



ZWTF

Sunday, June 15, 2014 Zapping-you Whenever Thoughts Flow

ROMANS Part 27

Chapter 3:24-26

GOD IS ALWAYS RIGHT



Romans 3:24-26

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.

This is an awkward sentence, thus proving Pauline authorship. The man had so many deep thoughts burrowing in and out of his head, he needed a Rolodex to track them. Paul relished parenthetical insertions. In other words, he loved saying stuff within stuff. He pioneered the parenthetical insertion within the parenthetical insertion, otherwise known as “saying stuff within stuff within stuff.” How he managed to return seamlessly to his original thought is anyone’s guess. This would have been even harder for a man pacing the room and dictating. Some modern baseball games have been shorter than a typical Pauline rabbit trail, which turns out to be not a rabbit trail at all, but more like a moose path made by a very purposeful and intelligent moose.

Here is my plan: Let’s first get rid of this passage’s parenthetical insertion and concentrate on what it says without it. Once we do that, we’ll return to the moose path.

“Being justified gratuitously in His grace, through the deliverance which is in Christ Jesus 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.”

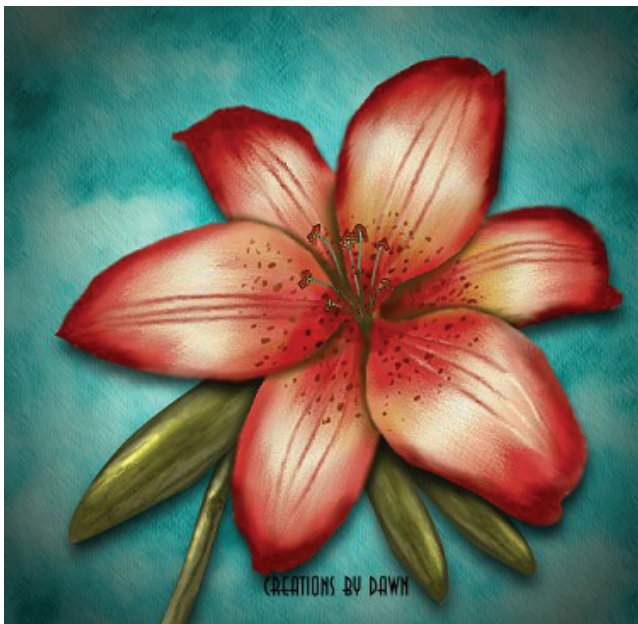
I realize this statement is still awkward, but it’s less so. At least the awkwardness is shorter now and we’re dealing with one thought instead of two. Last week we discussed how we are justified gratuitously (God says to us, “You’re right!” and has no reason for it other than

the cross and that He likes us) through His grace (grace is “favor granted to those who deserve the opposite”). Here is the new part: *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.*

I’m realizing now that there are more topics there than I originally noticed. In fact, there are three: 1) God’s righteousness, 2) God’s reputation, 3) the importance of Jesus Christ’s faith.

WHAT DOES SANTA CLAUS WANT FOR CHRISTMAS?

We rarely think about God’s righteousness or His reputation. It’s usually all about us. We want to make sure that *we* are justified, that God loves *us*, and that *we* will be with Him forever. There comes a time, however, when a spiritually mature person will ask: “What is in this for *God*? What does the cross of Christ do for *His* reputation? Does *He* come out smelling like lilies of the field? What are people going to think of *Him* after all this?”



God is moved whenever anyone poses or even thinks these queries. He can scarcely believe it when it happens. An angel approaches Him and says, “You’re not going to believe this, Sir, but someone down there is wondering how the cross reflects upon Your character. This lady in Wisconsin wants to make sure that Your reputation for being just and fair is unsullied, and that nothing untoward occurred at the cross that would cause you to come out smelling like anything less than

a lily of the field.”

God is taken aback every time this happens. Wishing to confirm the report, God asks the messenger, “Are you saying to Me that this lady in Wisconsin is actually concerned that the events of Calvary shed the best possible light on my unchangeable essence as the most righteous, do-right Being in the universe?”

“Precisely, Sir.”

God is usually so startled by this that He spills His iced tea and begins stroking His beard. Imagine Santa Claus being asked by a kid what *he* wants for Christmas. It never happens for Claus. No one ever asks him what he wants for Christmas. As for God, Who cares about *His* reputation? Precious few. Any inquisition pertaining to it grabs immediate headlines in upper celestial courts.

