



ROMANS Part 39

Chapter 5:6-8



For Christ, while we are still infirm, still in accord with the era, for the sake of the irreverent, died. For hardly for the sake of a just man will anyone be dying: for the sake of a good man, perhaps someone may even be daring to die, yet God is commending this love of His to us, seeing that, while we are still sinners, Christ died for our sakes.

From house arrest, in Rome, address unknown:

Grace and peace to you from God, our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ. They do not even tell me where I am. I had to discover that from visitors, which I have done. I am on the Vicus Mundiciei, famous, it seems, for toilet articles. How appropriate. Nereus told me the number, but I forget it. This is the part of the address that is unknown. For the first friends to have found me, they sought diligently. I am thankful for stubborn saints. Some from the ecclesia here have come, for which I am thankful. Nereus was the first here. He came with his sister; I cannot remember her name. Patrobas has also come, and so has Persis, the Beloved. Tryphena and Tryphosa, it is rumored, shall call upon me next week.

It is a shame that Martinus Zendrinus (my Greek name for him) cannot now elaborate upon this section of my letter to you, for I know that it is one of his favorite parts, and he has said that it is “one of the few parts” he can grasp easily—which is another criticism of my writing. He is full of it, this criticism. He speaks incessantly of it to you. We shall have a discussion, he and I, when I see him. He will know then of the delicacies of the Greek language for which his poor English labors breathlessly, yet cannot attain. I will admit to writing in a rush. I told you before of how the spirit of God moves upon me. It takes hours, not days, to compose. I am usually pacing back and forth in a small room, with my scribe Tertius—whom I have told you about—at a table in a sweat to record it all. He is the inventor of shorthand. He gets no credit for it. Ah, but he shall be rewarded at the dais of Christ—as will all of us—for those excellencies for which the world cannot now repay us.



This was John in Jerusalem four years ago, the last time I saw him.

Martinus works diligently and speaks of my friend John's revelation, received on the island of Patmos, which I visited once on my way back to Jerusalem from Miletus. It is a good little island. I would not want to winter there, though. Concerning the Unveiling of our Lord, it is good to know of coming things, so listen well. The unveiling of our Lord and Savior is near. The apostasy must come first, and has. It is near full blossom. In the meantime, I am glad to re-take the pen and perfect for you your grasp of Christ. I will explain the niceties of what I purposed to explain in my letter to the saints here these many years ago, since Martinus thinks so much is lacking. I jest—somewhat. I trust you do not mind hearing from the horse's mouth. It may be a refreshment for you, and relief from the other end of the beast.

I have written to you elect few before (elect of God), published by the aforementioned benefactor in a literary oddity called, "The Clanging Gong News," of which I am told you are familiar. Should you wish to refresh yourselves concerning what was said then, the locations of my expositions are as follows:

http://www.martinzender.com/dangling_gong/archives/Volume2-Issue4.pdf

http://www.martinzender.com/dangling_gong/archives/Volume2-Issue5.pdf

http://www.martinzender.com/dangling_gong/archives/Volume3-Issue8.pdf

http://www.martinzender.com/dangling_gong/archives/Volume3-Issue9.pdf

http://www.martinzender.com/dangling_gong/archives/Volume3-Issue10.pdf

http://www.martinzender.com/dangling_gong/archives/Volume3-Issue11.pdf

"STILL INFIRM"

To me, less than the least of all the saints, has been given this grace: to know my complete unworthiness, not only in my role as administrator of God's secrets, but of being chosen to be a friend—nay, a son!—of God. A son of God and a brother of Christ. It is nearly unfathomable to me, even with the passage of these years. How does He best show His pure love to me, and to us? Like this: "While we are still infirm, still in accord with the era," that is when He died for our sakes. He died for us, "while we were still irreverent." I am the perfect example of that, am I not? Many of you are too. I could tell my story, and you no doubt will have your own.

When did He die for me? While I was serving the saints of Ephesus? Preaching until midnight to the Jews in Antioch? Confounding the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers on Mars Hill? Ah, no. Bearing the lash of those who hated Him? Not even. These were my shining moments. Read again what I said. Christ did not die for us in shining moments, but in moments so black that we would hide our faces in shame to recall them. There, then! Think of the time when you were at your very worst, when you were putrid, hateful, bound in evil. Think of your lowest moment of doubt, of stubbornness, of sin. *There*, then. *That* is when He died for you. That is when He meets your eyes and says, "You are my son, in whom I am well pleased."

