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ZWTF

Zapping-you Whenever Thoughts Flow

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ROMANS Part 34

Chapter 4:6-10

PARDON VS. JUSTIFICATION

Even as David also is telling of the happiness of the man to whom God is reckoning righteousness apart from acts:

“Happy are they whose lawlessnesses were pardoned and whose sins were covered over!

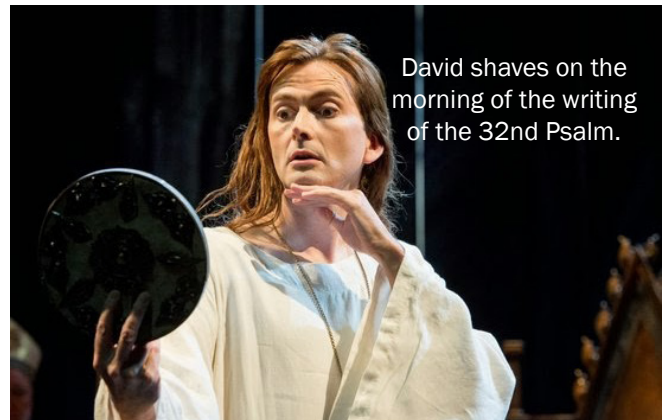
Happy is the man to whom the Lord by no means should be reckoning sin!”

This happiness, then, is it for the Circumcision, or for the Uncircumcision also? For we are saying, “To Abraham faith is reckoned for righteousness.” How then, is it reckoned? Being in circumcision or in uncircumcision? Not in circumcision, but in uncircumcision.

Why is Paul quoting David in a discussion about how righteousness comes through the gracious gift of Jesus Christ’s faith? David had never met Jesus Christ. Because here in the first two verses of the 32nd Psalm, David enjoys such a moment of clarity and exuberant relief concerning his adulterous affair with Bathsheba and the subsequent murder of that fair woman’s husband, Uriah, that he gushes glorious things about forgiveness and—surprisingly—about something he doesn’t even know about but that Jesus Christ would eventually teach to the world through the apostle Paul: justification by faith. The holy spirit caused Paul to read this passage one day, to make it stick to his mind, and then to inspire him to copy and paste it into his own letter to illustrate a new theological point. This point would borrow text from an author so famous that the mere mention of

his name would lend confidence to Paul’s otherwise seemingly mad assertion.

David wrote this psalm in a holy swoon of spiritual brightness. I don’t generally recommend swoons, but a man after God’s own heart who also happens to be a king of Israel and a veteran of great suffering can write while swooning anytime he wants to. I picture David sitting next to an open window, penning this psalm in his own hand. A slight breeze moves the sun-dappled drapery and the fronds of palms just outside of his room rustle hard enough to soothe the great king’s soul. Finally, if only for this singular moment, God grants David reprieve from the guilt of his sins. Now comes exuberance founded upon a happy thought, quickly put to parchment.



David shaves on the morning of the writing of the 32nd Psalm.

The title of this Psalm (the words are in dark-face type in the *Concordant Version of the Old Testament*, and are thus inspired) is: **“David, Contemplating.”** The man has no Scripture in front of him; I’m telling you, he’s writing off the top of his head in front of an open window. Without a care concerning where or how the thought has come, the king writes: “Happy is the man to whom the Lord by no means should be reckoning sin!” You will soon appreciate the startling nature of this statement.



PARDON VS. JUSTIFICATION

The only thing that pardon and justification have in common is that they are both theological terms continually mis-employed by ignorant Christians claiming the impossible, namely, that they are justified and forgiven simultaneously. Even some theologians suppose these words to be etymologically identical, though of course they are not. Pardon carries the same thought as forgiveness, whose meaning is, “letting off the hook.” The Greek word translated “pardon” is the same word translated “forgiveness” in the *Concordant Literal New Testament*, namely, *aphesis*. Its literal English elements are FROM-LETTING. The idea is that God is opening up His clenched hand to LET a penalty for your sins fall FROM it. You failed Him (that is, you sinned), but in His mercy, He is relaxing the just penalty and granting you reprieve.

