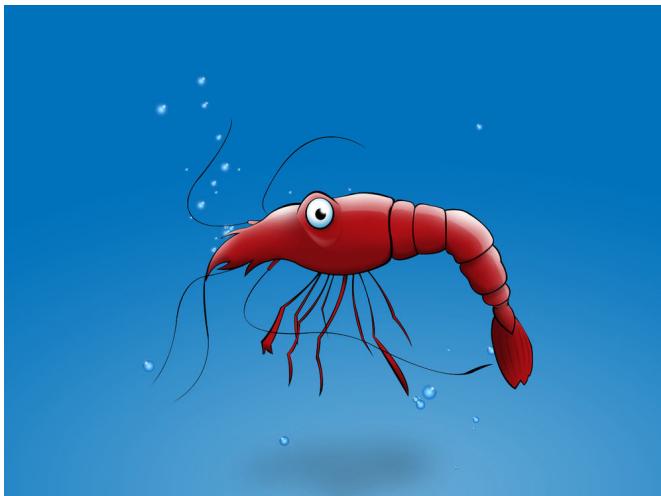




ROMANS Part 48

Chapter 5:15-19

Greater Than Adam, Part 7



But not as the offense, thus also the grace. For if, by the offense of the one, the many died, much rather the grace of God and the gratuity in grace, which is of the One Man, Jesus Christ, to the many superabounds. And not as through one act of sinning is the gratuity. For, indeed, the judgment is out of one into condemnation, yet the grace is out of many offenses into a just award.

For if, by the offense of the one, death reigns through the one, much rather, those obtaining the superabundance of grace and the gratuity of righteousness shall be reigning in life through the One, Jesus Christ. Consequently, then, as it was through one offense for all mankind for condemnation, thus also it is through one just award for all mankind for life's justifying. For even as, through the disobedience of the one man, the many were constituted sinners, thus also, through the obedience of the One, the many shall be constituted just.

WHO SIGNED UP FOR THIS?

“Consequently, then, as it was through one offense for all mankind for condemnation ...”

Stop right there. Did you volunteer for involvement in this Adamic mess? Was condemnation the “soup de jour” you chose from the menu of existence? Let’s simplify the question: Did you volunteer to be born?

“Excuse me.”
“Yes?”
“I would like to descend to Earth.”
“Do you understand the ramifications?”
“I have seen some brochures.”
“You will begin life as an embryo.”
“Is that kind of like a super nova?”
“No. You will resemble a baby shrimp.”
“For how long?”
“Let me check your file.”
(Five years pass.)
“Thirty years. In middle age, you will resemble Shamu.”
“Is that kind of like a movie star?”
“It’s a Sea World attraction. You will have diabetes and heart disease.”
“At least there will be good television shows on.”
“No there won’t be.”
“At least my family will understand me.”
“God, you’re naive.”
“When I’m not eating cheesecake, what will be happening?”
“Death. Doom. Discouragement. Disappointment.”
“Every day?”
“No. Every 10 days or so, you will get a one-day break. Not the whole day, though.”
“What about depression? Doesn’t that also start with a ‘d’?”
“Let me check your file.”
(Three years pass.)

"Yes. You will experience crushing depression for ten years, with thoughts of suicide, followed by suicide."

(Two year pause.)

"Wait. I already don't exist."

"Now you're thinking."

"If I don't exist now, why go to the trouble of not existing again?"

"Keep that up."

"These other things sound like trouble."

"Ever hear of vanity?"

"Isn't that a brand of window cleaner?"

"It's a gnawing sense of uselessness."

(One year pause, with quiet piano interlude.)

"I have one question only."

"That, itself, is troubling."

"Will there be cheese curls?"

(Six month pause.)

"I don't understand."

"On Earth. Will there be cheese snacks baked to a crackly crunch, but the snacks aren't real cheese?"

"One moment please."

(Seven years pass.)



"Yes. There will be these things you describe."

"I'm going in then."

"Wait. Your mother was sexually abused and your father is an alcoholic."

"Will they buy me a bike?"

"What does ... Yes, they will steal one for you on your sixth birthday, but—"

"And there are cheese curls ... "

"I already told you. But after you lose your second career, your fifth child will be stillborn and your third wife is going to—"

"Geronimo!"

