



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

ROMANS Part 17

Chapter 3:4-8

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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.

Christians give humanity the power (try to imagine this) both to derail God’s plans and to compromise His faithfulness to bless. So God’s plans to bless Israel are now trashed because Israel won’t have Him?

“May it not be coming to that!” Paul writes. “Now let God be true, yet every human a liar.”

When God says He intends to do something, He will do it. He intends, then executes. Human disbelief only makes things juicier for Him. It makes it “harder,” which He likes. “Harder” allows Him to display His power and then bless the human via the shock

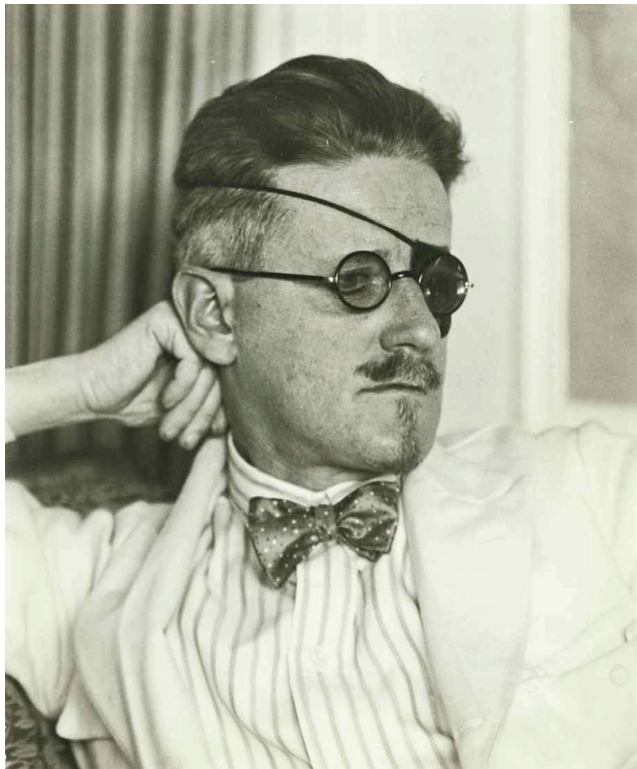
value (pleasant shock resulting in pure joy) of the contrast. This is why, prior to healing a blind man in John chapter 6, Jesus made a mud paste from dirt and His own spit and smeared it on the man’s eyes. Jesus might have resembled a kindergartner finger-painting. Witnesses stared at Him; they’d never seen anything like it. The blind man let Jesus do whatever He wanted; the man had nothing to lose. Jesus said, “Hold still,”



and the man shrugged and said he could certainly do that. Jesus’ intention with the paste was to make the man’s blindness theoretically worse. Jesus made a dramatic point for the sake of the onlookers. It was a well-planned production. It had flair. It should have been accompanied by a drum roll. Maybe it was, in heaven.

THE ORIGINAL SHAKESPEARE

God is so theatrical. He is the original Shakespeare. The book of Romans, itself, illustrates God’s



singular vision and creative prowess. Has “crazier” material ever been packed into sixteen chapters? Never. God’s truth is stranger than any writer’s fiction. Not even James Joyce—wearing his eye patch, drinking absinth—could have written this: *The Creator of the Universe gets nailed to a cross on the third planet from the sun by the very people He’s saving, which turns out to be everyone. After three days He raises from dead, then picks certain human beings to be glorified with Him at a later date and help Him reconcile an estranged universe, including Israel, which He purposely created to flop so that they could later succeed and praise Him a thousand years for the miracle.*

“FOR MY NEXT TRICK ... ”

In 1 Kings chapter 18, God plans an Oscar-worthy production with Elijah and the prophets of Baal on Mt. Carmel. Before sending fire to Elijah’s altar, God instructed the prophet to douse the altar with gallons of water—seven times. “Douse the altar,” God said, “*then* pray for the fire.” Truly, God is the original ham. I mean no disrespect to Him; someone has to say it. He likes stages and much fanfare. He also likes curtains and trumpets; rotting figs, pregnant virgins, talking donkeys; naked prophets—all of these dance in His hands. Fancy hats, palm fronds, boils and balms, men resistant to fire,

fancy hats, prostitutes, men hung like horses—God struts it all across the vast stage called Earth, then winks at us. Some of us are offended by it, suck our thumbs, pout, and preach to God a morality lesson. Others of us do cartwheels inside of the multifarious wisdom and laugh. God loves that. God is a Mardi Gras parade without the vomiting.

