

ROMANS Part 69

Chapter 8:18

The sufferings of the current era.

For I am reckoning that the sufferings of the current era do not deserve the glory about to be revealed for us.



THE CLERK

Here I sit in a non-chain motel room in Fresno, California that is supposed to be charming but that was purportedly a prostitute connec-

tion and a cover for drug deals in the 80's. There was probably no soap or shampoo in the rooms then, either.

I arrived late last night to find a disheveled clerk banging on her computer, trying to make it work. This move famously makes recalcitrant vending machines vend, but computers are far less responsive to the tactic and they rebel by shutting down and refusing to reboot ever again, no matter how many times a girl tries to reboot them, including nine times. Meanwhile, I am informed by the clerk that her thirty year-old boyfriend had undergone open heart surgery earlier this day. The doctors needed to operate right away. The surgeons replaced two valves, and I assumed they used pig valves because this is another well-known function of pigs besides bacon and stuttering cartoon characters.

"That's terrible," I said. "He is so young." I was talking about her boyfriend, and not the pig. "I know," she says. "Right?" She would be going to the hospital as soon as she checked me in, but the boyfriend's mother really can't stand her because of hurts that the mother thinks were inflicted upon her by the now-computerless woman before me, but that were in reality projections (projections in the psychological, clinical sense) imposed upon her by a woman whose own husband verbally abused her for the last 18 years of her miserable 22 year marriage, a situation made worse by the youngest son impregnating his seventeen year-old girlfriend and driving to Mexico.

"The doctors say that everything is fine, and that's what you want to hear, but I want to see him for myself, I think you understand, because you look like such an understanding man."

"Yes, I do understand, and thank you, and I am also very sorry for it all, very sorry that all of this has befallen you, and I hope everything works out with your boyfriend and his mother and her husband and their younger son and all the visa issues in Mexico that you speak of. But now I am wondering if there is a room

number associated with my stay here, and where I might find that room—things of that nature, not that I wish to impose upon you, because I don't; I would never do that, especially considering the day that you've had, and are continuing to have, and will continue to have after my departure."

"Oh, yes. 216. Sorry about that. Here's your key. Thanks for listening."

"I hope there is someone who can look at that computer. Technology is a pain."

"Yeah, well, these things happen. Bobby will be stopping in."

THE ROOM

The room is advertised as a suite, but "suite" is a figure of speech for an indentation in a wall containing a sink, a refrigerator, and a microwave oven. Since I have nothing to wash, cool or cook, I decide to brush my teeth. I reach into my opaque plastic bag to find my toothbrush, only to find my safety razor, "safety" being a figure of speech for "extremely hazardous when mistaken for a toothbrush."

I do not have a band aid and so I bleed in the shower for twenty minutes, never mind the wet gob of toilet paper pressed hard against the hole where a section of my finger used to be. The blood-water curling down the drain makes me think of the Beatles song "Helter Skelter," which purportedly inspired Charles Manson to order the killings of Sharon Tate and the LaBiancas. I reach outside the shower for another gob of toilet paper, only to see a roach walking beside the trash basket. The roach is taking his time at whatever God has willed for him; he is in no hurry whatsoever. I would even go so far as to call his manner "leisurely." He seems so at peace with his environment that I believe him to have been a resident here since the late '80's. I will not ask him to share the rent; he is clearly the freeloading type. I would not substitute a prostitute for him, or a line of cocaine, but boy, if he could talk.

I want to make sure I rinse my blood from the little plastic seat in the shower where the prostitutes and drug dealers used to sit and think about things, possibly together. The little plastic seat also looks like a good place to sit and clean one's toenails; I entertain this only as a theory. The last thing I want is for the housekeeper to think that anything violent or otherwise untoward has happened here in this shower stall, during my tenure. I only want her to wonder why her establishment is the

only one in America providing neither soap nor shampoo for its guests. She needs mental leisure for this task, and I will provide it. I will and I can. What I will *not* do is burden the housekeeper beyond her capabilities—if, indeed, there is such a thing *as* a housekeeper here—with blood stains, streaks, or trails. Thus, I remove all these. I want every trace of blood gone from the shower, the sink, the floor, the wall, the sheets, the headboard, the door, the "do not disturb" placard, the plastic cup, and the lock on the door that has been rusted motionless since Madonna released, *Like a Virgin*.