* * *

Being born is something that happens to us. Our parents had sex, and that was that. One sperm gained access to the egg, and that was that. There were no questions ahead of time: no brochures, no deliberations, no movie trailers of what to expect, no peeks into the sequel; nothing. Otherwise, who among us would venture forth? When we are suddenly aware of our existence, we say "Wha' hoppin?" Nice try, but no. No human at the dawn of awareness has ever said this. "Wha' hoppin?" is far too brilliant a statement for beings lacking existence before birth. Thus, the question "Wha' hoppin?", stupid as it is, boasts more wisdom than the actual human experience allows. Nothing different can happen to a being to whom nothing has ever happened. Thus, life is a dizzying series of cannonballs whizzing toward our heads. We don't even know what "the cannonballs of life" are until the first one flies past our nose. Then the second one comes and only then can we say, "Oh, that again." After my first day of school in first grade, I thought that was it. I literally thought I was done. I strode off the bus in great relief. Then they told me I had to go back. *What?* This was a huge shock to me. It was the beginning of twelve years of vast struggle for which I did not volunteer and of which I hated every minute.

We no more volunteered to be alive here than did Adam. He's the pattern, so watch what happens to him.

ENTER ADAM

On the sixth day of creation, God creates a human being. He gathers up elements from the soil and forms a lump. The lump lays there because it has no life. The name of the lump is "Adam." The lump doesn't know this yet because it has no consciousness; it is void of life. God breathes life into the lump, and the lump lives. The lump is now conscious. The first thing the lump decides to do is raise itself up. (This is the first pattern of Christ's resurrection.) The lump does not look at its hands and wonder what they are, because hands are not new to the lump. Nothing is new. For something to be new, there has to be old, and there is no old.

God gives the now-living lump a woman, which is finally something new. For Adam, it was the first thing that amazed him. He had fallen into the deepest asleep ever and awoke with a history.

THE SET-UP

God instructs the couple to eat from every tree in the garden except one tree: the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. (I capitalize it because of its epicness.) I will tell

you ahead of time: God purposely sets the scene so that Adam and Eve *will* disobey Him and eat of the tree. He wants them to sin, and they do. This does not make God a sinner; God never sins. To sin means “to miss the mark.” If God deep down wants Adam and Eve to stay true to Him, and if He hinges everything upon their fidelity, and they fail His intention, *then* God has sinned. But since Adam and Eve do exactly what God intends for them to do, He has not missed the mark in the least, and thus has not sinned.

This is the truth you will never hear in Christianity, because Christianity thinks that God is a lot like them. That is, they think that God is somewhat like a human. Their depictions of Him are of an elderly gentleman with a long white beard who sits on a golden throne. This juvenile concept of God sets Christians in the hole right off the bat. Once they get the idea in their heads that God is somehow remotely similar to their sorry, struggling selves, every thought they conjure up after this is doomed to idiocy. It doesn’t matter how beautiful the covers of their books are if the insides spring from the premise that God is kind of like the people who designed the book covers. This is really a shame, because Christians are the ones tell-

“I could go on for pages comparing Christians to boll weevils, but I do not wish to upset the boll weevils.”

ing us that they are the experts on God. A boll weevil has a better conception of God than a Christian because the worst thing that could be said about a boll weevil is that it is neutral. It has no teaching at all—no teaching being better than wrong teaching. I could go on for pages comparing Christians to boll weevils, but I do not wish to upset the boll weevils. The best that can be said about the boll weevil is that it can’t help doing what God makes it do. Deep down, the boll weevil knows this. It’s called instinct. The boll weevil is not a free moral agent, and I contend that the boll weevil is on some level cognizant of this. It is not free, it is not moral, and it is not an agent. How has the boll weevil come upon such wisdom? For starters, it has never enrolled in a seminary or attended a church service. This is the last dissimilarity with which I will suffer you between Christians and boll weevils.

As I said, God plans ahead of time for the first couple to disobey Him. Part of the lure here is that He expressly prohibits them from eating the fruit of that particular tree,

automatically enhancing the desirability of the fruit. Paul captures this facet of human nature in Romans 7:8, writing,

Now Sin, getting an incentive through the precept, produces in me all manner of coveting. For apart from law Sin is dead.

