

ROMANS Part 82

Chapter 9:9-14

The God of Jacob and Esau.



For the word of the promise is this: At “this season” I shall come “and there will be for Sarah a son.” 10 Yet, not only so, but Rebecca also is having her bed of

one, Isaac, our father. 11 For, not as yet being born, nor putting into practice anything good or bad, that the purpose of God may be remaining as a choice, not out of acts, but of Him Who is calling, 12 it was declared to her that “The greater shall be slaving for the inferior.” 13 According as it is written, “Jacob I love, yet Esau I hate.” 14 What, then, shall we be declaring? Not that there is injustice with God? May it not be coming to that!

God promised Abraham that a nation would come from him that would one day bless all the inhabitants of planet Earth. Abraham waited years and years for this to happen until his hormones turned to mush and the uterus of his wife Sarah had “passed away,” “departed,” “flatlined,” “kicked the can,” “met its Maker,” “passed on,” “paid the piper,” “succumbed,” “took a permanent vacation,” “checked into the Horizontal Hilton”—and other euphemisms for death. None of this bothered God, Who made the impressive prediction that “at this season I shall come and there will be for Sarah a son.” He was talking about Isaac, the son of promise born to Abraham and Sarah in their decrepitude. How did God know that this would happen? How did He predict the season? How did He energize these sexually-flatlined people to produce a seed in the most natural/exciting manner possible? One question at a time, please.

God knew it would happen because He designed it to happen before the beginning of time (Isaiah 46:10), and so it had to happen and it did. No surprise there. Such a thing can’t even be called a prediction, really. The game is rigged. It’s more like a telling. It’s like reading words on a page that have long been printed upon that page; the page is yellow and brittle with age but comes alive with the reading because it all sounds new (because it is new) to the people hearing the story for the first time. God could tell the season for the very

same reason: He consulted His own Script. God purposely arranged for the lateness of the sexual season for Sarah and Abraham so that *He* would ultimately get the glory for producing Isaac, and not Abraham's and Sarah's sexual organs. God energized these sexually-flatlined people through a large dose of spirit. You have heard of the spirit of God, no doubt. The spirit of God is a mobile, versatile power historically famous for accomplishing large, difficult projects such as "Let there be light, and there was light."

"I SHALL COME"

How did the word "coming" come to be associated with sexual orgasm? I don't know, but I would not put it past God to be winking here when He says, "I shall come and there will be for Sarah a son." He knows what He's doing—linguistically (classic linguistics) and in the slang dictionary of modern times. He places the right word for the right time into the right context, then gives me (Martin Zender) the temerity to comment upon it in the year of our Lord, 2016. Abraham was the hands-on (so to speak) administrator of the magic sperm cell, but God cleverly (I believe) portrays Himself as the Absolute Doer of the Son-Producing Deed.

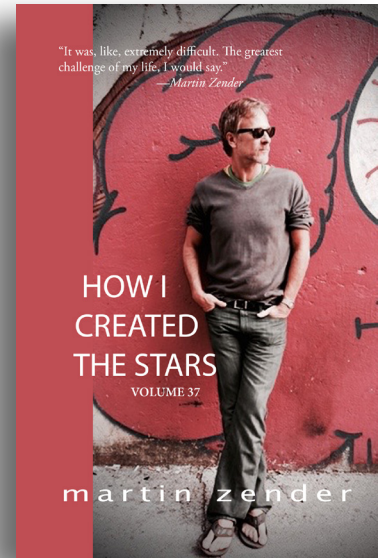


JACOB AND ESAU

Okay, that's enough about Sarah and Abraham. God is just giving a little detail there about how Isaac came to be the son of promise. It's not as though anyone asked, but God throws it in for general information purposes with a whiff of trying to impress people. It works. But He's not One to overkill it. It reminds me of when He says in Genesis, "And He also made the stars" (Genesis 1:16). If I had made the stars, I would have written a lengthy series about it in forty of fifty volumes, as in

"How I Created The Stars, Volume 37, by Martin Zender." (I would have used the word "created" rather than "made," you see. Much flashier.) My photo would be on the cover, of course. God simply announces is offhandedly: "Then I got dressed, then I ate breakfast, then I let the dog out, then I made the stars ..." One sentence, and a short one at that.

