



Sunday, August 31, 2014

ZWTF

Zapping-you Whenever Thoughts Flow

Volume 3, Issue 29

ROMANS Part 33

Chapter 4:3-6

What is the Scripture saying? “Now Abraham believes God, and it is reckoned to him for righteousness.” Now to the worker, the wage is not reckoned as a favor, but as a debt. Yet to him who is not working, yet is believing on Him Who is justifying the irreverent, his faith is reckoned for righteousness.

Before Abraham was famous in three religions, all he could do was look up at the stars and drool at the things God promised to do for him. God called Abraham in the drool phase of his life. As we will see this in verse 17 of this chapter, God called Abraham before Abraham could even believe Him. God called him before his name was even “Abraham.” Before he was Abraham, the son of Terah was known as “Abram.” “Abram” is to “Abraham” what “Joey” is to “Joseph.” It is not very sophisticated, or even godly. The Jews have no use for the man at this point, and neither do the Muslims or the Christians. These people don’t really like Abraham until God breathes an extra consonant into his name.

The fifth letter of the Hebrew alphabet “*he*,” means “God’s breath.” Five is also the number of grace. Pronouncing *he* sounds like a human exhalation: *hhh!* God breathed upon the names of both Abram and his wife Sarai, turning Abram into “AbraHam,” and Sarai into “SaraH.” The breath of God

is exciting; it smells better than the human variety. It’s the beginning of God-*activity*—and please note how I emphasize, with italics, the word “activity.” The breath of God is the beginning of looking and acting God-like. Before that, a person has only his or her own exhalations, which smell a little lower than the angels. This is when God calls *us*, however, “While we are still infirm, still in accord with the era” (Romans 5:6)—and still in need of mint-flavored mouth rinse.

Neither Jews, Christians nor Muslims have any use for the Abram Paul loves, until God changes his name and demands that he escort his son Isaac to Mount Moriah and run a knife through his heart. In other words, Abraham isn’t appreciated by any religion until his faith is tested and sweat begins pouring from his Chaldean pores. Don’t religions ever love to sweat! They love to see their Bible heroes sweat. Better yet if a nearby ram gets his horns caught in a bramble bush and starts struggling and making pathetic ram noises.





favorable weather conditions. Thank God as well that there were wars in her day capable of being fought by women dressed as boys and cutting their own hair with scissors and an oatmeal bowl.

STAINED PAIN

When I was a kid, I used to stare at the Abraham scene on the west-facing stained-glass window of my church. Did the artist depict Abraham staring up at the sky and believing God? Of course not. It's too boring. Forget Genesis chapter 15. There would be no action there to incite the religious heart and make children want to say the rosary ten times every night and give up the Batman television series for Lent. The scene depicted on the stained glass of my church was Abraham on Mount Moriah, sacrificing his son Isaac to God—or attempting to, anyway.

I will never forget Abraham's face in that glass: it was rent in anguish. The patriarch's knife, of course, rose high above his son, ready to be plunged with a bloody scream into the boy's chest. Included in the scene was the angel come to stay Abraham's hand. In the stained glass scene at my church, however, Abraham cannot yet see the angel. I could never figure out why Abraham didn't just turn around. The angel had great wings; it was in midair flight, this angel, and hovered directly behind the patriarch. I could never figure out how Abraham failed to hear the an-

gel's flapping wings. The angel had wings comparable to those of the flying monkeys in *Wizard of Oz*.

THERE MUST BE ANOTHER WAY

Jews, Christians and Muslims must have action. These are the people of "doing, doing, doing," and their holy heroes must be pained, breathing hard, or dying terrible deaths. This, however, is not the way of the gospel of the grace of God. It is not the way of Paul's Abraham (Abram) of Genesis chapter 15. The book of Romans is an account of God's ability in the face of human inability. The saints of Paul's stained glass (God forbid there should ever be any) would be sitting around a campfire drinking coffee and talking. A few of them would be sleeping. These scenes would make the people *looking* at them sleepy. Many naps would ensue. No one would give up anything for Lent.

Such is justification by faith.

BELIEF VS. ACTS

The most righteous thing a person can do is to believe God. It's not my fault—nor my credit—that God likes belief so much. The first slap in God's face was not being believed. God told Eve that eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil would lead to death.

