurons, synapses, and protoplasmic fibers called axons. Even after Jesus Christ gives you faith, no human instrument can detect it. You can pass through airport security with craploads of faith, and no alarms will trigger. You can't say the same about your wristwatch, now can you?

This is a brief sidetrack, but the best way to detect a person's faith or lack thereof is to deliberately question that person about God and Christ. (They will not do this at the airport, so don't worry.) Ask someone if Jesus Christ will eventually return every son and daughter of Adam to God. Ask if Jesus Christ died, or if only His body died. Ask if God is in control of the universe, including all 8 billion inhabitants of earth. Ask if sin will stop anyone from getting to heaven. Ask if Jesus Christ has enough leftover faith to eventually pass on to everyone.

THE IMPOSSIBILITY OF BOASTING

When we truly grasp the gracious nature of the eonian salvation preached by Paul, boasting becomes impossible. The way Paul puts it is, “Boasting is debarred” (Romans 3:27).



The word “debarred” is the Concordant Version rendering of the Greek word *ekkleio*. This is a two-part Greek work whose English elements are OUT-LOCK. Boasting is locked out of the “room” of anyone truly believing that God saved them.

Notice I said “of anyone *truly* believing that God saved them.” Many people say that God saved them while simultaneously believing that they saved themselves by their faith in Jesus Christ. Boasters are not necessarily those who do it outwardly. We all know people who outwardly boast. They crow over their life’s attainments. Stickers on the bumpers of their cars announce their children to be better than yours. This is one form of boasting, though not the sickest form. The sickest form of boasting is doing it while pretending not to. This is boasting with a side order of hypocrisy. It smells worse than room temperature hamburger. People who boast like this don’t run over at the mouth like obvious bores. Rather, they carry about them an *air* of boasting that not even Febreeze grapefruit-scented candles can overcome. It is as though you can smell and even see the religious pride oozing from their noses. The Pharisees dripped similarly. These grand poo-bahs of Judaism swelled so badly that their heads got stuck in door

jams. The fat cats of Pharisaism even prided themselves on being humble—please appreciate the irony there. It reminds me of a line from Weird Al Yankovich’s parody of “Gangsta’s Paradise.” Weird Al’s parody, “Amish Paradise,” features a line embodying the covert-style boasting classic to Christians. Yankovich pokes his finger at a fellow Amish person and hurls the taunt: “I know I’m a *million* times as humble as thou art!”

Amish Paradise? Sounds more like an Amish paradox.
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1OfZLb33uCG>

MY STORY

I was a Christian for two years before becoming a believer. Before that, I was a Catholic. I will never forget the day I realized that my salvation was not of me. The weird part about this realization is that I thought I’d already realized it two years before. I said the words for two years, “My salvation is not of me; it is of Christ,” but I still believed in free will. My belief in free will belied my confession of “Jesus saved me.” How was Jesus my Savior if my own confession saved me? If my confession saved me, then Jesus *didn’t* save me. It had to be one or the other. If my confession saved me, then Jesus was merely a potential Savior Who paved the way for me to save myself by believing in Him.

I was sitting on my bed in the middle of the day in 1981 (probably after a nap) when the aforementioned realization struck. It came in the following form: “Oh, my God. I’m just like everyone else.” You would think that a Christian such as myself would have already realized this so-called simple truth; but, no. This is what I’m telling you. “I’m just like everyone else” is the last realization a Christian will ever latch upon. As soon as a Christian latches upon it, he or she is no longer a Christian, but a believer. I realized that day that my flesh was no different than anyone else’s flesh, not even Hitler’s. Like everyone else—including Hitler—I was bound for eternal death. There was no one righteous, no not one—not even me. *Not even me, for crying out loud.* If God had decided to withhold faith—as He had from Hitler—I could no more produce it than raise myself from the dead.

“You would think that a Christian such as myself would have already realized this simple truth.”

I was suddenly and desperately thankful to God. I mean, I praised and lauded the daylights out of Him for choosing me for eonian life. I'm pretty sure I cried. It floored me to realize that the only reason He chose me was because He liked me. It had nothing to do with me. Nothing whatsoever. This scared me, because it suddenly dawned on me that I could just as easily not have been chosen. (This is true.) I then felt like I'd won a gigantic



lottery. (This is also true.) All responsibility for salvation got removed from me. God never had looked down on me and said, "Martin is a pretty decent guy, and a hearty believer full of faith, so I will choose Him for eonian life." No. Just the opposite. God had looked down on me and said, "Martin is a jerk. I'm going to pick him instead of 49 billion other people, just because I feel like it. Why not? I will pick him before he is born and before he can do anything to impress Me."

It was not until that day that boasting was finally and actually removed from my life. I never boasted outwardly before that, but rather oozed the secret pride that covertly belittles others for not believing. Other people were idiots,

or simply careless. How could they not believe in such a simple thing as Christ? How could they hear the "easy" message of the gospel of God's grace and not respond to it? Whoever thinks these thoughts is automatically and unavoidably a boaster. Whether such a person articulates it or not is irrelevant. Such a person, admittedly or not, leaves ample room for self-credit, and thus boasting. The doctrine of human free will is nothing *but* giving the human credit for salvation, and thus room for pietistic puffery. Boasting is far from debarred in such a person's life; it belongs to the conviction that one has wisely chosen Jesus Christ while others stupidly haven't.

Only one who grasps Paul's evangel can *truly* say, with Paul, "Yet, in the grace of God I am what I am" (1 Corinthians 15:10). Everyone else is kidding themselves and will face this fatal fact at the Great White Throne judgment.

FORGET LAW

"For we are reckoning a human to be justified by faith apart from works of law" (Romans 3:28).

Because of human weakness, law can never produce justification. It can only do what it was designed to do, which is 1) highlight human failure—Romans 5:20, 2) produce even more sin—Romans 7:8, and 3) inspire deeper droughts of God's indignation—Romans 4:15.

For if a law were given that is able to vivify, really, righteousness were out of law. But the Scripture locks up all together under sin, that the promise out of Jesus Christ's faith may be given to those who are believing
—Galatians 3:21.

Under Paul's gospel, belief rather than law becomes the channel to an apprehension of God's gifts. God loves to be believed. Even this belief, as simple as it is, must be given by Him. He gives it to whom He will, when He will. Is it so strange that He then delights in it? We delight when a loved one opens something we have purchased and set upon their laps. Why think it strange, then, when God delights in something He, Himself, accomplishes? All is out of, through, and ultimately for Him (Romans 11:36).

For in grace, through faith, are you saved, and this is not out of you; it is God's approach present, not of works lest anyone should be boasting.

—Ephesians 2:8-9

—MZ