Justification, on the other hand, is a completely different Greek word with a correspondingly different meaning. The Greek word behind the English “justify” is *dikaioo*, meaning “to make right.” The opposite of right is wrong. Justification, therefore, is the state of not being wrong. In other words, it is being right, or “righteous.”

Justification is God looking at you, right now, and saying, “You are right.”

In Paul’s letter to the Romans, “righteousness” is not a moral attainment, but a state of being based on a divine pronouncement. Before he’d fathered a single son, Abraham heard the following from God: “A father of many nations I have appointed you” (Romans 4:17). Abraham did not *feel* that this was true. He certainly had not lived it; at the time, he was a fatherless man sit-

ting outside of his tent. Abraham simply flat-out believed what God said concerning him.

Romans 3:24—

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

For us, we simply believe what God says of us: *we are now right in His sight*. We are to think and believe this way now, in spite of what we see in the mirror.

THE JUDGE ISN’T CRAZY

Here is a good question: If we are right in God’s sight, how can we be forgiven? Remember that forgiveness is the letting off of a penalty for sin. One cannot be forgiven unless he or she has done wrong. Justification is the fact of not being wrong. Therefore, a justified person cannot be forgiven. What would he or she be forgiven for? For being right? Pardon and forgiveness assume guilt, whereas justification denies it. Does the following make sense?

Judge: I pronounce you “Not Guilty.” Therefore, I will forgive your sentence.

Forgive *what* sentence? I’m not guilty.

God has declared us “Not Guilty.” For those thus exonerated, forgiveness is out of the question. It is not only out of the question, it’s impossible.

Here is a rational statement:

Judge: I pronounce you guilty. Therefore, you are going to jail.

This makes sense. But now the case goes before the president, who is able to exercise executive privilege and pardon lawbreakers. The president is able to say, “Yes, you are guilty of breaking law. But because you are a

friend of mine who contributed thousands of dollars to my campaign, I will offer you clemency and let you off your jail sentence.”

This is forgiveness, not justification. Forgiven people are guilty—justified people are not. Guilty people can be forgiven; “not guilty” people cannot.

Can you see that Israel has never come to the truth of justification? Justification operates outside the sphere of law. Yet even during the Millennium, Israel operates in law.

Not even during the Millennium, therefore, will Israelites be justified. During this time, they yet operate in the sphere of law. God will have written the law on their hearts (Jeremiah 31:33). The only reason forgiveness is unneeded is because Israel is at last perfectly doing law. But since they are still in the realm of law, it is as though forgiveness waits in the wings; it’s not needed, but wherever there is law, forgiveness is ready to bless. Forgiveness and law are a package deal. Justification, however, has nothing to do with law—it is a blessing in Christ that can thrive only apart from it.

“For we are reckoning a man to be justified by faith, apart from works of law” (Romans 3:28).

GOD IS GETTING TIRED OF IT

Stop begging God to forgive you for your sins. By doing so, you are failing to appreciate the gift of justification through Jesus Christ’s faith. God now looks at you through the lens of the new humanity (Ephesians 2:15). If you are constantly begging Him to forgive your sins, you are still considering yourself according to flesh, that is, according to the old humanity. You are robbing the tomb of the old humanity. Why would you do that? You were entombed and roused together with Christ (Romans 6:5-7). Your old humanity was crucified (Romans 6:6). This is why you are able to live “in newness of life” (Romans 6:4). Kicking yourself for sin is certainly not newness of life. It is sniffing the tomb of the old humanity. Begging God to forgive you is certainly not newness of life. It is looking for the bones of the old corpse. That’s gross. Stop being a grave robber. Believe God that your old humanity was crucified and entombed with Christ. Believe God that when Jesus Christ rose from the dead, your sins got left in the tomb. Now you no longer have to visit the tomb.