THE CURRENT ERA

In the current era, not too many people think highly of God. They either hate Him and don’t believe in Him (worldly people), or they so miscalculate His purpose and character (speaking now of religious people) that they perform moralistic feats (such as going to church or refusing to smoke cigars), hoping to avoid hell.

In Romans 3:26, Paul tells us that the deliverance from sin and death won by Jesus Christ on the cross was a display of God’s righteousness in the current era. This is one of the secrets of the cross of Christ, that the cross was a display of God’s righteousness. Hardly anyone sees it as that. Religious people see it as God’s attempt to take away their sins. Worldly people see it as the ultimate stupidity and weakness. Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 1:23-25,

Yet we are heralding Christ crucified, to Jews, indeed, a snare, yet to the nations stupidity, yet to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ, *the power of God and the wisdom of God.*

The cross was a manifestation of the wisdom of God in that, even though the crucifixion appears to be overkill (too much violence; too horrible a death), it was wise of God to deal with sin in this manner. In fact, it was right of Him.

Sin is that bad.

In Romans 3:26, the cross is said to be God’s righteousness on display.

“Righteousness” simply means, “right.” God wants us to look at Christ on the cross and say, “That is right. It is just of God to do that. God is not crazy.”

This is such a difficult thought that we can only think

it as we learn the character of God. In addition, we must analyze the results of the cross: everything ever created will return to God richer for the experience of evil (Colossians 1:16-20).

Because of God's nature and the results of the cross, it was *right* of God to kill His Son in this manner. It is difficult to say this, I know. I don't want you



to think that we have to wait to see the results of the cross for God to be right about what He did. God was right at Calvary *while the events were occurring*. That the results will be a long time coming has nothing to do with God knowing what He was doing at the time. With hindsight, we can better see the righteousness of God because we see the end. But if we're standing at the cross, it's harder to see. It requires spiritual insight, which is a gift. Paul is here communicating plainly to us that the cross was right of God, so we consume that information and trust the spirit to make us believe it. It takes a good dose of spirit to make us believe this simple information.

God loves it when we see His wisdom and righteousness *now*, before everyone else sees it later ("duh!") when the results show up. This desire for a pre-result lauding of God animates Paul's pen. The cross was not a criminal act of divine proportions. Neither was it an act of anger or sin. Everything about delivering the universe from sin and death through the killing of a beloved human being (in fact, a Son) was the correct thing, the only thing, and the most righteous thing God could do—under the circumstances. Forget the details of figuring out how. Just believe it. It's important to believe. Otherwise, we might come to distrust God. If you don't see this yet, 1) pray for revelation, 2) read Romans, 3) repeat this process.

FEAR NOT

Many of us might see what God does and become afraid of Him. When we see what He put His own Son through, it's difficult to trust Him. "If He does this with His Son, what will He do with me?" But then when Paul tells us that the cross was a display of God's righteousness, it settles us.

This information settled Jesus Christ Himself. He trusted His Father to do right. He knew His Father was love. You can bet that Jesus Christ looks back now and the cross seems a distant memory. I think He has a hard time remembering the trauma for the blinding glory. It's all relative. Whatever glory we get, it eclipses the pain many times over. The pain buys the glory. Like childbirth, the pain lasts a short while compared to the glory, which just keeps unfolding.

It's the same principle with the cross, or with your present trial. Do you want Jesus' same exact glory? You're crazy if you do. It's too late anyway. His glory came on the heels of the depth of the shame, humiliation and pain of the cross. You will never suffer like that. I say, let Him have his glory. But whatever pain you do endure, the glory eclipses it. As it was and is for Him, so will it be for us. He gets more glory because He suffered more. Still, as I said, His pain is now a distant memory. So will ours be. This life shall one day be remembered as but a dream in the night.

For the momentary lightness of our affliction is producing for us a transcendently transcendent eonian burden of glory. —2 Corinthians 4:17

Christ can say this as well. He can look back now and say concerning the cross: "It was a momentary, light affliction."

As I said, it's all relative.

GIVE PAUL WHAT HE WANTS

Such comfort takes time. Attend now to the phrase: "For Him to be just." All Paul wants is for you to realize that God is just. If you can see that He is just in this terrible thing—that is, in the cross—then eventually you will be able to see Him just in every hard thing in your life.

Even though you are going through hard things, nothing was harder than Jesus being killed on the cross. I remind you that the only way God could go through with His bloody plan was that, in His mind's eye, He saw

His Son raised three days later. He saw His Son lauded and lifted with higher praise than He ever had before becoming human. Even as His Son struggled for breath, God saw the entire universe returned to Him, praising the daylight out of Him, and being happy for eternity. All because of the work of His Son. I believe Jesus saw this, too.

