

Take this here test!

I RECKON GOD SEES WHAT WE DON'T

That person staring back at you in the mirror every day is the old humanity God reckons as crucified. Am I sure it's still the old humanity? Pretty sure. Could I be wrong? I reckon. If you wish to test it, here's a simple, three-part experiment:

- ▶ lift up your right arm and smell your armpit. If it stinks, you are still part of the old humanity
- ▶ take a little hop into the air. If you come back down to the floor, you are still part of the old humanity



"Dad gum it, Granny. I jumped up, but I come back down."

- ▶ stop drinking water and eating food. If, after a month, your obituary appears in the local paper, you are still of the old humanity

This is where walking by faith rather than perception comes in (2 Cor. 5:7). God reckons that sorry thing in the mirror to be dead and gone. *Is it dead and gone?* No; God *reckons* it that way.

"Thus you also, be reckoning yourselves to be dead, indeed, to Sin, yet living to God in Christ Jesus, our Lord" (Romans 6:11).

Martin Zender's Clanging Gong News

"If I know all mysteries and all knowledge, but have no love,
I am a clanging gong" --1 Cor. 13:1-2



Two out of three isn't bad.

I reckon we ought to reckon as God reckons

Thank you, ladies and gentlemen. Your encouraging letters about last week's *Clanging Gong News* have inspired me to remain onstage and direct your attention even deeper into the glories of God and Christ. For my next trick, I will take the truth from last week's edition (that faith is founded on fact) and apply it to some well-known passages from Romans. By the time the curtain of this edition falls, your faith will be founded upon the fact that you died with Christ. You will walk out of this theater believing what God thinks of you rather than what you think of you. While you may not float to your car, you will feel lighter than a Joel Osteen sermon.

Yep, them there is crazy facts all right

The sixth chapter of Romans is loaded with what appear to be crazy facts. Here is one of them:

"Or are you ignorant that whoever are baptized into Christ Jesus, are baptized into His death?" (Rom. 6:3).

When people were baptized into something, it meant they were cleansed and united ceremonially by water. So if you were baptized into John, it meant you agreed with John's message that 1) the kingdom was coming, 2) the Messiah was near, and 3) you should clean up your life in preparation for this.

Everyone who agreed with this message got wet in the Jordan by the hands of John, and then emerged from the water as members of the same club. Nothing magical happened when you hit the water, or when the water hit you; it was all ceremonial. Since water was (and is) famous for cleaning things, water was the chosen symbol for a person's change from an old way of thinking and behaving to a new one.

Here in Romans chapter six, God introduces, via Paul, a radical new baptism. This baptism involves neither water, nor John the Baptist, nor waiting for Messiah. The meaning of this baptism, however, is the same as all other baptisms:



it symbolizes a cleansing and a uniting. What changes from baptism to baptism is not the meaning of the word itself, but the club you're attaching yourself to and the vehicle that makes you baptized. With John's baptism, the club was "those awaiting the Messiah" and the vehicle was water. With the baptism into Christ's death, the club is "those who believe what God says concerning them," and the vehicle is faith.

Here is a further detail about this new baptism: Romans 6:3—

"We, then, were entombed together with Him."

Here is another detail, from Romans 6:5—

"For if we have become planted together in the likeness of His death, nevertheless we shall be of the resurrection also."

Here is a hugely important detail, from Romans 6:6—

"Our old humanity was crucified together with Him."

2000 years ago, God decided to ceremonially cleanse and unite you, that is, to baptize you. What would He cleanse you from? Sin and condemnation. Who would He unite you to? His Son, Jesus Christ. What was His chosen ceremonial vehicle that would usher you into

...reckoning as God reckons

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this club? Faith. Instead of getting wet, you would simply say, "I believe what you are saying of me, God." At the point when you say, "I believe you, God," you belong to the club known as the body of Christ. Not many people are in this club. For some reason, God gives few people the radical faith required to



Drysdale and Hathaway; still wrestling with the old humanity.

see themselves as God sees them. To see themselves as God sees them, they would have to give up reforming themselves and rely completely on the death, entombment, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. It is much easier to join a religion. Why? Because in the religion, you're still manhandling the old humanity; no religion on earth considers the old humanity crucified. These religions

(especially the Christian one) dig up the old humanity and dress it up like a mannequin. God says the old humanity died, but who believes Him? It's easier to believe feelings and experience. It's much easier to work for God's favor and reform your flesh for Christ than to have faith in something God said. "Easier," however, in no way translates into "more peaceful."

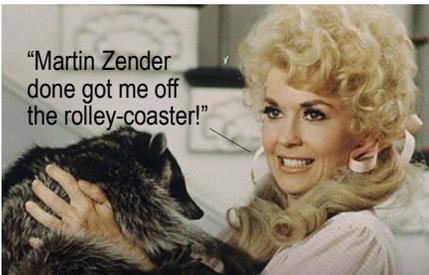
The baptism into Christ's death is a change from an old way of thinking and behaving into a new way. Instead of being depressed when you sin or contemplate mortality, you "reckon yourselves to be dead, indeed, to Sin, yet living to God in Christ Jesus, our Lord" (Romans 6:11). Reckoning yourselves as having died with Christ Jesus sustains your daily happiness. But you cannot reckon a thing to be true until you believe it to be true.