But now we are going to talk about that same son of promise, Isaac, only this time adding his wife Rebecca and their twins sons Jacob and Esau into the mix. Why is Paul writing about these people at this juncture in Romans? He is first and foremost concerned that we not think that Israel is finished (kaput) as a literal nation with



literal promises from a literal God Who will literally do what He literally said. Secondly, here is an opportunity for Paul to testify to the sovereignty of God. Not only is God not done with Israel, but He will make happen what He determined long ago to happen because He, Himself, controls the players on the stage. Every actor and actress in this great drama that we call life performs precisely as God has pre-decided for them to perform, and in perfect accordance with what He has already indelibly etched upon the Script. God has no White-Out on His desk, and neither does His keyboard contain a "Control-Z" combination to undo something that He has determined beforehand to occur.

For eight chapters Paul has detailed our wild, wild blessings that are founded upon the work on the cross of our Savior, Jesus Christ. He has told us how nothing in the universe can screw up these blessings. Since God is for us, says Paul, then who can be against us? No one. But just Who is this One Who is for us? What sort of power does He possess to not only preserve our calling and keep *us* on the right track, but to prevent bad guys (and girls) from illegally infiltrating our lives and hijacking our blessings? Here is how: At every moment, God is in complete charge and total control of both good people and bad. He is not only in control of them, He ultimately *animates* them. In case I still haven't said it clearly enough: God is

the driving force behind both good and bad people. Some people don't like this truth. Fortunately, it doesn't matter how many people like or dislike it. Truth never takes a poll to ascertain its popularity.

I recommend going with the truth, not against it. Either it hits you now, or it hits you later.

THE GOODNESS OF BAD

Does this truth make God both a good and a bad Deity? No. God is pure good, and nothing but good. The bad coming from God is ultimately good, just not immediately so. Such badness would fall under the category of "tough love," in that it educates us. It tempers and trains us. It makes us appreciate good. In Isaiah 45:7, God credits Himself with the creation of both evil and good. It's the contrast principle, of course—there is no appreciation of good without evil. Unless you understand the contrast principle, life will seem incurably chaotic.

Is there a sense in which bad can be good? Of course. In God's universe, bad things are good when looked at from an absolute perspective. They're good when looked at from the vantage point of the outcome, which is *always* good. The crucifixion of Christ is the prime example of this. Was that crucifixion a bad thing? Oh, Yes. Terrible. But was the bad thing a good thing? Oh, hugely good. Apply that principle now to every other bad thing—and

ently surround and vex us. This is where faith comes in. God did what He did with the cross to give our faith less strain; it eventuated in good. The crucifixion of Christ is the template for how God turns all evil (the crucifixion was the worst evil) into good. If He can do it with the crucifixion of His own Son, then He can do it with anything. God operates all things together for good (Romans 8:28). Most of it just doesn't seem good as it's happening.

The most shocking truth of Romans, chapter 9 is that God animates both good and bad people. It is a simple truth, and plainly stated here by a guy (Paul) who sometimes has a hard time stating things plainly. But never mind how simple or how clearly stated the truth of God's control is. Hardly anyone believes it.

EQUAL-OPPORTUNITY WOMBMATES

Yet, not only so, but Rebecca also is having her bed of one, Isaac, our father. For, not as yet being born, nor putting into practice anything good or bad, that the purpose of God may be remaining as a choice, not out of acts, but of Him Who is calling, it was declared to her that "The greater shall be slaving for the inferior." According as it is written, "Jacob I love, yet Esau I hate" (Romans 9:10-13).