Seeing as this is so, God now looks at you with new eyes. He’s looking at the new humanity, not the old. Get up to speed with God and stop looking at the old humanity. Your mirror is deceiving you. The body you are

looking at today is not the body God sees. Jesus Christ crucified and entombed that body. He considered your body crucified and entombed with Him. We are invited, in Romans 6, to look with God at the new humanity, even stare at it. You may do this in Romans, chapter 6; we’ll eventually be getting to it. This is the humanity that rose with Christ. We are invited to consider ourselves to have been roused with Christ, even while dragging around these decaying bodies. This is why Paul says that we are to be “reckoning” the new humanity as a fact (Romans 6:11). That Paul exhorts us to reckon it (think it) proves that it is not yet our experience. Otherwise, it wouldn’t need to be reckoned. It is a spiritual fact that is not yet seen, felt or realized. This is why Paul also exhorts us to walk by faith, not perception (2 Corinthians 5:7).

FORKING UP SIN

Back in the ‘80s, I used to listen to a teacher named Ray Prinzing. As much as this man helped me with truths concerning the salvation of all, Ray was a kingdom teacher (Israel-oriented) who had not yet come to the truth of his crucifixion, entombment and resurrection with Christ. Thus, Ray still battled his sins. He couldn’t help seeing himself in accord with the old humanity. In one of his taped messages, Ray offered the following analogy of what he did with his sins. I’m paraphrasing:

Whenever sin raises its head in my life, I picture a large fork. I picture myself stabbing the sin with a fork, and then offering it to God. In this way, God deals with my sin.



I used to think this was a great analogy, that it sounded very spiritual; but then I realized how primitive it was. Around the same time, God gave me the realization of the new humanity. If I truly saw myself as resurrected with Christ (at least in the mind of God), then I must also believe that my sins were left in Christ's tomb. As great as it sounds to offer one's sins to God, it is even greater to realize that there are no sins to offer; there is nothing to stab. In order to figuratively stab my sins with a metaphoric eating utensil, I would have to place a plate of my sins before me. To be staring at this plate of ugliness would be no different than what the Catholic church made me do for much of my youth.

Every month back in those Catholic days, the church forced me to recollect my sins and confess them to the priest. How was that different than forking them up to God? Sin is sin. How had Ray Prinzing improved upon Catholicism in this regard? Remembering sin is remembering sin. It is a terrible occupation to sit quietly and

“It is a terrible occupation to sit quietly and strain to recall every nasty thing you’ve ever done.”

strain to recall every nasty thing you’ve ever done. Such an occupation insults Justification. Justification sees the poor penitent picking up the fork or saying 10 “Our Fathers” and says, “What the heck are you doing? What is a righteous person doing digging up his or her sins? I could understand it if you were an Israelite still begging for forgiveness, but you are a member of the body of Christ. God sees you as right. He has declared you ‘Not Guilty.’ Have you never read the book of Romans? So please, let me know when you get over this obsession with your failings, and we will talk. Maybe then you will stop tomb-robbing and see yourself from the divine standpoint of the new humanity. Wake up and smell ‘Not Guilty!’”

BACK TO DAVID

Which brings us back to King David at his open window with the sunny, noisy fronds. Here, again, are the opening strains of the 32nd Psalm:

Happy are they whose lawlessnesses were pardoned and whose sins were covered over!

Happy is the man to whom the Lord by no means should be reckoning sin!



Happy is the man to whom the Lord should by no means be reckoning sin.

This first part was known and accepted by Israel: “Happy are they whose lawlessness were pardoned and whose sins were covered over.” Every Israelite knew of forgiveness and pardon. Pardon is being let off the hook for one’s sins. But now comes the strange part. There must have been a particularly strong blast of wind (with an accompanying spirit blast) for David to exult out of seemingly nowhere: “Happy is the man to whom the Lord by no means should be reckoning sin!”