"THAT REMINDS ME"

This motel reminds me of a little place I stayed in last month in Beckley, West Virginia. As I was leaving in the morning from this Beckley lodging, two police cars and two black, unmarked vehicles sat askew in the parking lot as if no painted lines had ever been laid down to prevent such things. Meanwhile, a S.W.A.T. team—or something very much resembling a S.W.A.T. team—paced back and forth on the balcony of the second floor, where I'd been housed. I was glad they weren't looking for me—not that they would have reason to, of course, but it is a strange age in which we live, an age in which objects in mirrors are closer than they appear and people on the Earth are stupider than they appear.

I went into the lobby to check out, at which time two of the policemen walked in carrying pieces of paper with the photographs printed on the paper of the deviant that they were hoping to arrest, convict, and execute. They looked me over, asked me where I was from, and I said, “O-o-o-hio.” They wondered why there were so many “o’s” in Ohio, and I couldn’t really explain it to their satisfaction except to say that it had something to do with the lake-effect, speaking specifically of Lake Erie.

One of the officers looked at me, then at the mugshot in his hand, then at me again, then at the mugshot in his hand, then at me again, then at the mugshot. Then he looked at his police friend and remarked, “It’s uncanny.” His police friend then looked at the mugshot, and then at me, and then back at mugshot, and then at me (he repeated this cycle seven times, which is the number of perfection) and said, “Boy, I’ll say. It’s incredible.” I wanted to ask them about some of the tourist sites in West Virginia, but I couldn’t really say anything. I tried to swallow hard, but the usual liquids in my mouth that I had been so used to swallowing throughout my life were strangely unavailable. All liquid production in my body had suddenly ceased—with the exception of that which proceeds from the bladder.

The policeman who had said, “Boy, I’ll say,” now looked at me and said, “May I see your identification?” I w-w-withdrew my driver’s license and the policeman tried

three times to grab it. He said, “Can’t you hold your identification still?” and I said, “You do not realize, sir, how hard I am trying to do that.” He finally snagged it. It was an amazing feat. He snagged it and stared at it. At this time, the clerk behind the desk, who was Italian, or Mexican, or Indonesian—and who from this point forward will be referred to by me as “Saint Anthony”—said, “Ah, boys, *dees* is not da guy. Da guy *we* talk about, *he* check in two days ago, *dees* guy only last night.” The nice policeman who had said, “Boy, I’ll say,” thanked St. Anthony, handed back my identification and said, “Sorry about that, sir. Enjoy the rest of your day.” I said, “I will! I will surely enjoy the rest of my day!” and then I went outside, got into my car, put the car in “Drive,” and did not stop until Ocala, Florida.

* * *

Where is the glory of God? I want it. But no one works harder at concealing the glory of God, than God. I am not speaking now of the “common” glories we take for granted, such as the red spot on Jupiter, the Man in the Moon, wrapped hotel soap, and the blooms of an Easter lily cactus. I am talking chiefly about the glory of our change, the glory of the celestial world *above* the stars, and the glory of Christ as He sits at God’s right hand.

But back to the stars and planets. This is basically space debris. The photographs we gawk at—the glorious images sent down from the Hubble telescope—is space debris. It’s the celestial junkyard of the greater universe. The celestial beings of higher orders and broader regions watch us ogle these trashy prints and marvel at the stuff that awes us. You are aware of my lament concerning Paul, who was taken by God to the third heaven to see and to hear things that *I* long to see and hear, but that were unlawful for the man to utter (2 Corinthians 12:2-4). Then why bother going? This has been my standing question and complaint. I can only conclude that the trip was for the sake of Paul, and Paul alone. I’ll give it to the man; he suffered more than any man, although there is no record that he ever lodged in Fresno, so the jury is still out.