As written, this passage is a piece of cake. It is at the same time extremely difficult for many people to believe. This is because most people are self-righteous, self-glorifying, God-defying, swaggering, hypocritical egotists. (I think I covered everything.) And this is just the Christians. Most people believe that God takes good and precious care of little children (especially little girls in cute dresses and pigtails), but when the little children reach the epic age of accountability (which no one has yet defined—*because it does not exist*) He abandons the little children with a hearty, "Good luck, formerly-precious morons!" The morons (we are *all* morons if we are to believe Paul's famous



I mean *every* other bad thing. Congratulations. You now have the key to solving the reason behind every bad thing: it will eventuate in good. We can see it clearly now with the cross, though not immediately with the evils that pres-

ently surround and vex us. This is where faith comes in. God did what He did with the cross to give our faith less strain; it eventuated in good. The crucifixion of Christ is the template for how God turns all evil (the crucifixion was the worst evil) into good. If He can do it with the crucifixion of His own Son, then He can do it with anything. God operates all things together for good (Romans 8:28). Most of it just doesn't seem good as it's happening.

admirably get a prize: they go to heaven, where the thermostat is set at a constant 74 degrees Fahrenheit. Those who misbehave, on the other hand, get sent to an eternity of fiery torment—where all the thermostats have melted. Does hell hurt? Only for eternity. But God has no choice but to send bad people to the bad place—or so we are told. Poor God. He helplessly watches beings of His own hand struggle to believe in Him down here where 40,000 people die every day—gagging and sputtering, some in their own blood—and gas prices sometimes rise to over five dollars a gallon.

Paul obliterates this insane conception of God here in Romans chapter 9, and he uses Jacob and Esau to do it. The fact that life sucks does not matter to Paul's revelation. That Jacob was a trickster and Esau a goof, did not matter. That gasoline had yet to be invented, did not matter. That Satan was flying all over the place (he's the chief of the jurisdiction of the air—Ephesians 2:2), as he is now, did not matter. That "no one is righteous, no not one" did not matter—except to ensure an understanding that Jacob's righteousness was God-breathed, and so is ours. The two sons of Isaac and Rebecca become useful instruments in Paul's hand (they were twins, with equal everything) to teach the truth of God's management technique over *all* humanity: God decided exactly what would happen when, and which people would do what when, and for how long they would do it, long before anything had happened or anyone had done anything.

I told you it was simple.

"CONSEQUENTLY, THEN"

I have been told that God operates in such a fun, dynamic fashion *only* with Jacob and Esau. Pooh-pooh. This is the wishful thinking of the swaggering egotists described earlier. God exerts similar control over the Pharaoh of the Exodus, described later in this chapter. When Paul has concluded his Jacob and Esau account in verse 16, he sums up the revelation this way—

Consequently, then, it is not of him who is willing, nor of him who is racing, but of God, the Merciful.

Paul is clearly no longer speaking of Jacob and Esau, but of everyone. He uses Jacob and Esau as a template for how God deals with everyone. If *anyone* is either willing or racing, then what such a person does is not of him or her, but of God. This single verse disproves human free will. A will that is supposedly free must be free of all influence, both good and evil. But since God

created both good and evil (Isaiah 45:7), and nothing happens *besides* good and evil things, then God's influence permeates our existence every moment of every day. Thus, free will is an illusion. Just because people feel free does not mean that they are so.

After discussing Pharaoh in verse 17, Paul concludes in verse 18—

Consequently, then, to whom He will, He is merciful, yet whom He will, He is hardening.



Again, when Paul says "to whom He will," he is no longer describing the experience of Pharaoh, but of everyone. Jacob, Esau and Pharaoh are merely famous examples of how God manages every single human being alive on the planet. Back now to Jacob and Esau.

WHOSE CHOICE IS IT ANYWAY?

