



ROMANS Part 86

Chapter 9:21-24

Vessels of indignation.



21 Or has not the potter the right over the clay, out of the same kneading to make one vessel, indeed, for honor, yet one for dishonor? 22 Now if God, wanting to display His indignation and to make His powerful doings known, carries, with much patience, the vessels of indignation, adapted for destruction, 23 it is that He

should also be making known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He makes ready before for glory—24 us, whom He calls also, not only out of the Jews, but out of the nations also.

It really doesn't matter to me how many people think that the truth of the sovereignty of God is "crazy," "unfair," "untrue" or "too much God, too little us." Few words from Paul's pen are as plain as those above. What awkward maneuvering must occur for these sentences to say something other than what lies transparent on the page. I refuse to apologize for God's directness; it's just too refreshing here. In the sovereignty of God department, I do not camp upon isolated texts. I take a passage such as the one above in context, comparing and complementing it with other texts, even every text. Thus, I bless myself with a full-orbed, nothing-denied picture of the nature of God. Not everyone enjoys this. Not everyone understands or even sees the absolute versus the relative perspective—that God does things *and* we do things at the same time, but that God's overriding will informs everything we do (Ephesians 1:11). Those who miss this either pitch their tent on the "God is sovereign" side of the camp and figure that He simply earmarks certain people ahead of time for eternal torment (Calvinists), or they choose the viewpoint that God can't really control anything and crosses His fingers, hoping for the best (Arminians). The god of the Calvinists is "locked in," meaning that he predestines certain people—most people—for hell. At least the god of the Arminians is an "equal opportunity" salvation guy who is fair and gives everyone an equal chance to make a smart decision and save themselves from the fictitious never-ending torment.

The common error between Calvinists and Arminians is eternal torment. As soon as one lands on the truth that eternal torment is unsupported by properly translated Scripture (see my book, *Martin Zender Goes*

to Hell), then the wonderfully blunt statements that God makes about Himself—such as the one above—can simply be believed.

God is eventually the Savior of all humanity (1 Timothy 4:10).

THE KNEADING

Or has not the potter the right over the clay, out of the same kneading to make one vessel, indeed, for honor, yet one for dishonor? (Romans 9:21)

A kneading is a common lump of clay from which various vessels are made. Out of the same kneading God makes both vessels of honor and of dishonor. We're talking about people now, not pots, though pots are God's chosen analogy. It's a good analogy (nice job, God) because pots are made from the same substance as human beings: soil. It is important to know that both good and bad people come from the same lump ("kneading") of clay, that is, from a common batch of flesh. This puts the responsibility of both intermediate and eternal destiny upon God, not on flesh. The flesh is but a medium by which God expresses His will upon the earth. Real clay pots are molded on a wheel. For us, the earth is one giant wheel. Earth is God's canvas, flesh His brush.



What does God mean when He says "vessels"? In this context, the word vessels is used both literally and figuratively. Literally, it speaks of the outward container that we travel through life with. Figuratively (as a figure of association), it speaks of our lives—what we are, what we do, how we think. How else can a vessel be said to be either honorable or dishonorable unless there were personality lent to it via figure? All people—body, soul and spirit—are products of the Potter's mind and hand. With His hand the Potter fashions hands, with His mind, minds. Again, the Potter is the One with the creative variations, not the flesh. Michelangelo used marble to create both David and Pieta. With marble from the same quarry, Michelangelo created remarkably different works. Had humanity not come from a common quarry of flesh, we would be tempted to say (no, we *would* say) that God has good batches of flesh and bad batches; good souls and bad. Obviously there are good and bad people. But how did they get that way? According to human (religious) philosophy, the good people come from the good batch of flesh and the bad people from the Grade B batch. Were it this way, we could then blame people—absolutely speaking—for screwing up their own lives and sending themselves to hell. This is what free-will people do: they blame the clay for ignoring God and then

“In order to live with the eventual damnation of friends and family, one must lean heavily upon one's personal worthiness.”