For the joy lying before Him, [He] endures a cross” (Hebrews 12:2).

I COULD HAVE HATED GOD FOR AWHILE THERE

When my wife of 26 years abandoned me, I thought it was the worst thing in the world at the time. For me, it was. In Ephesians chapter five, Paul tells husbands to love their wives as Christ loves the ecclesia. A husband is compared to Christ. I did not invent this. I do not have a messiah complex, and I assume that other people

“When you start to rebel against such a horrible death, consider the outcome of the cross.”

can read Ephesians 5 as well as I can, but I habitually give people more credit than they deserve. So when the wife leaves her husband, the husband suffers like Christ on the cross. He continues to love, even as people (his wife) are killing him. In fact, the more he is killed by the people who are supposed to love him, the more he loves these people. It’s bizarre. It is divine love—*agape*. Otherwise, it doesn’t make sense. Who loves people who are killing them? My words here are consistent with Ephesians 5. The husband is Christ.

This event in my life is my standard by which all other pain is measured. Everyone has their own standard. I was tempted throughout the trial to imagine God being unrighteous. I hated God, momentarily. These were my first thoughts and I entertained them for much time. At least I held God responsible for what He was doing. I did not waste time cursing Satan. (I live and breathe the sovereignty of God.)

This thing that I was writhing and crying under and hoping to die under was sure to kill me, or so it seemed. I wanted to die. Besides the sovereignty of God,

I knew one thing for sure throughout the ordeal: God was just. This was one of the only rational God-thoughts I had left. I knew He could do only right things, and that it was impossible for Him to do wrong things. I did not pull this thought out of thin air. I knew it because of this verse in Romans. Now I’m helping *you* to know it because of this verse in Romans. The cross was “the display of [God’s] righteousness” and He did it “for Him to be just” in every other thing He ever does. Maybe this will become a great help to you.

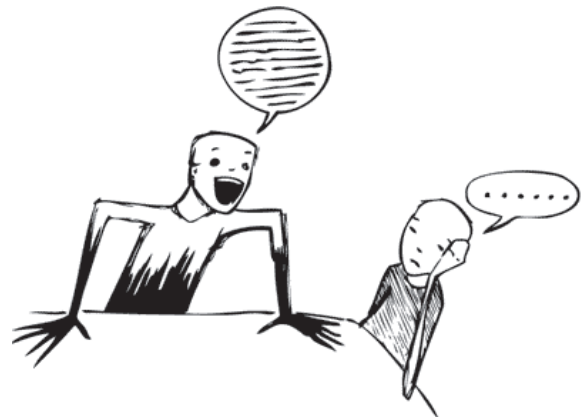
Because, honestly, killing Christ was worse than Him “killing” me through this traumatic event.