The point is this: He did His best for you at your worst. Can you think of any greater sacrifice than the cross? Now, can you think of any greater shame than what you have just called to mind? The cross was His part, the shame yours. Two extremes. This is the formula

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for rest. What do I mean? Just this: If He has done His best for you at your worst, then what will you now do to elicit more favor from Him? Will you do some good act? Some marvelous moral feat? That is fine, but it will win no more of His love than already lavished upon you in the shadow of your darkest deed. You can do nothing to improve His opinion of you. More sin only elicits more grace (Romans 5:20). Now you know what I mean by “rest.” This is the end of all striving to be God-like. The Jews still have not figured this out. The Romans think they *are* gods. This revelation has come to neither the Jews, nor to the Greeks, but rather to us upon whom God has bestowed such bold belief.

LOVING THE UNDESERVING

See how Christ wins the utmost response from us. We can scarcely believe such love in the face of our hate, so we throw ourselves at Him in thanks. This is all He wants. He wants to be thanked. Only one of the ten lepers He healed returned to thank Him. That always vexed me. What was the difficulty in finding Him? He banished their disease that no doctor could cure. It is base unthankfulness. I am persuaded of better things concerning us. He showed us such love at the very moment we were most undeserving. *This* is what makes us respond. If we think we deserve such favor, then why would we ever fall at His feet? (I have seen people fall at their *own* feet, and it is difficult to retain one’s breakfast in light of it, so sickening is the sight.) Grace lies in the entire lack of anything inside of us to elicit His love. Thus, He loves the undeserving. When at last you realize this, it will bring you to the ground in relief; thanks; praise; real rather than feigned worship. It did this to me. But then when you recover from the shock of what you have never known, you are at last happy. Or should I say, joyful.

I have often thought that the result of a co-operative salvation is co-operative thanks and praise. That is, if the sinner owes anything of his salvation to himself, then in that very measure he must also thank himself—at least if he is consistent and logical. That, I would like to hear, if only for the novelty. If only those who believe in the freedom of the human will to choose Christ, apart from Christ—if only these were consistent and logical enough to sing their own praises in the common hymns, why, that would be something: “Praise me from whom several of my blessings flow.” Image that. If only such honesty existed, we would hear strains such as: “Amazing Me, how sweet the sound, that saved a decent person like meeeeeee ...”!

WHILE WE ARE STILL SINNERS

Notice the tense: while we *are* still sinners. That was no accident. I have not stopped sinning yet. Have you? I am yet in flesh. I have yet to be perfected. Are any among you going on to perfection without me? Are you rich, while I am still poor? I have this treasure of God’s grace in an earthen vessel (2 Corinthians 4:7), so that I may continually remember to whom I owe my joy and my rest. It is somewhat like circumcision, only better. I can observe my literal flesh and remember how I came into this physical world, that is, apart from any will of my own, or even the will of my earthly father. I can also readily see the figurative flesh in me that yet serves sin. Beholding it (not that I want to), I am reminded how I came into this “world” of eonian life. It was by grace, and grace alone. It started that way, and continues to travel along that road.

DARING TO DIE

“For the sake of a good man, perhaps someone may even be daring to die, yet God is commending this love of His to us, seeing that, while we are still sinners, Christ died for our sakes” (Romans 5:8).

Yes, that is what I wrote. The truth ought to be self-evident. A man will die for his friend. A man will die for his family. A man will die, perhaps, for a good man of whom he is not personally acquainted. But what sort of Man dies for enemies? What sort of Man dies for those who are killing Him? What sort of Man dies for the Prince of Darkness himself, who incites the very hearts of those betraying and piercing Him? And not *just* death, but the most wretched death available to humanity? There is only One Man in the universe Who is so daring, and it is our own Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. Daring! That is what I called Him, and call Him still. His strikes against evil are bold. His obedience to His Father is bold. His love is bold. His grace is unheard of in all the annals of Israel, and not only there, but in the registries of heaven. Listen closely! Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, what God has made ready for those of us who love Him. I have seen it myself. It remains, to this day, unspeakable. But the day draws near.

Now may the Lord Jesus Christ, Himself, be with your spirits. Enter with boldness into so great a grace!

Remaining your servant, and a prisoner and slave of Christ Jesus,

Paul