Don’t dare accuse God of selfishness; everything He does is for His creatures’ ultimate benefit. We watch and learn. He even invites us to participate. No one can help participating to some degree. We all enact His intentions, some of us willingly, some not. He makes the compulsion to enact His intention mostly undetectable, that we may have the joy of feeling free, even while being nowhere near that.

Free will is a myth, but God makes us feel free so that we live and learn. We have the best of both worlds: 1) the comfort of knowing that we cannot escape God’s intention, 2) the fun of *feeling* untrammelled and executing “spontaneous” cartwheels.

“WRITE THIS DOWN”

For His divine record, God makes sure everything He does gets witnessed. Then He inspires people to record it. (If no human saw it—for instance the creation of the heavens and earth—He gives them visions as though they had. I am thinking of Moses, the author of Genesis.) Then He miraculously preserves the record. He makes sure several Bible organizations screw up the translation (the King James, the NIV, the NASB, the Living [nightmare] Bible, so that people who aren’t really interested in what He has to say grab the most popular version available (the quickest, the cheapest) in the “Faith” section of Barnes & Noble, and proceed to learn extremely wrong things about Him while sipping caffeinated beverages containing 7,599 calories, not counting the whipped cream. Simultaneously (in a quieter, darker, more boring sector of the store), He also makes concordances available to people who are extremely interested in what He originally said in the original languages of Scripture: Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek. These people prove their zeal for His words by



looking behind the popular fluff (and bluff) of the easy versions, and uncovering truth behind the translations without drinking seven dollar caffeinated beverages and texting “lol” again and again to their so-called friends. The concordance people actually love God; the “lol” people love the idea of God. God cleverly makes it evident (the people expose themselves one way or the other) who is who, so that the “lol” people can persecute the serious students (“what fellowship has light with darkness?”—2 Corinthians 6:14), thus blessing the students with a form of suffering commensurate with Christ’s.

HARD IS EASY

To make a point, God increases the degree of difficulty in the eyes of the attending humans. We ask ourselves why God is making things harder for Himself. This questions comes from our perspective, not His. God is not a man. We try to make things easier. When God is on “cruise control,” however, everything is deliciously uphill for Him. Now we see how truly great He is. To him, uphill is downhill because He demonstrates His power, and that feels good to Him. In the meantime, we throw up our hands (and sometimes just throw up) at our insurmountable task. The result is that we exhale hard and trust Him. Ah—now is when He works. “Difficult” is the default setting of the universe. It isn’t like God has to work hard to make things hard. He has to work hard to keep things hard because light and smooth sailing sit poised for the unleashing. I say difficulty is easier for God because God looks ahead to the fun dumb awe of the onlookers when mud-coated people wash to become awash in His light and life. It was all a parable with that blind guy; it was all a microcosm of what God will eventually accomplish for the entire universe.

The mud-ball is bigger, of course.

MARTIN ZENDER FORMULA OF DIVINE CONTRAST

The Baal prophets stood stupefied when fire descended to engulf and consume Elijah’s waterlogged altar. The impressions God makes are always so great—a result of the contrast—that the anticipated outcome lubricates (for God) every step during the maddening (for us) process.

If only we could see things from God’s point of view. If only we could see to the end of things. (Well, we can. Read the book of Ephesians.)

This explains why your life appears to be sabotaged. Before ordering you to the Pool of Siloam for the shock-



ing miracle, God applies more mud. The presence of mud in your life can mean only one thing: washing (liberation) is imminent. Prepare to see! Trust that this is God’s *modus operandi*, because it is. Trouble squared (t^2) equals miracle to the tenth power (m^{10}). Here it is, then, the Martin Zender Formula of Divine Contrast: $t^2 = m^{10}$. The miracle is out of proportion to the trouble. The blind man endured Jesus’ spit for what?—five minutes? His vision lasts the rest of his life. In Romans 8:18, Paul explains this truth of exceeding returns on small investments:

For I am reckoning that the sufferings of the current era do not deserve the glory about to be revealed for us.

$$t^2 = m^{10}$$

The coming glory is out of proportion to the present suffering, yet at the same time is fully dependent on it.