Satan talked Eve out of the fact that God really meant what He said. Thus, she disbelieved God. (Eve believed Satan instead of God.) Her offspring, Jesus Christ, fixed the problem and delivered her from the stigma of damning the race to death. What fixes the problem of not believing God? Believing Him. This is why God likes it so much. It undoes Earth's premier sin.

God's future judgment is based on acts. There will be a time—such as at the Great White Throne Judgment—when God will judge based on acts. No one is claiming the principle of “judgement based on acts” to be an unscriptural theme or precedent.

“Unless you are foolish enough to golf during an electrical storm, killer lightning bolts are extremely rare.”

What I *am* claiming is that judgment in accord with acts today is—as far as God is concerned—impossible. God is now conciliated to the world through Christ and is not reckoning offenses (2 Corinthians 5:19). Haven't you noticed? God cannot be roused to indignation today. Many have tried. Yet people blaspheme God and continue to live. Unless you are foolish enough to golf during an electrical storm, killer lightning bolts are extremely rare. God never uses thunderstorms vindictively these days. Later? Yes. He will do it later. But not now. Go ahead and curse Him all you want; you will continue to live. Just don't curse Him while golfing during an electrical storm.

PAYBACKS?

God's present-day gifts are ruined the minute we attempt either to repay them or imagine that we somehow deserved them in the first place. It's hard for human beings to keep their dirty hands off of anyone's grace, let alone God's. I had a friend years ago who could not accept money from me. When he and his family were down-and-out, I tried on several occasions to stuff cash into his pocket. He could never accept it. He used to say, “Martin, I will pay you back.” Whenever I refused this, he would refuse the money. This infuriated me. I went from wanting to help the guy to wanting to strangle him. God is much calmer than me, thank God. Were He thus disposed, we'd all be divinely executed, not for laziness, but for failing to keep our dirty working hands off of His grace.

Imagine. God sends His Son to die on the cross for our sins, and someone says, “That is, like, so amazing and awesome that you did that for me, God. I promise I will pay you back.” Really? How? Church attendance? Giving up cigarettes? Just what shabby human trinket will anyone dare attempt to exchange for Calvary? How badly are we aching to insult He Who has everything? What are we going to give him? Soap on a rope? A plant? A tie? A handful of prayers?

“Now to the worker, the wage is not reckoned as a favor, but as a debt. Yet to him who is not working, yet is believing on Him Who is justifying the irreverent, his faith is reckoned for righteousness” (Romans 4:4-5).

If our salvation were one of works, then whatever God gave us based on these works would be a debt. God would be indebted to us for working. This evangel that we teach, however, is not based on works. Thus, it is completely of God's favor. There are these two possibilities only: favor and debt. Many people would be loathe to say, “God is indebted to me.” Yet these same people imagine themselves to be working for salvation. It is fashionable to say, “I am working for God.” It is hideous to say, “God is indebted to me.” Yet one comes with the other. The two concepts are not sold separately. One is easily uttered, one not. Yet the loathful saying (“God is indebted to me”) belongs to the same dirty hand and mouth that believes he or she works for salvation.

I would not be caught dead offering God anything but thanks. If I am somehow clothed during the snatching away, I will soon remedy that condition. I don't want God thinking I have any secret gifts hidden anywhere. Watch me strip. If they make me wear pants, I'll tear out the pockets. If they make me wear shoes (stuff can be hidden in shoes),



I'll kick them off. I would not wish to give Him the slightest inkling that I, at any time, ever dreamed of repaying Him for anything He has done for me. Paul writes in 1 Timothy 6:7—

For nothing do we carry into the world, and it is evident that neither can we carry anything out.

This verse is quite a relief. It allays any worries I have about pockets and hidden shoe compartments in Paradise.

Israel repays God with good works. It's an Israel thing; it's a visible religion thing. Since Christianity and Islam are visible religions, they need their saints to do stuff. They need their saints to sweat and die.

Today's saints? We merely believe stuff. Our joints don't even work. Try to bend us; we can't move. Our hands hold no weapons, our banners furl not in the wind.

God, we would make lousy action figures. —**MZ**

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