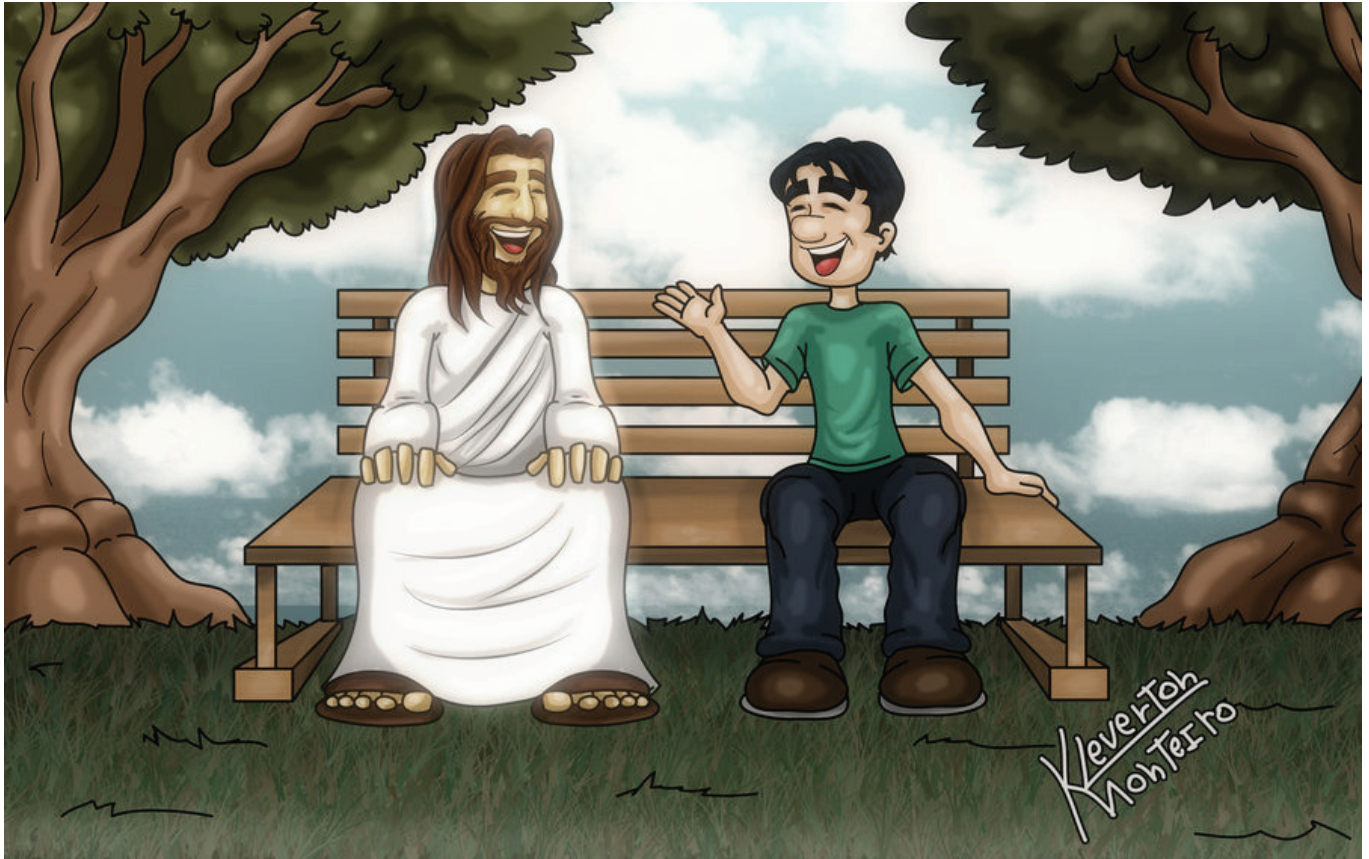
The cross is worse than anything you are going through now. I’m not downplaying your pain, believe me. As I said, it’s all relative.

For now, stare at the cross. This is what I used to do as a kid in the Catholic church. It served me well. Because of this and subsequent things, I can’t forget the cross. See how awful that time was for Jesus. Now think that, while it was happening, God was doing right. God was righteous the whole time—not someday, but right then. When you start to rebel against the thought that such a horrible death could be right, or that the Bringer of the death could be righteous, consider the outcome of the cross. See every being in the universe, including Satan, one day lauding God for eternity for bringing them out of sin. Every being will then realize that, “There was no other way to do this, apart from the love God showed us at the cross.”

OTHER WORTHLESS OPINIONS

Everyone nowadays, in the current era, has many other genius ideas of how the universe could have been saved. *They* would have done things differently, of course. Everyone thinks that “there must have been another way.” Idiots, but I can’t blame them. If there had





been another, easier way, God would have done it. Few see this now. Everyone will see it then. Future foreheads will be self-slapped in the realization that, “I see it now. Of course. The cross was the only way. Without the depth of the sacrifice, we would not know how bad sin was. Without Christ voluntarily coming here and going there, we would not see His faith. Without God joyfully raising Him from the dead right on schedule when He said He would, we would not know how perfect God knew this Sacrifice was, or how organized God is.” This and many other things will occur to people during the coming forehead slap. We ourselves will realize many more things about the cross when we are beholding Jesus—literally looking at Him—and discussing these things with Him personally.

Thank God that you are realizing some of these things now. Thank God for calling the apostle Paul to write this passage of Scripture.

Think well of God. He is righteous. If He is not righteous, then none of us have any hope of being righteous. God’s righteousness must come first. His righteousness

must be your first concern. Get the righteousness of God straight in your mind, and everything else will fall into place. Doubt it, and nothing else will work. Everyone has doubts—I’m not blaming you for yours. Paul squelches them here, though. Forget about your doubts, then.

God does everything right. Believe it. —MZ

Next week: *What is “propitiation”? How did God “pass over” sins before? What made Him want to do something different in the current era? Why must our Justifier be just?*

“God loves it when we see His wisdom and righteousness now, before the results show up.”