This was the part of the Psalm for which David had no Scripture, and of which he had no experience. It is as though he were prophesying of Paul’s ministry. For truly, this is the meaning of justification, elaborated upon by our apostle: *the Lord is not reckoning sin*. One to whom sin is not reckoned cannot be forgiven or pardoned. Again, no one needs to be pardoned for being right. With this statement, David goes “off the script” to anticipate a future state that not even he will enter into, no, not even when resurrected into the millennial kingdom.

Did God inspire David to write this Psalm in order to help Paul? Yes, I believe He did. Anticipating Paul centuries later, God sent the spiritual blast that steered David’s pen. David, later reading what he wrote, must have shook his head and considered striking it. But the holy spirit, anticipating Paul’s future need to quote a notable Israelite concerning so freakish a teaching as justification by faith, saved it.

IN ANTIOCH, PAUL ROCKS THE BOAT

Addressing the Jews in the synagogue in Antioch in Acts, chapter 13, Paul references David and then, apparently recollecting the passage from Psalm 32, says the following (I include the entire context here):

For David, indeed, subserving his own generation by God's counsel, was put to repose, and was added to his fathers, and was acquainted with decay; yet He Whom God rouses was not acquainted with decay. Let it then be known to you, men, brethren, that through this One is being announced to you the pardon of sins—and from all from which you could not be justified in the law of Moses, in this One everyone who is believing is being justified.

Amazing! Here in Antioch, with a near-identical turn of phrase, Paul teaches what David wrote. Observe the similarities:

DAVID: "Happy are they whose lawlessnesses were pardoned and whose sins were covered over."

PAUL: "Through this One is being announced to you the pardon of sins."

DAVID: "Happy is the man to whom the Lord by no means should be reckoning sin!"

PAUL: "In this One, everyone who is believing is being justified."

With both David and Paul, the transition between pardon and justification occurs within the confines of a very

narrow context. It is as though both men are so aware of the shock of the new teaching, they preface it with the old. Standing alone, the new teaching over-startles; observing it emerging out of pardon makes it more palatable. Yet justification does not emerge from pardon; it stands apart from it. Do not think that justification stands upon the shoulders of God forgiving Israel the penalties of their sins. It cannot do so, no more than the new creation stands upon the shoulders of the new birth, or that the new earth stands upon the shoulders of the old, which will have been destroyed with a booming noise and dissolved by combustion (2 Peter 3:10). These two truths are as distinct as oil and water. Shaking these substances together produces a momentary, illusory union. Thus also with David and Paul; thus also with pardon and justification. But no. When truth settles, two things that could not be more disparate than pardon and justification also settle, and we realize that these things are as different as can be.

A.E. Knoch writes concerning Paul's pronouncement in Antioch:

Here we have the first intimation of the great doctrine of justification or acquittal. True to the kingdom he has just announced, Paul proclaims the pardon of sins. But pardon or forgiveness is but a temporary respite which may be forfeited or withdrawn (Mt. 18:23-35). Those Pentecostal believers who had been forgiven like the ten thousand talent debtor, yet refused to extend this blessing to the gentiles, who owed much less, had their pardon revoked.

Now, however, the apostle offers them more than pardon. Those who were pardoned still tried to keep the law of Moses (Acts 21:20). He promises an acquittal from their infractions of the law, on the ground of faith. Pardon takes guilt for granted. Justification or acquittal denies guilt. They mingle here for a moment, but in Paul's epistles those who are justified are beyond the necessity of any pardon, for they are pronounced not guilty.

Enjoy, for yourselves, the divine pronouncement: "Not Guilty!" It is a far greater blessing than pardon. Refuse to take unto yourselves those Scriptures, written to Israel, concerning God's old way of dealing with sin. For lo! There has come new! (2 Corinthians 5:17).

Happy the human to whom the Lord by no means should be reckoning sin.

This is you. Can you believe it? —MZ

Produced by Martin Zender/www.martinzender.com
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email: mzender@martinzender.com