God made human nature. What Paul just described above is how humans are supposed to act. It is perfectly natural to react this way to a prohibition. It makes humans do what God wants them to do because the humans are only obeying their natures, which God made. God sets lovely little traps for human nature all the time. They are not really traps, because in the end they bless.

Next, God puts the tree in the middle of the Garden. He made the garden “... with the tree of life in the middle of the garden, and also the tree of the knowledge of good and evil” (Genesis 2:9). If You really don’t want Your creatures eating from this tree, the middle of the garden is a bad place for it. It is a questionable strategy. (If you *do* want them to eat from it, however, the strategy is stellar. Add a prohibition and the thing is guaranteed.)

Next, God has made the fruit of this particular tree pleasant on the eyes. According to Genesis 3:6, “The woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it brought a yearning to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable for gaining insight.”

Speaking of the woman, God made her even more innocent than Adam. Thus, she was easily seduced. Paul says that Eve (1 Timothy 2:14) was deluded and seduced, not Adam. Additionally, “the serpent, it became more crafty than any other animal of the field that Yahweh Elohim had made” (Genesis 3:1). This recipe, these traps, these conditions, are a guarantee for “failure,” which is actually success because the “Fall of Adam” was not a fall in the absolute sense, but rather a necessary preparation for the revelation of Jesus Christ: no sin, no Savior. But I’m getting ahead of myself.

Let’s review:

- the tree sits unguarded and unprotected in the middle of the garden
- the fruit of the tree brings yearning to the eyes
- God purposely makes Eve innocent, that is, lacking any knowledge of good and evil
- God prohibits the couple from eating the fruit, making the fruit more desirable still
- God purposely makes the serpent crafty

THE BOMBSHELL; I DIDN'T WRITE THE BOMBSHELL

All of this should prepare you to now receive one of the most shocking verses in all of Scripture: Romans 8:20-21—

For to vanity was the creation subjected, not voluntarily, but because of Him Who subjects it, in expectation that the creation itself, also, shall be freed from the slavery of corruption into the glorious freedom of the children of God.

From the time of the first couple's sin, the creation was subject to vanity. Vanity means "uselessness." Apart from Jesus Christ and the rescue from death into glory, everything feels useless and meaningless. Most our days are exasperating. This crappy feeling of unease is interrupted only by naps and some good meals. The astonishing part of this verse is that the creation was subjected to this vanity "not voluntarily." That's the bombshell. Don't shoot the messenger. I didn't write the bombshell. Oh, shoot if you want to. I will gladly die for the cause. I will happily be delivered from a world containing death and cheese curls. Read this verse in the version of your choice. No version I have ever seen has been able to botch it, no, not even the vaunted King James Bible. This is what I have been trying to show you—the involuntary-ness of our condemnation to mortality and thus sin. Human free will occupies no corner of this. If creation did not volunteer for this slug-fest of sin, death and decay, how did it all come about? Who is responsible for it? The answer to this question is so clearly and brilliantly stated that even the boll weevil nods in reverent affirmation: "Because of Him Who subjects it."

The next question Paul anticipates is, *Why would God do that?* The answer to this question is also plainly elucidated as follows: "... in expectation that the creation itself, also, shall be freed from the slavery of corruption into the glorious freedom of the children of God."

God's goal is to free creation from the slavery of corruption that, through none of its own intention, has befallen it. As we shall see, the freeing is just as involuntary as the slavery. The point for now is that in order to free creation, God must first enslave it. This is the explanation of the "mysterious" passage known as Romans 11:32, "For God locks up all together in stubbornness, that He should be merciful to all." Where is the vaunted human free moral agency in this passage? It doesn't exist.



"Yes. Please send me into a world of utter frustration."

It is neither on the stubborn end, nor on the end of the mercy. Free moral agency must be imported from a foreign field and illegally inserted into a passage that natively and instinctively resists it.