The fire of the spirit of God will transform your body of humiliation. Until then, water will rise to your eyeballs. It is perhaps doing so now. Only when you fear imminent drowning will God send the promised cure. In these two Scriptural examples, the mud and water are as essential to the miracle as the miracle itself. God builds the spectacular upon a foundation of horror. You now occupy Phase 1 of the miracle—the hard, horrible part. Phase 2 is on schedule and around the corner.

BALK LIKE AN EGYPTIAN

Consider Pharaoh. The last thing God wanted was the Egyptian leader catering to His stated whims. In order to heighten the drama of the Israelite exodus and highlight His power (God wanted the Exodus discussed and celebrated for hundreds and thousands of years), the last thing He needed was an accommodating, shrugging potentate: “Sure. Of course I’ll let your people go. What time would you like me to escort them out?” This never would have inspired an Oscar winning movie starring Charlton Heston. How could Pharaoh demonstrate stubbornness unless Moses provided him the opportunity with the now-famous divine imperative: “Let my people go!” The command was essential to the resistance of it.

People ask me all the time, “Martin, why does God give the Israelites commands He knows they can’t obey?” He gives them commands *because* He knows they can’t obey. Salvation requires sin. Israel cannot demonstrate sin apart from commands; where there is no law, law cannot be broken. Without broken laws, there are no lawbreakers. Without lawbreakers, there are no sinners needing salvation. Without sinners needing salvation, there is no Savior. Motions must be gone through for the sake of the practical demonstration whose pinnacle is Christ. Paul puts this into a nutshell in Galatians 3:22-24—

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. Now before the coming of faith we were garrisoned under law, being locked up together for the faith about to be revealed. So that the law has become our escort to Christ, that we may be justified by faith.

Moses articulates God’s revealed will (“Let My people go”—Exodus 7:2), so that God might then harden Pharaoh’s heart and enact His secret intention (Exodus 7:3), which is Pharaoh’s resistance and an eventual Broadway-production Exodus. God provides both the expressed command, and then the ensuing resistance. God does everything, using human players. Is God allowed to do this? Um, yes—but thanks for asking. He’s God. The human players—all of them—are eventually blessed (Romans 11:32; 1 Corinthians 15:28). Vessels of honor are blessed before vessels of dishonor, but everything eventually comes out neatly folded after the wash. You are a vessel of honor—thank God for it.

Not only does human unbelief *not* nullify the faithfulness of God, it demonstrates it. It stuffs it into a can-



non and fires it. It gives it a foil against which to resplendently shine.

PAUL’S OVERALL PLAN

Here at the beginning of Romans chapter 3, don’t overanalyze trees and forget what forest you’re in. Think of this letter as a demonstration of the love and saving power of God. To demonstrate this pair of marvels, God paints the necessary backdrops of hate and loss. Human stupidity becomes the backdrop for divine genius. From 1:18 until now, Paul describes the stubbornness of humanity. Now he heads off objections to a plan that, to humans, looks like one big convoluted overwrought mistake. In light of his revelations at the end of chapter two, Paul asks a series of eight questions:

- 1) What, then is the prerogative of the Jew? (3:1)
- 2) What if some Jews disbelieve? (3:3)
- 3) Will not their unbelief nullify the faithfulness of God? (3:3)
- 4) If our injustice is commending God’s righteousness, shall we declare that God, Who is bringing on indignation, is unjust? (3:5)
- 5) How shall God be judging the world? (3:6)
- 6) If the truth of God superabounds in my life, for His glory, why am I also still being judged as a sinner? (3:7)
- 7) Why not say, “We should be doing evil that good may be coming”? (3:8)
- 8) Are we privileged? (3:9)

I have already answered questions one through three. How would you like me to answer questions four through eight? Well, all right then. I will do it next week.

Thank you again for subscribing to this particular dispensary of satisfying answers. I like having you around. —MZ