consign it to hell for eternity. (Oops, that's the big miss—that eternal torment thing.) Some flesh is stupid, some is smart—according to the prevailing human philosophy embraced by freewillists. If someone is not saved, it is because the flesh was not as wise as it could have been and refused to make that all-important decision to fashion itself into a vessel pleasing to God. Conversely, the flesh of the believers is a better grade (or so they think)—top-drawer stuff; born to perform right out of the womb. If it were literal clay, it would be of an exceptional kneading as compared to a second-class glob of whatever. This is the tacit belief. The truth of the common kneading, the common flesh, is unknown in circles where pride is paramount to survival. Or should I say that pride keeps many from even wanting to grasp the simple, divine revelation. Hell may



GOD WANTS THIS

Now if God, wanting to display His indignation and to make His powerful doings known, carries, with much patience, the vessels of indignation, adapted for destruction, it is that He should also be making known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He makes ready before for glory—us, whom He calls also, not only out of the Jews, but out of the nations also (Romans 9:22-24).

God *wants* to display His indignation and make His powerful doings

have something to do with that: In order to live with the eventual damnation of friends and family, one must lean heavily upon one's personal worthiness. Who besides Calvinists can watch loved-ones go to hell without the classic "it's-their-own-damn-fault" escape clause?

God's Potter analogy is simply another Jacob and Esau situation in a different suit. With the Jacob and Esau set-up, explained earlier in this chapter, the shocking phrase is verse 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...*" (Here the shocking phrase is, "or has not the Potter the right over the clay.") Freewillists believe that they are saved by the practice of believing. Believing in Jesus Christ is a good *practice*, according to them. Though they do not call it this (it is much too honest of a proclamation) free will is "salvation by practice." Contrast this with Paul's text. The Word of God here makes human practice irrelevant. *Ouch*. God favored Jacob before he had practiced anything, good or bad.

The startling conclusion, of course, is that salvation is not a matter of human behavior. You may have heard these words spoken in church, but no one follows through with them. They say them but they do not believe them. In truth, salvation is a matter of first being in Adam, and then being in Christ (Romans 5:19; 1 Corinthians 15:22), both events of which occurred many, many years before any of us were born.

known. I'm just the messenger; please drop the weapon. God can do what He wants and has the right to tell us what these things are. He's God, so maybe we should just let Him speak without interrupting or censoring Him. Maybe His desire to display His indignation and make His powerful doings known is all part of a broad plan that will bless all of us in the end. One can only see it this way after unhanding the false teaching of eternal torment.

Indignation is "strong displeasure at something considered unjust, offensive, insulting, or base; righteous anger." Would any of us prefer that God *smile* at any of these things? It's not that God is indignant for the sake of it, as though indignation were His default setting, but rather that He hates injustice and all associated wrongs. "But," goes the argument (levied by those who at least recognize God's control of everything), "God *invented* injustice." Of course. We've been through this. He had to invent injustice and its ilk so that sentient creatures like us could know the difference between injustice and fair treatment. Is God unjust for inventing injustice? Not when we realize that the injustice is a temporary (not eternal) foil for the display of its opposite attribute. The next verse of Romans explains the necessary corollary: If God wants to display His indignation and to make His powerful doings known ... "*it is that He should also be*



making known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He makes ready before for glory.”

The key words here are “making known the riches of His glory.” The glory cannot be made known without the opposing thing. Since God is the ultimate Author of everything, He must write everything into the Script.

PATIENT SUSTENANCE

God “*carries*, with much patience, the vessels of indignation.”

“Carry” is such a common word that we miss subtleties of definition such as, “to sustain and support.” I once saw a stupid church sign (sorry for the redundancy) that said: “Atheists have no invisible means of support.” Indeed, atheists *do* have invisible means of support, because God carries them. He not only carries them, He supports and sustains them moment by moment lest they stop being atheists and screw up the necessary, wanted contrast against which people who believe in God shine forth.

God not only carries vessels of indignation such as atheists, He supports them. He gives them what they need to keep being atheists. He feeds them all of the philosophical crap that the atheists need to deny His obvious existence, at the same time withholding the light that would spawn instant belief. (It seems like hard work to me. I would think that granting belief would burn far fewer calories.) So God locks down people like this from both ends: He feeds them the necessary philosophical crap, and then withholds the light. We saw this clearly with Pharaoh. As soon as Pharaoh wavered and would have opened Egypt’s gates, God sustained the man’s obstinacy by hardening his heart as needed. God’s heart-hardening techniques on Pharaoh was not unlike a thermostat keeping a house warm. When a house gets too cold, the thermostat kicks in and on comes the heat. The thermostat only puts up with so much cold before telling the heater to fire up. In the case of Pharaoh, God made him only so accommodating before feeding him the necessary fuel

of antagonism (in whatever form it came—bad life; bad wife; bad parents; bad breakfast) and withholding the light.