Where is the thrill of freedom if not for slavery? If not for stubbornness, where would be the sweet fresh air of mercy? The slavery and the stubbornness, therefore, must predate the better things. God provides for these negative things in Eden. Eden, then, becomes the field for the enactment of Part 1 of God's drama, and Calvary the field for Part 2. Part 1 (Eden) gets us into the necessary trouble, while Part 2 (Calvary) gets us out of it, glad for the deliverance.

For humanity, it all comes down to Eden and Calvary. (Take your eyes off of yourself, for nothing comes down to you.) It comes down to Eden and Calvary; Adam and Christ; evil and good; stubbornness and mercy; slavery and freedom. These are all package deals. No individual part is sold separately. Because God makes the human to depend upon contrast for revelation, He cannot have any one of these elements without the opposing thing. Thus, He provides for both; *He* provides for both. We are along

for the ride. We watch what happens to us and say, “Thank You, God; thank You, God; thank You, God.”

I always recommend saying this three times.

THE CURE PREDATES THE SIN

Though the evil parts of these packages come first into our purview, they were never first in the mind of God. In the mind of God, first and foremost, were the following: 1) love, 2) mercy, 3) salvation, and 4) freedom. Thus, the Lamb of God was “slain from the disruption of the world” (Revelation 13:8). This was long before Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit. My conclusion is that the “cure” predates the disease. The disease comes only to provide a field of opportunity for the revelation of the “cure.” This is why the sin isn’t absolutely a sin, and why God can speak later, through Paul, of justification. The sin was Part 1 of an ingenious plan. Ignorant people credit God with an ingenious plan of salvation, all the while damning the devil and tacking up mug shots of Adam and Eve at the post office as the criminals of the eon and the stupidest people ever to walk Earth, as if they—the ignorant people—would have done anything differently under identical conditions.

The Christian view is that the sin of Eden threw God’s plans into disarray, forcing Him into Plan B, which is Christ. *What? Jesus Christ was an afterthought?* This is the view that makes God a sinner, not my view. (I call this outlandish view: “Jesus Christ, The Afterthought.” It comes pre-packaged with sad organ music.) My view—the Scriptural view—is that God intended ahead of time for all of this to happen so that He could unveil His Son, Whom He held in His bosom long before sin. How can He unveil a Savior without sin? How can He unveil immortality without death?

The brilliance of my view is that nothing is amiss in the universe. Circumstances have never forced God from His Script. Adam’s sin is just as much a part of the Script as is the crucifixion of Christ; one cannot exist without the other, and all was set out beforehand (Isaiah 46:10). This is Paul’s message. This is what I herald. I am a happy herald of this because it is so perfect. It glorifies God. It gives a reason for evil and a happy outcome to the universe and every being in it. It lets me believe all of Scripture and makes me the friend of disgruntled church people. It also makes me the enemy of professional clergypeople and church-goers; but this is fine, because I can then suffer evil for the sake of Christ.

I may yet be shot.

God never resorts to Plan B. He never has to play “catch up” with the stuff He made. Wouldn’t this be like a potter chasing his newly-made coffee mug around the workshop? Perish the thought (put it to death), because it’s ridiculous. The Christian view of the universe has God running amok hoping to salvage what He’d hoped could have remained perfect, but what eventually escaped Him. God blueprinted a perfect universe, but Satan broke his leash and fouled The Plan. Ah, but