THE DIMLY-LIT EPHESIAN LETTER

I never react to the book of Ephesians as I’m supposed to react. They tell me that this is the most spiritual letter among Paul’s collection. It’s a fine letter, I’m



just not overly awed by it. Nothing happens to my jaw when I read it. My eyes never leave their sockets, as they are supposed to. The tame sentences of this book and their apparently lazy arrangement are not exactly what I'm looking for. I want color photographs. Language-wise, I want specifics. Be concrete, Paul. For once, surrender your obtuseness for the sake of those with inquiring minds. I want to see through a telescope that makes the Hubble look like a free toy in a box of Froot Loops. Paint it like Renoir, Paul, not Picasso. But no. Most



great things are either skewed or understated in this book, by this man, to the point of deadpan. It's not quite as bad as Dali or Bob Newhart, but still. There is more obscuration here than revelation,

at least in the glory department. This is my humble opinion. It's all so dimly lit here in *Ephesians* that I can barely make out the walls of the upper vaults of the celestial junkyard. Scripture-wise, I'm more excited by the spiritual emergency of *Galatians* and the cry for help that is *2 Timothy*. *Ephesians* has been advertised as, "And now for something completely different!" I see it, but just not much of it. It's not enough to jangle me as those fun Beckley policemen did.

TRAVELOGUE

Concerning the vaunted letter of *Ephesians*, I call to your mind Mark Twain's first bestselling book, *Innocents Abroad*. All travelogues before his portrayed Europe and the Holy Land through the rutted lens of convention, sighing and gasping at all the right moments, at all the right paintings, and at all the right artifacts in celebrated museums. Clemens dispensed with the mythos, lending these places and their things a cold, satirical (read: "honest") eye, sparing nothing. For instance, concerning Paris he writes:

"In Paris they just simply opened their eyes and stared when we spoke to them in French! We never did succeed in making those idiots understand their own language."

Concerning memories:

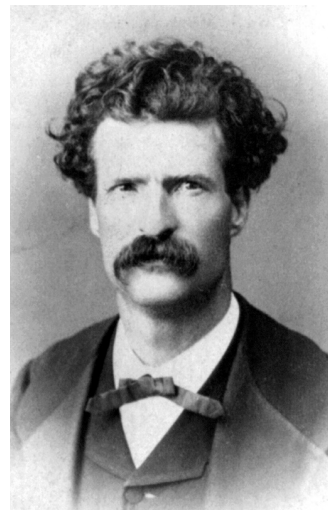
"... memories which someday will become all

beautiful when the last annoyance that encumbers them shall have faded out of our minds."

Here is his brutal and blessedly compromised rapture over Italian cathedrals:

"As far as I can see, Italy, for fifteen hundred years, has turned all her energies, all her finances, and all her industry to the building up of a vast array of wonderful church edifices, and starving half her citizens to accomplish it."

Could any Michaelangelo sculpture escape the song of the travelogue hack? Yet Mark Twain, to our delight, finds all the sour notes:



"I never felt so fervently thankful, so soothed, so tranquil, so filled with a blessed peace, as I did yesterday when I learned that Michael Angelo was dead."

Summing up the wonders of world travel, Twain finishes with:

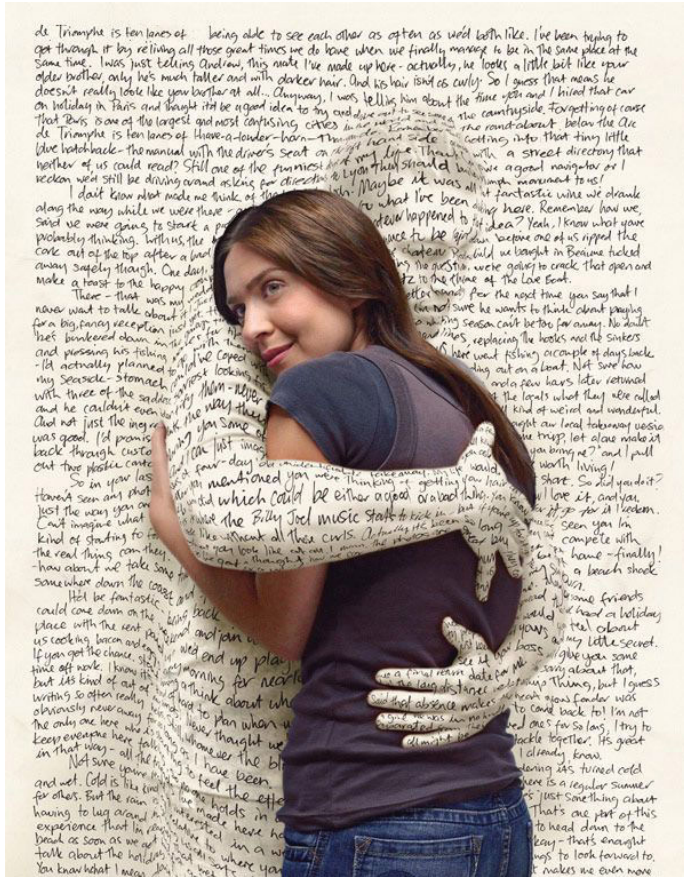
"Human nature appears to be just the same, all over the world."