For, not as yet being born, nor putting into practice anything good or bad, that the purpose of God may be remaining as a choice, not out of acts, but of Him Who is calling, it was declared to her that "The greater shall be slaving for the inferior" (Romans 9:11-12).

Christians talk a lot about free choice. Funny that God decided to use the word "choice" in this passage when speaking of His purpose. I believe that He did this because He knew what a hot-button the word "choice" would become, and He makes sure to state Whose choice rules. He says here, in essence, *Yes, it certainly is of choice, but it's Mine and not yours.*

Concerning Jacob and Esau, God's choice of one over the other (Jacob's advantage is temporary, not eternal) is

“not out of acts, but of Him Who is calling.” Notice the capital letters there. From before time began, God chose Jacob over Esau. It is not as though God looked into his magic telescope far into the future to see how these boys would behave, then returned to His time in order to choose the one that the magic telescope showed being a good boy. God preempts such an idiotic, time-game argument by saying that His choice of Jacob and Esau occurred before either one had been born, and therefore before either one could have done anything good or bad. You would think that this would end all human free will arguments, but no such luck. Humans stick to free will like super-duper Velcro. To pull them away from free will creates an irritating ripping noise—if you can get them away from it at all. The two separate pieces (humans and free will) just don’t want to let go. It’s hooks and loops, hooks and loops. Free-willers really have to dust themselves off after reading this

“Humans stick to free will like super-duper Velcro. To pull them away creates an irritating ripping noise.”

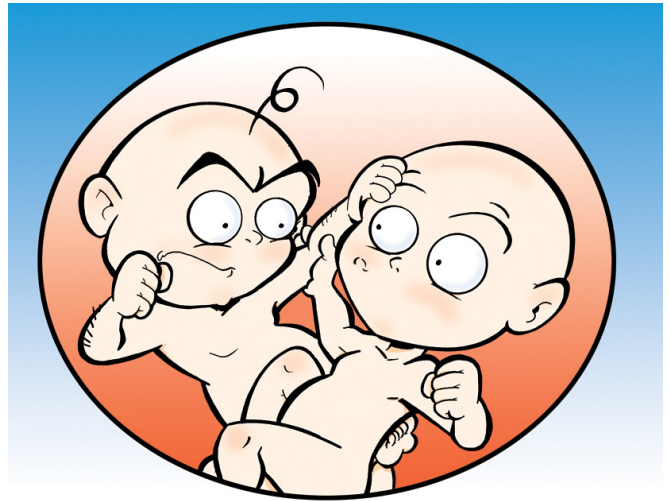


passage and try to go on. This is when they attempt their “yeah, but it’s only Jacob and Esau” trick, at which time I pull out verse 17, explained above. But alas, Christians are not impressed with *any* verses from this epic chapter.

THE LOVE AND HATE OF GOD AND HUMANS

According as it is written, “Jacob I love, yet Esau I hate” (Romans 9:13).

Does God really hate people? Of course He does; I assume that we can all read the above passage. There it is in black and white. We all read English here—correct? Very good. God hated Esau. But of course we must realize that



God hates Esau only in relation to his love of Isaac. This is a relative, not an absolute hate. It’s comparative. We can’t forget the verse that says, “God is love” (1 John 4:8). Love is what God is and does. Love is the umbrella covering all His other relative attributes, including hating people. This is *not* a contradiction. Don’t you sometimes strongly dislike people whom you love?

If I can show you how this principle of disliking those whom we love operates with humans, it should be easy to see how it can apply to God because, compared to God’s love, our love snaps, crackles and then poops. But even on our best days, we can dislike those whom we continue to objectively adore.

It’s funny how Christians laud the love of God but then at the same time flounder at explaining how God can hate Esau. The opposite of love is hate. Could God send those whom He loves to hell? Therefore, He must hate the hell-bound. Since hell is forever—according to the loony tunes—then God hates those in hell forever. Right? Christians miss the comparative aspects of God’s hate because they think that hell is eternal. If hell is eternal, then the divine hate that sends people there must also be without end.