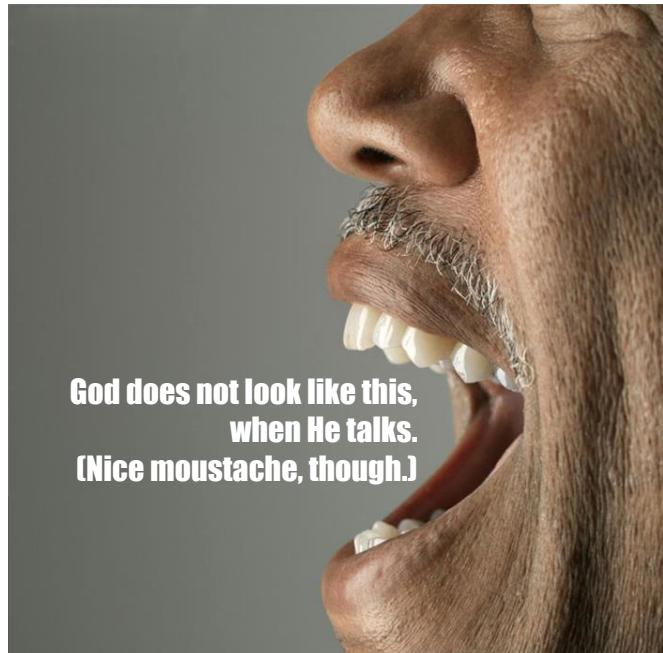


no universe is perfect without appreciation. Early Eden contained none of that. God arranges for this appreciation by the divine contrast of evil and good. God introduces evil into the universe (Isaiah 45:7), and then on its heels the appreciation of what was there all along, but never grasped: good. Neither Adam nor Eve realized the privilege of walking with God in the cool of the day until they lost it. They never even realized it was “the cool of the day” until the entry of sin and death. “That used to be the cool of the day,” Adam would have said to his woman, who would have answered, “Yeah. Now we know.”

When all have appreciated what is good, the evil which necessarily contrasted it is abolished—1 Corinthians 15:26, “the last enemy being abolished is death.” Why would evil be abolished? It is but a temporary expedient. It came later only to make us aware of good. It was never meant to stay, but to pass. I have said this before and I love repeating it: the teaching of the eternity of evil is sick. It’s a teaching of demons—1 Timothy 4:10—and nowhere to be found either in correctly translated Scripture or in the minds of those uninitiated into cults.

GOD'S WILL AND INTENTION

Ignorant people get thrown off the track when God comes across in Eden—and elsewhere in Scripture—as surprised and confused. In Genesis 3:9, for instance, God says, “Adam, where are you?” This is only one example of God acting ignorant. He is not ignorant. This is literally an act. There are many other examples of this, such as God bantering back and forth with Abraham about saving Sodom. Does anyone actually believe that God doesn’t know where Adam was? 1 John 3:20 assures us that “God knows all.” So what is happening here? This: God plays ignorant to teach Adam a lesson. This is a figure of speech known as “Condescension,” when God condescends to the human level in order to communicate with a lower order of creatures. The frequent



mistake is thinking that God is actually ignorant, and that this verse and others like it “prove” that God is flying by the seat of His pants along with His creation. This robs God of His omniscience, but no one seems to care. Christians keep using the phrase “God is omniscient” even while denying it in their doctrines.

Such a mistake is akin to someone walking into a room where an adult is coo-cooing to a baby and subsequently reporting the adult to be “a gibberish-speaking idiot,” as if the crib-room language were the adult’s default tongue. When God speaks to humanity, it’s never the “real” Him. He’s condescending to teach us something. He speaks neither Hebrew nor Greek. God is not an English-speaking Deity. He has neither a mouth, nor

vocal chords. He does not have teeth. Thus, gums are also completely lacking with God, as are tonsils. Whenever God is spoken of as having a mouth (such as in Isaiah 45:23), it is the figure of speech known as Condescension.

Thus, Eden.

There is a difference between God’s will and His intention. These are two different words in the Greek: “will” being *thelo*, and “intention” being *boulema*. God’s will is what He says He wants people to do, while His intention is what He actually intends for the people to do, and what they will do. Some call this the “revealed will” versus the “hidden will” of God. I prefer the inspired words just mentioned.

In Eden, God says to the first couple, “Don’t eat the fruit” (this is His will), even while arranging things so that Adam and his woman could do nothing but eat it (this is His intention; Romans 8:20-21 proves that it is His intention). How can Adam and Eve disobey God if they don’t have a law to disobey? God has to provide the law, and He does. He wants Adam and Eve to feel the pain of the loss (“God locks up all together in stubbornness ... ”) so that He can eventually deliver them into the joy of the mercy (“... that He might have mercy upon all”). God comes across surprised when Adam and Eve do fulfill His intention (Genesis 3:13, “Yahweh Elohim said to the woman: What is this you have done?”), which is another classic example of Condescension, used to exercise the couple’s collective conscience. Absolutely speaking, God is not surprised at all. How can He be? He’s God.