Do you believe what God says about you? Do you reckon yourself in accord with how God reckons you or in accord with how you reckon you? Is what you see in the mirror too powerful for you, or can you believe what God says (that is, the fact) about your old humanity?

Don't you think God knows what He's talking about? ■

Get off the rolley-coaster

Do you remember dying with Christ? Think back, and think hard. Time is up. Of course you don't; you weren't even born. Here is another question: Do you *feel* that you were crucified together with Him? Try to recall the pain in your wrists; the pain in your feet; do you remember talking to the two thieves? Of course not; you were not actually at Calvary. And yet God *counts* you as having been there, and that is the fact to attach your faith to. The fact is not that you were there, but that God *counted* you as there. This is what you must believe and believe hard, because it's true.



If you're expecting to *feel* that any of this is true, you're on the wrong track. We can all blame our early Christian training for how hard it is to believe invisible facts. The Christian religion constantly emphasized feelings. We had to *feel* righteous; we had to *feel* like we were saved; we had to *feel* worthy; we had to *feel* the holy ghost power. And yet what God reckons concerning us has nothing to do with feelings. We can feel it or not feel it; it doesn't matter. The *fact* is what counts here, and the fact is

that God considers our present sinning, confused, and unsure selves to have died with Christ. So forget how you feel and believe what God says.

Want a steadier walk in Christ? Then affix your faith upon fact rather than a feeling. There is no surer way to escape the maddening rollercoaster that some people call life. ■

What a Revelation!

RECKONING BOLSTERS FAITH IN FACTS



Once you realize that everything that happened to Christ on the cross is considered,

by God, to have happened to you, you can begin strengthening the faith that believes these facts. Paul refers to this as "reckoning."

"Thus you, also, be reckoning yourselves to be dead, indeed, to Sin" (Rom. 6:11).

Reckoning is simply thinking. Now, if you already believe the fact that that God considers you to have died with Christ, then reckoning becomes easy. But if you are not sure you believe what God says and you hope to make this death applicable by the sheer mental exercise of reckoning, you've got an uphill battle. Think of it as the difference between knowing something and having to talk yourself into it.



If you **KNOW** that you were crucified with Christ (because you believe this fact from Romans), then reckoning it to be true (that is, thinking it day after day) will be much easier. "*Knowing* this, that



our old humanity was crucified" (Rom. 6:6). God's inspired Word puts knowing (vs. 6) before reckoning (vs.

11) for a reason. Again, you cannot easily talk yourself into something you don't really believe. If you want to test this, go to church Sunday morning, listen to a hell-fire sermon, and see if you can reckon to yourself that it's true. ■

Rants & Stuff

The Apostle Paul says we should not murmur (Philippians 2:14). Therefore, I shall rant.

Beverly Hills; I did a bad, bad thing



As time goes by, I am less and less captured by the tricks and pretensions of this current eon. This eon works way too hard to make people like it, promoting only that which is big, strong, sexy, shiny, and rich.

Do you remember our Lord's opinion of the temple? He offered it after His disciples had pointed it out to Him in Mt. 24:1—

“And His disciples approached to exhibit to Him the buildings of the sanctuary.”

The word “exhibit” tells you how proud the disciples were of the sanctuary area; I can just picture their sweeping arm gestures. No doubt the temple was big and strong and shiny and rich as the world measures these things—but would Jesus be impressed?

“Yet He, answering, said to them, “Are you not observing all these? Verily, I am saying to you, Under no circumstances may a stone here be left on a stone, which shall not be demolished.”

In June of 1980, my friend Jim and I bicycled through Beverly Hills on our way across the United States. I was as iconoclastic then as I am now, though much less careful—at age 20—of civil law and the acceptable standards of human decency. While taking



a break under a palm tree in the world's most famous community of millionaires, I asked Jim what he thought would be a suitable demonstration of my general disdain of the world and its cherished baubles.

“It depends on whether or not that iced tea has hit you yet,” he said.

Today, of course, I'm ashamed of myself. Four years later, finding myself back in Beverly Hills, I decided to look for that particular tree. It was the strangest thing: there was an empty spot in the long row where I remembered it. Well, scripture does say (2 Cor. 4:18), that “what is being observed is temporary.” What it does not say, however, is the means by which some of these observed objects shrivel and die. ■

Better than black gold, Texas tea

What I've told you in these last two editions of the CGN will be true every time. Fact is always fact, no matter what you think of it. For many millennia now, facts have remained unaffected by both faith and experience, and they're not going to start taking opinion polls. Faith that looks to experience rather than fact will always fail. Why? Experience is an unreliable gauge of spiritual reality. Just think of poor Peter walking on that water. As soon as he relied on experience (the raging sea) rather than fact (what Christ told him he could do), down he went. That will be you if you take your eyes from fact and put it on experience.

Discover God's facts and put your faith ever upon them. Do this, and you will enjoy a rich experience. Isn't that the great paradox? The paradox is that our

experience improves as we ignore it and focus on Christ.

Do these things, then:

- ▶ Know God's facts
- ▶ Live by faith
- ▶ Experience God's power

Oh, and this:

“Y'all come back now—hear?”