Hatred is a strong dislike. When I was a kid, I used to think that “hate” was the worst word in the world. My parents taught me to never hate anyone. Whenever I said that I did hate someone, my parents made me say, “Just say that you strongly dislike that person.” I did not yet own a Webster’s Dictionary and therefore could not whip it out to show my parents that the definition of “hate” is “to strongly dislike.” For the purpose of this brief study, let’s ease our troubles by using the definition of “hate” rather than the word itself. There are too many prejudices against the word itself.



I love the state of Ohio because I grew up there. However, I also strongly dislike the state of Ohio. I discovered this disturbing fact only when traveling with my family to Florida from Ohio for the first time during an Ohio winter. It was 1995. It was at this time that I realized why people went to Florida from January through April. It was also at this time that I realized that I strongly disliked Ohio, and I believe that I said as much to my family: “Family, I now strongly dislike my very own home state.” My nine year-old son Gabe said, “But dad, you also said—and this has been documented and notarized and kept on file by me—that you love Ohio.” I tweaked his little nine year-old nose and said, “That is *also* is true, son. I *love* that horrible place.” I could say such an awful thing about Ohio only when comparing it to another, relatively paradisiacal place (meteorologically-speaking), such as Florida.

LOVE/HATE

Is not “love/hate relationship” a common human phrase? From whence does it come? It comes from loving something and strongly disliking it—at least for awhile—simultaneously. None of us are strangers to these conflicting emotions. Don’t you love your kids? But aren’t there times when you strongly dislike them?

God has no literal human emotions because He’s not a human. Whenever we use an emotion-tinged word to speak of the Deity—whether love *or* hate—it is not literal. The nearest thing we have in the human vocabulary of emotion to describe what God is and does, is love. This is an emotion within the range of our

human perception, translated to us through another human, Jesus Christ, Who is the image of the invisible God (Colossians 1:15).

Thus also, “hate.”

Back to the absolute and the relative: “Thus God loves the world, so that He gives His only-begotten Son” (John 3:16). Does God therefore love Esau? Yes. This is the absolute viewpoint. God loves the world. But does He also hate Esau? Yes, but this is the relative viewpoint. We may also say that God is oftentimes not fond of the world. The root word of the word “relative” is “relate,” and God hates Esau only in relation to His love of Jacob. It is not *absolutely* true that God hates Esau. He only hates him during the time that He temporarily uses him as a foil for Jacob. This will incite a predictable outburst from some readers, “Why would God hate someone whom He purposely determined ahead of time to be an idiot?”

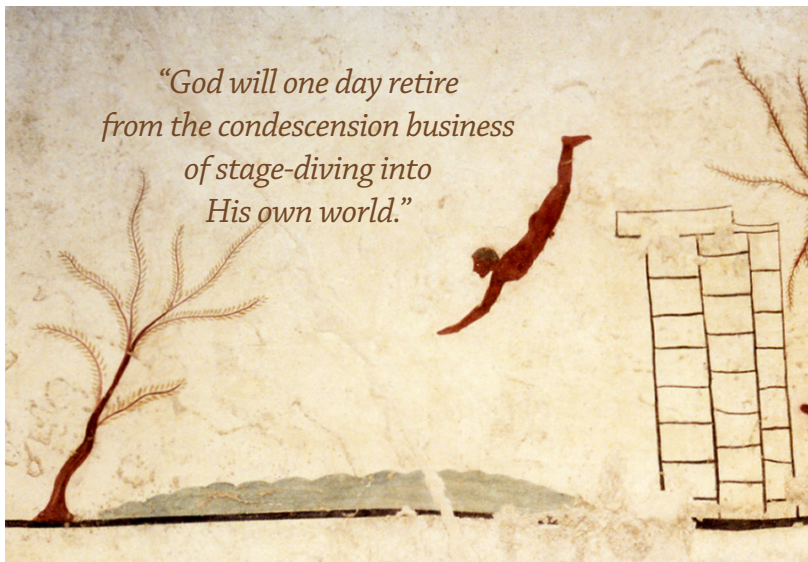
In order to help us through this life of contrast and conflict, God, in His condescension, has placed Himself *in* our life of contrast and conflict, even though He is absolutely not subject to these dual turmoils. He condescends to this so that we may know His character. We must learn to like what God likes and to strongly dislike what He strongly dislikes. This is only possible if He tells us these things. All of this occurs within the realm of time—the eons. When God becomes all in all at the consummation of the eons, we will no longer need these contrastive experiences, emotions and lessons, and then God can blessedly retire from the condescension business of stage-diving into His own world. We will all have learned the lessons of contrast through the example of God Himself. It is so merciful of God to condescend to

