



# ZWTF

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 23, 2012 Zapping-you Whenever Thoughts Flow

## “Where sin increases, grace superexceeds.”

*Ever hear this verse in church? I didn't think so.*

Sometimes, all I have to do to start a riot is quote Scripture. Romans 5:20 is one of those Scriptures: “Where sin increases, grace superexceeds.”

That's from the Concordant Literal New Testament. I have yet to find a version that has screwed up this amazing revelation. Not even the fabled NIV (New Inconsistent Version) managed the feat:

“Where sin increased, grace increased all the more.”

The NIV blew the tense—making it past rather than the timeless aorist tense (the CLNT gets it right)—but we can live with that. Grace still blasts sin to bits. If more sin comes along, the sticks of grace dynamite from God's glorious arsenal just keep getting bigger.

No, not even the evil, tea-drinking, English, 1611 wanna-be translators (may they resteth in peace), fouled the waters of this pure spring—though I'm sure they tried. From the KJV:

“Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound.”

It sure sounds to me like, in the great battle between sin and grace, grace wins. And yet, as I quote this verse in enemy territory, my detractors rush the podium as though I'd just damned myself to Tartarus with the disobedient spirits there.

“Sir! Assuming the veracity of your earlier statement concerning sin and grace ... ”

“You mean—the apostle *Paul's* earlier statement?”

“Don't get smart with me, young man. You will answer to God for standing here and telling us, with a



straight face and not a shred of conscience, that we should go out and sin more, so that more grace can come.”

“Yes, ma'am. You're on to me—caught me red-handed. ‘Go out and sin more’—that's *exactly* my message. It's the true purpose of my talk. I should have added, ‘like crazy.’ Hate your neighbor. Lie to your spouse.

Deposit your household trash into gas station bins. Whenever you get the chance, steal pacifiers from babies. Kill your parents; run stop signs.”

“Are you pulling my leg?”

“I'd *like* to. I'm answering you according to your folly, and you've given me plenty to work with. Why would you jump to such an illogical conclusion that, since God is gracious and has declared us righteous through Jesus Christ, we would want to sin against Him? Do you *always* want to hurt those who do wonderful things for you? Does charity make you hate your benefactor?”

“Of course not. I never wish to hurt these kinds of people at all.”

“So why do you jump to the conclusion that people would do that against the ultimate Giver of good? Why do you assume that the very *gift* of good could inspire

lawlessness?”

“I jump to conclusions because I am a nominal, self-righteous Christian.”

“Now we’re getting somewhere.”

“I jump to this *particular* conclusion because I don’t trust grace, and I hate the idea that people who don’t try as hard as I do to be good, still get blessed by God.”

“This is a rare outbreak of honesty.”

“I have no idea why I’m saying all this!”

“It’s holy ghost power. You’re under the influence.”

“My goodness. I feel giddy. Are you some sort of cult leader?”

“No, ma’am. I’m the World’s Most Outspoken Bible Scholar. I make sense for a living.”

“This is delicious. I suddenly feel so happy.”

“Romans 5:20 did it to you. You dropped the common assumption long enough—that people instinctively can’t wait to sin just to get more grace—to finally believe Paul’s words.”

“Do I owe you anything?”

“If it’s not too much to ask, could you kindly remove your fingernails from my Adam’s apple?”

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Romans 5:20 is as true as can be: “Where sin increases, grace superexceeds.” No one can out-sin grace. But does it mean we should launch sin binges to test the principle? No. If God promises to re-grow your hair every time you burn it off with a blowtorch, should you keep doing that silly thing with the blowtorch? Well, you could, but people who have tried it tell me that it hurts. I am not recommending that people go out and sin. For hair, I recommend styling salons.

The apostle Paul must have had detractors, also. Read what he writes two verses after 5:20, in Romans 6:1-2—“What, then, shall we declare? That we may be persisting in sin that grace should be increasing? May it not be coming to that!” See? Paul anticipates the ridiculous argument. But the fact remains that we could do it, and it would work. Did you hear me? I said we could do it, and it would work. Did you hear me? *I said we could persist in sin so that grace should be increasing—and it would work; grace would increase.*

I’m tired of so-called theologians using Romans 6:1-2 to cancel Romans 5:20. People feel so good after reading and believing 5:20—just like that nice lady on page 1. The truth made her giddy. I love it when that happens. I love it when people understand grace for the first time. This revelation makes people want to sing, praise God, and share the news with a friend. I have yet to meet anyone who has wanted to decapitate a dog or break a window.

But I hate it when a theologian or pastor shows up and tries to steal the joy. What do these people have against joy? My theory: If people get “too happy” in Christ and start flitting about joyfully, they may flit right out the church door and never return; religious bigshots hate losing power. Their guarantee against it? Your guilt.