Doesn’t God get tired of doing all this? If He were human, He certainly would. It must be hard work keeping so many clues from so many people for so long. (The phrase, “That guy doesn’t have a clue,” takes on new meaning with the realization that God is the Master Withholder of all Clues. How *can* a guy or a girl have a clue when the God of all clues hides them so brilliantly, like so many Easter eggs?) So yes, if God were human, He’d be taking frequent naps. It would be easier to simply take His big fat hands off of peoples’ eyes and minds and let the radiant glory of creation that is more all-pervasive than the sun wash over them. Let them feel the wonder of His love; let them believe in Him. But again, how would this highlight belief? Remember? God wants to make His powerful deeds *known*, and we are some of His powerful deeds. One cannot highlight belief when everyone is a believer. God want to *highlight* belief, and He can’t *highlight* belief without the opposite thing. Likewise, how can the riches

of His glory be shown to vessels of mercy if there is no poverty, no infamy, and no indignation against which to show these things? Thus, God sustains necessary evils with all patience. He patiently bears with stubborn morons whom He has purposely fashioned—for the time being—into stubborn morons. Why shouldn't He bear with them patiently, then, when He Himself made them the way that they are? This certainly *explains* His patience.

It is also, I think, a great reason for us to be patient. Like God, we are free to speak of His enemies as His enemies because they are what they are, never mind the source. We are free to call stupid people “stupid,” and atheists “atheists.” Is it wrong to call a human being a human being simply because the being never chose to become what it is? We call humans “humans” to distinguish them, say, from tree frogs. What difference does it make that no human chose humanity over tree frog-dom? The source and motive of creation is another discussion. Here, we are simply calling things what they are, including “people.” Are we to deny what we see? Certainly we are to try to teach and help the disobedient, for who knows whether or not God will be illuminating them in this life? As Paul patiently explains in another place, we are to “with meekness [be] training those who are antagonizing, seeing whether God may be giving them repentance to come into a realization of the truth” (2 Timothy 2:25).

Knowing that God ultimately makes these people what they are lends much patience to our intercourse with such individuals. This knowledge grants us patience without robbing us of the same righteous indignation possessed by God, even as we try to forward the evangel of universal conciliation (2 Corinthians 5:19).

KNOWN TO US

“...that He should also be making known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He makes ready before for glory—us, whom He calls also, not only out of the Jews, but out of the nations also.”

Astoundingly, God makes the riches of His glory known to *us*. He goes to a lot of trouble to do so. He raises up and inspires (*de-spire*?) all the vessels of dishonor and indignation, just so that He can make a difference between them and us. He can only favor us (for now) if He disfavors other people (for now). I know that it is a politically incorrect thing to emphasize “us and them,” but damn it, that's what it is. For now. God is the farthest thing from politically correct, but He is always doctrinally correct. His

favorite doctrine? That He designates beforehand vessels of honor created for superlative glory. We must not fall into the Calvinist trap of thinking that God chooses the elect in order to damn the rest. No. God chooses the elect so that He can use them later to reach the rest.

At the consummation of the eons, everything comes out in the wash. At that distant time, washers and dryers are done away with. There will come a time when there will be no more emphasis on how different things are. Things will still be different, but it will be different degrees of glory rather than glory and infamy. Until then, I cannot recommend drying clothes in the washer, or washing clothes in the dryer. For now, let us distinguish between things that



differ. Let us not get ahead of God, but let's not get behind Him, either. *Not* recognizing vessels of indignation during Eon 3 is a truth out of time. It is a denial of present fact. It is an equal denial of fact to look the other way at one's own calling, as though it were some invention of our own minds. For now, we are special to God above many other people. God calls us special (“God is the Savior of all humanity, *especially* of believers,” 1 Timothy 4:10), so let's not deny His own testimony in the interest of a homemade unity that not even God acknowledges.