us to such an extreme degree. To appear as a member of His own creation? *Holy smokes! How humble of Him.* You have no idea what a lowering it is for Him. But only thus do we come to know Him.

THE JUSTICE OF GOD

What, then, shall we be declaring? Not that there is injustice with God? May it not be coming to that! (Romans 9:14).

Humans being humans, they read of God determining ahead of time who will be naughty and who will be nice, and they accuse God of playing favorites and therefore being unjust. He does play favorites, but He is not unjust. These objectors simply fail to realize that God is God and that they are *not* God, and that God can do whatever He wants with the creatures of His own hand. How burdensome for these objectors to stare at themselves in the mirror and mistake themselves for the Deity. These folks have



a real downer reality coming someday. What would surely be unjust for humans is not unjust for God, for how else can God show the bright sides of things unless He shows the sides that are dark? Since He created everything, then the dark-side things *have* to come from Him. *Everything* comes from Him (2 Corinthians 5:18).

To ensure the dark sides, God makes them Himself. These dark sides include dark people. God is not an equal-opportunity employer. No one auditions for Him. Jacob and Esau “enjoyed” equal status in Rebecca’s womb. Rather than affording them an equal opportunity to perform, it afforded God a “clean field” on which to prove His sovereignty. What Jacob and Esau would become was in no way based on anything that either Jacob or Esau did, or

would do. Humans base good opinions and promotions on merit. God bases these things on His own decisions and pleasures. In this, let no one accuse God of arbitrariness. His choices are intelligent and subserve great and noble purposes. Can humans always say this? Not in my experience.

In one sense I appreciate the objection of, “God is unjust!” At least the objector has understood the underlying point, that God makes people who and what they are, and is responsible for all human behavior. Only one grasping this important point can raise the objection in the first place. Christians never raise the objection because they never grasp the point. The Christians are responsible for their own actions (according to them), and they will insist upon that until death do them part. Apart from divine illumination, it remains impossible for anyone to consider life’s inequalities and “blame” it on God (wise people credit God with it), as such people never consider God responsible for any of it. God has left such people alone in a dank, cheap hotel room with their sovereign (untouchable) wills, so that any accomplishments or screw ups are—according to them—theirs and theirs alone. What a dread deception. The deity of such individuals merely stands in the wings, crossing his arms or tapping his fingers while waiting to see what epic or tragic decisions his children will make. He then responds accordingly. Such a deity deserves the lower-case “d,” and that’s all he gets from me.

It is my opinion that the Christians of the above context are in fact the unjust ones, robbing from God His divine due. Their day will come. It will be a tough day for them. We have our tough days now.

Not all days are sweet to those imbibing of the truth of God’s sovereignty. Far better, I believe, to acknowledge the Deity now, in the day of grace, than to feel it like a sack of flour dropping upon the head later. God has chosen us for this. For us, God has graciously granted us red-carpet access into His secret counsels through His inspired penman, Paul, a man famous for saying, “In the grace of God I am what I am” (1 Corinthians 15:10).

Are there any finer words with which to conclude?

—MZ