There are many other examples of God causing people to withstand His will in order to fulfill His intention (for “who has withstood His intention?”—Romans 9:19), including:

► **Pharaoh.** God tells Moses to tell Pharaoh to “Let my people go,” while at the same time hardening Pharaoh’s heart (Romans 9:17, 18) so that Pharaoh will not let the people go so that God can magnify His glory.

► **The law of Moses.** God continually presents the law to Israel as a viable means to personal and national righteousness, yet eventually tells Paul that the law came so that offenses would increase—Romans 5:20—thus destroying Israel’s self-confidence in anticipation of transplanting her heart.

► **The crucifixion of Christ.** God Himself sets forth the law, “Thou shalt not commit murder,” but then hardens the heart of Israel—Romans 11:25—so that they will eventually murder His Son, which occurs “in the specific counsel and foreknowledge of God”—Acts 2:23.

EVEN AS; THUS ALSO

Romans 5:19—“For even as, through the disobedience of the one man, the many were constituted sinners, thus also, through the obedience of the One, the many shall be constituted just.”

1 Corinthians 15:22-23—“For even as, in Adam, all are dying, thus also, in Christ, shall all be vivified. Yet each in his own class.”

A.E. Knoch's commentary on Verse 19 of Romans 5, from his book, *Concordant Commentary on the New Testament*, reads like this:

If Adam's offense only gave each one an opportunity to sin, so that some become sinners and others not, then we might say that Christ's work brings justification to all subject to their acceptance. But we must acknowledge that man has no choice in becoming a sinner, thus also will it be through the work of Christ. Both are actual and universal.

This is what I've been insisting upon and pleading for: the recognition that Adam's offense infects each of us irrespective of any so-called free choice. If Christians want to insist on Paul's parallel while at the same time insisting that God gives each one an opportunity to accept Jesus, they must then import their Christ dynamic into Eden and make the sinning and the dying in Adam also a matter of free choice. How does this work? It doesn't. Not even the most virulent opponent of these gorgeous parallels teach condemnation in Adam as a thing to be either accepted or refused. Mortality comes to all, irrespective of will.

Let us toss Christian duplicity to the trash heap, then, and read the above passages for what they say and not for what we have been taught they say. The “even as” and the “thus also” in both references make Paul's comparison between Adam and Christ a perfect parallel. Here is the revolution, which is also a two-thousand year-old truth lost in apostasy: *Even as death in Adam is completely involuntary for all, so vivification in Christ is completely involuntary for the same all.*

BREATHING AND IMPARTING

I told you that Adam was once a dead lump of clay. He remained so until God breathed life-giving spirit into him. Adam did not exist, and then suddenly he did. Thus also you, and every other human. To be in Adam, one must be born. To be born is to be pulled into existence from non-existence. The only thing that can accomplish

this, absolutely speaking, is the breath of God's spirit.

This divine action brings each of us, in our own order, onto Earth as a dying human. How does a dying human get into the Jesus Christ rescue boat? If you think it's an act of free choice, you're failing to follow the parallel. It may feel like an act of free choice, but as with the life that animated Adam, the power comes from without.



Stay with the parallel: The life of Christ unto immortality is just as imparted to humanity as is the breath of life received by Adam. Watch it work in this couplet:

Genesis 2:7—“Yahweh Elohim blew into his nostrils the breath of life; and the human became a living soul.”

Romans 12:3—“God parts to each the measure of faith.”

Both verses describe an impartation of life via an act of God. In the Genesis verse, God blows into the human's nostrils and he becomes a living soul. In the Romans verse, God parts to the human being faith, and the human becomes a member of the family of God. Both passages contain active verbs: “blow” and “part.” Both actions originate with God and happen *to* a being incapable of initiating it, but only receiving it. Adam was literally dead and was brought alive by God's breath. The soulish human is figuratively dead, and is vivified by divine faith.

Let us rejoice in the power and importance that this correct view of life gives to God. For God to be so glorified, we must be debased. As John the Baptist said concerning Jesus, “He must increase, and I must decrease.” This must also be our viewpoint of God. While the acceptance of Paul's teaching will knock wind from the sails of human pride, it will at the same time blow into the human heart an appreciation of God's greatest gift: life eternal together with Him. —MZ

(To be continued.)