We attribute our special calling, not to any personal merit, but to the Potter's decision to do something exceptional with us that He is simply not currently doing with others. The riches that are ours today will come to all in due time, when God's revelation no longer requires such profound contrasts.

Let us bless God then—the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ—Who blesses us with every spiritual blessing among the celestials, in Christ, “...according as He chooses us in Him before the disruption of the world, we to be holy and flawless in His sight, in love designating us beforehand for the place of a son for Him through Christ Jesus; in accord with the delight of His will, for the laud of the glory of His grace, which graces us in the Beloved” (Ephesians 1:4-6) —MZ

SEE NEXT PAGE FOR LETTERS

FROM OHIO

Martin, I trust nobody who is smiling at all times. If anyone is not suffering much, I doubt very much God is giving that person truth. You suffer daily, Martin. I can tell it on your shows. I am the least member of the body of Christ, and I know it. I am given the lowest of tasks and hated by people for doing good for them. I cry daily. I am so broken, and if anyone could walk in my body for one week they would see. I suffer pain in my legs and back that most give up from. It isn't me who sustains me. I do nothing without God. I mean nothing! Although I suffer greatly, I am happy inside because I won the lottery, that is, membership in Christ's body. God chose a weak, stupid creature like me, and we are going to rule together, you and I. I know that I am being groomed by as much evil as can be for the task we have next. There is no happy ending for us on this earth. I pray that I make it to the snatching away. You are my friend, and you teach me. Before this is over, all will forsake us. At this point I say: *Bring the pain*. God will see me through it. This world is evil and the evil is everywhere. Every hope and dream I had here is gone. God must take these away, I guess. I test every spirit. I have been tricked many times. I was tricked at first by that %\$#@! Acts 28 teaching, but no more. You straightened me out on that. You are a brave teacher, and bold. You rebuke, but with love. God will not leave us for forsake us. I will suffer until the very end. At this point, it doesn't bother me. I can take more pain than anyone I know. There are very few who believe like us. That is God's will. I have no doubt that the time is coming sooner rather than later for our change. I am with you until the very end, my friend. Thank you for always being the caring, thoughtful man that God made you, who is there for any of us who are in need. You truly are my brother in Christ and I can't wait to meet the others someday. God has renewed my spirit. Thank you once again

—Your brother in Christ

FROM SWITZERLAND

Dear Martin

In 1975 I worked in Bangla Desh, after it has been beaten by civil war, genocide, mass raping, floods and famine. I was deployed in its very flat northern part near the gigantic Brahmaputra river, from where, on rare clear days I could detect the white chain of the



Himalayas at the horizon. My bedroom was in a small, primitive house in the midst of rice fields, the windows had grilles only, dozing lizards were my roommates, and at bedtime myriads of frogs gently rocked me to sleep with their monotonous lullabies, of which I could make out the lyrics when I had inhaled enough of the hemp growing in our courtyard.

But one warm, sultry night I woke up by a scary, rustling, vibrating sound and some very strange, zooming movements close to my face. When I lit my torch I saw the walls, the floor, the table, my bed and myself being completely covered by thousands of fairly big, dark locusts, a whole lot of them flying back and forth over my head and through the room with high speed. They were probably just rushing in. I had seen many things before, but this was beyond my naive imagination. My heart started beating like mad, I could barely breathe, I had no voice and was paralyzed with fear, but I eventually managed to gather my senses, to slowly move my body—what made them jump away from it—and to zip up my unfolded sleeping bag on which I was laying, making sure it was empty. I had not the courage to get up and walk across the room to the door. And so I endured in the dark and the heat and got increasingly homesick. All in a sudden, at dawn, they swarmed out through the windows, alltogether. I was left soaked with sweat in my hot sack and felt miserable and exhausted.



By recalling this, though, I'm well aware it was just a diminutive glimpse of what will happen—"my" locusts didn't bite, looked like normal grasshoppers and visited me for about five hours, not months—I can comprehend this desperate unfulfilled longing for death which the inflicted people of the last days of this eon will endure. I refuse to imagine the torment, but I'm glad I had this experience, it makes me aware of how unpredictably and vehemently the events will befall the world.

Thank you for bringing up these future facts to the last, graphic detail in your Revelation Series.

From my refreshingly cool, safe home, embedded in a comforting, protective cover of trust,

—Your sister in Christ