"SO WHERE IS THE GLORY AGAIN?"

Similar critical sentiments arise in me when considering passages in *Ephesians* advertised to wow—passages such as 2:4-7—

Yet God, being rich in mercy, because of His vast love with which He loves us (we also being dead to the offenses and the lusts), vivifies us together in Christ (in grace are you saved!) and rouses us together and seats us together among the celestials, in Christ Jesus, that, in the oncoming eons, He should be displaying the transcendent riches of His grace in His kindness to us in Christ Jesus.

I'm not saying it's a bad sentence, I am only saying that, for a detail guy, much is lacking in the brass tacks department. Considering the subject matter, could there



be a more sparing use of adjectives and nouns? I am happy, but underwhelmed. Here is how my version would read:

Yet God being rich in mercy, because of His vast love with which He loves us, raises us like stallions and gliders and hungry vultures past the sun and the moon and planets with high-flying toucans, up through layers of space sediment unknowable heretofore yet smelling of spring potato flowers, removing our stomachs, splaying the legs of our new bodies over unnamed suns (three in number—except for February, which has four, ‘til Leap Year gives it five), basking our new souls in heat radiant still from Earth’s distant foundations—and seats us in shiny seats next to God, overlooking crystalline cities of sky-scrapery the likes of which makes São Paulo, Brazil look like a set from a Godzilla movie, with angels, yes, beings we can finally see who resemble, in all their majesty, the winged-monkeys of Oz in red and blue valet vests except a lot nicer and *very* deferential to us, scraping along to worship the fruit of God’s womb, the next and now wonderkinds of the universe drinking goblets of celestial elixirs demoting the ancient fruit of bee mouths to the rank of flat Ginger ale, not adding ice, all of us tossing hair blown long in a space-wind, warm and cool simultaneously, winging in star-swings—off we go!—with Christ, toward celestial lodgings of sixteen walls in

the living room *alone*, mile-long televisions channeling past and future accomplishments, and chandeliers the size of Chicago.

Contrast that with, “... and seats us among the celestials.”

Really? So where is the glory?

**It's
here.**

AT LAST, THE REVELATION

Here is the revelation. Arriving now is what I’ve been awkwardly building toward this entire newsletter. I will make all your trouble worth it to you—starting now. Thanks for reading this far. I was testing you, to see how many staunch of spirit resided here, on-board to the end. Congratulations, here you are. Johnny, tell them what they’ve won.

We can only know the coming glory, at present, through comparison to the depth of the evil. Why? Because of the “Rosetta Stone” passage of Romans 8:18. I call this a “Rosetta Stone” passage after the Rosetta Stone, an igneous, alkali feldspar stele inscribed with a decree issued at Memphis, Egypt, in 196 BC on behalf of King Ptolemy V, and discovered by a French soldier in 1799. The helpful thing about this stone is that the Memphis decree appears in three different scripts: the upper text in Ancient Egyptian hieroglyphs (which no one could interpret before the discovery), the middle portion in Demotic script, and the lowest portion in Ancient Greek. Because it shows the same text in all three scripts, one line of known script—the Ancient Greek, more than likely—interprets the top line of unknown script, which was much worse than Greek to every scholar up until this time. Thus, this stone provided the key to our modern understanding of Egyptian hieroglyphs.