If I had to emphasize one verse or the other, I would emphasize Romans 5:20. Once Romans 5:20 is apprehended, 6:1 could go unsaid. No one grasping the grace of Romans 5:20 thinks to him or herself, *This newfound immunity makes me want to teach curse words to my kids.* No, those who grasp Romans 5:20 (see the exception, at left), sin less. Grace has that effect on people. Upon further reflection, I don’t think Paul wrote Romans 6:1-2 for you and me anyway. I think he wrote it for the grace-hating theologians whom he knew would trip over 5:20, using one portion of Scripture to cancel out another.

### The profitability of sin?

Unfortunately, the nice woman on page 1 had a sister who found some other “distasteful thing” about my sin talk that, in this instance, I was delivering outdoors.

Naturally, she rushed the podium. (Why do people always *rush* podiums? Can't they merely *approach* them?) "You seem to be saying, sir, that sin has a profitable purpose. But where does the Bible say that?"

Ignoring the underlying God-defiling doubt that *anything* in a loving Deity's universe could *not* serve an ultimately profitable purpose, I addressed this latest elderly podium-rusher (it took her a full twenty minutes from the beginning of her "rush" to the grand consummation) with characteristic patience:

"*Why can't you relics of the Inquisition just leave me alone!* But seriously, dear friend, I love this question. Romans 3:5 is the very verse you are pretending to seek, but would rather not see, especially not from *my* ilk. In this verse, our dear apostle says that '...our unrighteousness commends the righteousness of God...' Isn't the commending of God's righteousness a profitable thing? I see by the fact that you are brandishing an ice pick, that you disagree with me. Very well. You wish to know the context. I understand completely; I'm the same way. The context of Romans 3:5 is that, if some Israelites don't believe God's promises—which obviously many did not, as I'm sure you were aware before dementia set in—God's faithfulness rolls on anyway. In fact, Israel's disbelief only makes God's faithfulness more defined and amazing."

My elderly detractor, unimpressed, retired in haste to her place in the congregation, arriving the following Tuesday.



Look up Romans 3:5 in any version. The J.B. Phillips paraphrase brings this nicely to life, saying, "... our wickedness advertises the goodness of God ..." The New International Version says, "... our unrighteousness brings out God's righteousness more clearly ..."

How about verse seven of the same context? Phillips again: "... my lying throws into sharp relief the truth of God and increases His glory ..."

I will dare put it to you this way: Our unrighteousness, which is sin, provides God a canvas on which to paint a righteous masterpiece, which is salvation. His masterpiece is white: Christ. So what better background for the whiteness of Christ than a black canvas?

When we realize this is God's way with our worst offenses, it becomes easier than ever to believe that, "Where sin increases, grace superexceeds."

### Paul's detractors prove his point

Paul teaching that no one can out-sin grace, and that human unrighteousness ultimately glorifies God, was so plainly stated (unusual for Paul) that some folks, understanding very well Paul's teaching, hated his message and slandered him, reporting that he taught people to go out and do evil so that good would result. Witness:

"Why not say, as we are being slanderously reported as saying and as some claim that we say, 'Let us do evil that good may result'?" (Romans 3:8).

Please listen carefully now, because this is important. That Paul's enemies could even concoct this slander proves that Paul's teaching was precisely what he said it was. Otherwise, he could not be slandered. Are you following me? A teacher who says, "Sin has no good purpose in your life. If you keep sinning, you'll lose your salvation and go to hell forever," this teacher *cannot* be slandered as saying, "Go out and do evil so that good may result." His teaching doesn't invite that. How could it, when he says sin wrecks everything, including your salvation? That Paul could be slandered, and that his teaching could be twisted to mean, "go out and do evil so that good may result" proves that Paul really did teach that 1) no one can sin his or her way out of grace, and 2) good does, eventually, result from even our vilest offenses.

### Now I would like to ask *you* a question

Why aren't there any so-called teachers of grace today being slandered as saying this? Why? It's simple, really. It's because they're not teaching what Paul taught. Were they teaching what Paul taught, they would be slandered as saying, "Let us do evil, so that good may result." That *I* will be slandered as saying this (and routinely *am*) will only prove that I am teaching what Paul taught. So my slanderers will ultimately be doing me a favor. They will

prove, by their slander, that my teaching follows that of Paul. So let them slander away.

Like Paul, I do not recommend that you go out and sin. I'll even tell you: don't do it. (I have said this to many people.) Nevertheless, I believe and teach, like Paul, that if you do sin, grace will not only cover it, it will swamp it. If you do sin, even on purpose, God will use it as a black canvas, paint a masterpiece of righteousness on it, and the outcome will be ultimately better after the failure than before it.

As for the notion that this good news will actually incite lawlessness, the effect will be just the opposite.

Many Christian teachers today still promote the Ten Commandments as a viable means to godliness. If I were these peoples' parents and had financed their way through seminary, I would be so disappointed. I would request a refund. Did these people learn nothing at the seminary?