Apply this now to the glory of God. I would have no concept of the glory of God without God provid-

ing a comparison. I need a key. I need a known line of “text” to give the glory—which I know next to nothing about—a perspective. The evil? I know *craploads* about that. The glory? Not so much. So here is the provided Providential key, in Romans 8:18, the “Rosetta Stone” of glory. Watch how it works:

For I am reckoning that the sufferings of the current era [KNOWN “TEXT”] do not deserve the glory about to be revealed for us [UNKNOWN “TEXT”].

That’s the *Concordant Literal New Testament*. Here is the passage in the International Children’s Bible, a Bible I didn’t know existed but that now impresses my child-like heart:

We have sufferings now. But the sufferings we have now are nothing compared to the great glory that will be given to us.

The sufferings we have now—the sufferings of the current era—are *nothing* compared to the glory about to be revealed. That’s the key. The revelation is in the comparison.

Every one of us has at one time or another complained bitterly about the evil in this world, and not just the evil, but the depth of the evil. It is the depth of the evil that decimates us, drives us to tears, makes us want to kill ourselves, and foment within us doubts concerning God. Just when we think that things in the current era could not get worse, some new horror arises. Now we know why. It is the Rosetta Stone of Glory. It is God’s backhanded way of preparing us for the height, breadth and depth of the glory about to be revealed for us.

The coming glory is so high that, when finally experienced in relation to the known evil, will make the known evil vanish into insignificance. Thus, knowing the evil is helpful. It is a gauge. The same evil we curse today will seem as nothing when at last held against the splendor in store. In fact, it will appear as *so* nothing that it will not even be worthy of a comparison. Today, we must simply believe this. If you think that the evil is ridiculous, then the glory is overwhelmingly more ridiculous. Appreciate the key. We must simply bask in the *thought* of the weight of the coming wonder, and the opposing force by which we measure it.

It is *this*—the depth of horror of the evil of the current era—that foreshadows, for those with eyes tuned to the truth of Romans 8:18, the coming breadth of such an indescribable magnificence.

Wait for it. —MZ

The FAMOUS Sheryl Crow

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kp0kuscF600>

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jVYfRwT-_PE



MARTIN, I wanted to thank you for airing the show with our family member in Christ, Sheryl Crow.

I’m in awe and humbled to be a member of the body of Christ knowing that one of the members is Sheryl. It touched my spirit and I cheer for her to be above myself and many others in

the celestials because this girl has the “balls,” so to speak, and I would be glad to be of service to her on a lower position of reign in the celestials.

Sheryl, we love you and cheer for you. Do not worry, your light will be many times stronger than the Sun’s!

Hi Martin, Thank you so much for the episode on Sheryl Crow. Here I was thinking that 2015 has been one of the most hellish years of my life, and you show me that there is someone else worse off than I. When is this going to end, Martin? How much more?

How does Sheryl do it? How does she keep going when all hell is breaking loose around her? How do we stay focused and true when such evil engulfs us? I love being called into the body of Christ, but I can tell you, I do not love the trials, pain, sorrow, destruction and death this life affords. We’re supposed to say, “Bring on the trials!” I find that difficult. I feel sometimes that God has put me on the very end of the rope where it gets whipped around the most and the hardest. Is everyone in the body of Christ experiencing similar trials?

Without your videos and written word, I just don’t know what I would do. I’m the only one in my family who has been chosen. In spite of it all, I wouldn’t give it up for anything. Thank you, Martin.

I just watched your two shows on Sheryl Crow. What a blessing that visit was. Amazing opportunity for the spirit of God to really be on display. If that didn’t make her parents think twice, I don’t know what would. No false pretenses, just a genuine display of love and caring that you have for their daughter. Sheryl has been given a particularly difficult walk and I can’t wait to see her rewarded. I’m betting you were as blessed from the visit as she was.

Produced by Martin Zender/www.martinzender.com
© 2015 by Martin Zender/Published by Starke & Hartmann, Inc.
email: mzender@martinzender.com