These blind guides are still somehow ignorant of the true purpose of the law, which came to cause transgressions to increase, not decrease. Read the first part of Romans 5:20 in the version of your choice (I've been quoting the second) to verify this amazing fact. I believe that much of the lawlessness in the world today is caused by clergymen (and women) who still throw rocks from Sinai. To explain the whys of this little-known news will require yet an-

other book, which I intend to write, assuming I survive these many rushes of the podium.

What is the difference between law and grace? Merely this: Condemnation versus deliverance; misery versus peace; sin versus right behavior. The law said, "Accursed is everyone who is not remaining in all things written in the Scroll of the Law, to do them" (Galatians 3:10). Grace says, *Blessed are you, whatever you may do, for Christ has justified you apart from your works and nothing in God's creation can now condemn you.* (Romans 3:28, "For we are reckoning a human to be justified by faith apart from works of law"; Romans 8:1, "Nothing, consequently, is now condemnation to those in Christ Jesus").

“It is grace, not law,  
that deters people  
from sinning.”

The clergyperson immediately concludes: "If my people are truly free to do anything, they will. I simply can't preach such grace." A pity; note the worldliness of the modern church. Congregations are rebelling against the curse of law, preached every Sunday. Nothing new there. Haven't the clergypeople studied Israel? This nation is a fine and terrible example of the effects of law on human flesh. Read about the history of Israel in your Bible—but please, put your kids to bed first.

What is grace to these clergypeople? It is a word that rhymes with "face" in many of their songs. It is a Hollywood word, gilded and propped on a mountainside, with nothing behind it. Who among the clergy today actually believe grace to be a power? Who among them forsake law completely to trust God's favor? Few, if any. Yet grace, though invisible, *is* a power. It is grace, not law, that has the power to deter people from sinning.

No one who finally tastes grace (and I mean real grace, not the string-laden schemes of the clergy) reasons that, because he's immune from condemnation, he should rob convenience stores. In fact, when all strings are finally removed from salvation, a person tends to relax and sin less. It's the truest paradox ever. Should a believer sin in the face of such grace, he feels it. The offender against law, however, runs it down and never looks back. Rather than hinder him, the threats of law enrage him and stir his rebellion.

Practical experience with true grace educates better than a law-filled seminary course—any day.

## My prayer

I pray that this nearly incredible information, hidden, twisted, lied about, and ignored by orthodox ministers (who are, the great majority of them, clueless as to what grace even is) will deliver you from fear, condemnation, and guilt. Are you feeling better already? I hope so. Think how much improved your worship life will be without these imaginary burdens.

As for those who have never worshipped this Savior before, don't give up on Him. His character has been defaced by the religiously self-righteous, by hypocrites who have told you God has saved you by grace, but then expects you to be wise and strong enough to grasp it. God is not like that. He dabbles not in hypocrisy. His grace is better than that which passes for grace in the dark dens of clergymeisters everywhere.

When you see Who God really is, and what grace really means, you will be drawn to the One Who walked a lonely way and secured you to Himself years before you were born and could blow it. As I always like to say: "Believe in God, in spite of what the clergy tell you."

Only when you realize that sin has a profitable purpose will you be able to calmly gauge its presence in your life. This is the opposite of panicking and feeling guilty. And by understanding the rarely-appreciated truth that the "cure" (Christ) predates the disease (sin)—1 Peter 1:20—you will be one of the few people in this mixed-up world who will know what God is up to.

This, you will enjoy. ■ (*... to be continued ...*)



**I AM A  
LOSER**

**facebook**

Dear Friends,

**Those of you who have been following me on Facebook are aware of a notable phenomenon: I am no longer there. I really did try. But I've come to grips with the fact that I am simply not cut out/wired/designed by God to participate in social media. No matter how "necessary" it is, no matter what a "great thing" it supposedly can be, I, Martin Zender, cannot do it.**

**To me, social media is anti-social. The very format invites superficiality and insincerity. I am not accusing any of you of this; the fact is, this kind of format makes me this way.**

**I am an "in person" guy. There is nothing I would like more than to meet all of you face-to-face; that would be my version of Facebook; I could shake your hand, hug you, look you in the eye. No pre-fabricated smiley-face icon would be necessary (I have sworn these off for life), because I could smile at you myself—and watch you smile back.**

**HOWEVER: I am a writer. This, God has wired me to do. God has been putting it on my heart to re-start my "Zenderville" blog, on my website. I will contribute to it at least every other day, and you will be able to comment to your heart's content, and—who knows—I may even comment myself. This would be much easier and more pleasurable for me than the forced social pressure (my perception only) of Facebook. Deal?**

**Thank you for understanding. My Facebook pages will remain up; only Zender will be going down ...**

*... to resurrect in another place! I love you all, Martin*