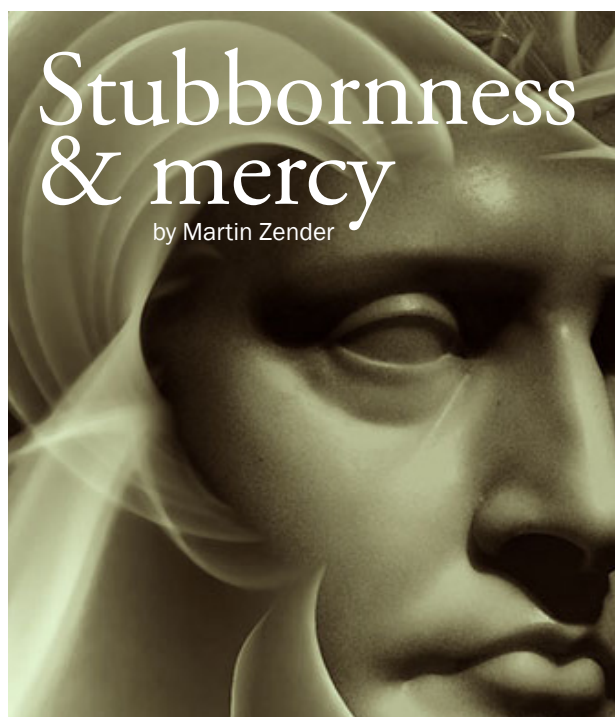




ROMANS Part 110

Chapter 11:29-32



29 For unregretted are the graces and the calling of God. 30 For even as you once were stubborn toward God, yet now were shown mercy at their stubbornness, 31 thus these also are now stubborn to this mercy of yours, that now they also may be shown mercy. 32 For God locks up all together in stubbornness, that He should be merciful to all.

As if we need to be told that God doesn't absolutely change His mind. That's what "unregretted" means: God doesn't change His mind. Well, maybe it is nice to be reminded of this occasionally.

It's better than to deceive oneself into supposing that God thinks one thing when He first meets you, that He calls you based on a certain favorable first impression He has of you, finds out later what kind of person you *really* are ("Bob did *what?!*"), then slaps His forehead and reaches for a bottle of White-Out. We have nothing to fear concerning unexpected, not-so-flattering information that may come to God's attention subsequent to our calling. Unexpected information can't derail our heavenly trajectory because nothing is unexpected. How could anything be unexpected when God Himself wrote the blueprint?

Ephesians 1:3-6—

Blessed be 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.

God chose us—and Israel, for that matter—to *be* holy and flawless in His sight. Notice what this verse doesn't say. It doesn't say that "holy and flawless" is what we are. No, but it is what we will be. Note the absence of the word "because," as in, "according as He chooses us in Him *because* we are holy and flawless in His sight." That's not what it says. This is a future promise, not a present reality. God's call of us doesn't *depend* on flawlessness; it *eventuates* in it. In addition to this, "He chooses us in Him before the disruption of the world."

THE DISRUPTION OF THE WORLD

The disruption of the world was the crisis between Eons 1 and 2, captured in the brief phrase in Genesis



1:2, “And the earth became a chaos and vacant.” This was not only the disruption of a world (Greek *kosmos*, “system”), but the disruption of an eon and an earth as well. (Eons and worlds correspond; see Ephesians 2:2 in the *Concordant Literal New Testament*; an eon is the particular period of time during which a particular system operates.) The ensuing chaos and vacancy led to God separating the land from the waters and bringing forth life upon *another* earth (and another eon and another world)—the earth that Adam would eventually walk upon.

The disruption of the world spoken of in Ephesians 1:4, therefore, predates Adam.

I believe this to have been the time when sin first entered the universe. Too many bad things happened at once (disrupted earth, disrupted kosmos, disrupted eon) for it not to have been epically (and epochally) significant. This, added to that fact that it was the first time on record that anything like that had ever occurred. (There would be one more lesser disruption of the earth—at the end of the thousand-years—and three more scaled-down but significant disruptions of eons and worlds—the Flood, the Tribulation, and the combustion of the second earth by fire—2 Peter 3:10).

The first disruption of everything (world, earth, eon) was probably the result of a celestial rebellion. The point is that God made sure to tell us, through Paul, that our calling in Christ preceded the first major universal

upheaval—“He chooses us in Him *before* the disruption of the world.” Why bother telling us this? 1) Our calling was not a result of God reacting to something, and 2) Since God’s callings are unregretted, then no subsequent disaster (nothing has been quite as whacked-out as the disruption of the world) can dislodge us from our calling.

GLASS HOUSES

“For even as you once were stubborn toward God, yet now were shown mercy at their stubbornness, thus these also are now stubborn to this mercy of yours, that now they also may be shown mercy” (Romans 11:30-31).

Anyone who has ever been stubborn and who then decides to condemn someone else to, say, eternal torment for, say, stubbornness,—well, these kinds of folks better not be carrying around such large stones so near to houses that are constructed of breakable material such as, oh, say, glass. The stubbornness of Israel brought a long-hidden gospel to the nations. The revelation of our gospel of peace cost Israel dearly because she’s been roiling in her stubbornness ever since, privately (sometimes publicly) hating the other nations for elbowing in on her “God thing.” (Here’s a news flash, Israel: We didn’t “elbow in” on anything. This wasn’t our idea. God apprehended our spokesman against his will, and then gave us the faith to believe that spokes-

man's message against *our* wills.) But the promise is that "now they also may be shown mercy."

"Unregretted are the graces and the calling of God," says Paul. Showing mercy to a centuries-stubborn Israel who killed His own Son would surely be a stroke of grace from the throne of Deity. I can't wait to see it. I would be disappointed not to see it. God simply does not disappoint. He judges, but then does not hold grudges. In the long run, God knows that everyone followed the Script, so how hard is it, really, for Him to return adulterous lovers such as Israel back into the fold? In the long run, God disappoints no one. Speaking of the long run—

BOTH STUBBORNNESS AND MERCY DIVINELY IMPOSED

"For God locks up all together in stubbornness, that He should be merciful to all" (Romans 11:32).

Did you see what Paul just did here? He took a specific case of stubbornness and mercy (the nation Israel versus the other nations), and he made it universal. Are the nations getting smug because they are now the beneficiaries of truth while Israel languishes on the perimeter of divine favor? Paul reminds them, "God locks up *all* together in stubbornness." Is Israel becoming despondent because she is stubborn while the nations fly ahead? Paul reminds *them*, "God is merciful to all." Paul not only makes the stubbornness universal, he makes the mercy equally as comprehensive. To top it off, Paul credits both the stubbornness and the mercy to God.

Romans 11:32 comments obliquely upon how God deals with the entire human race in the salvation department. Think back to Romans, chapter five, when Paul compared Adam to Christ. Paul said that, while all were condemned through the mediation of Adam, the same all would be justified through the mediation of Christ (Romans 5:18-19). Romans 11 is the equivalent of Adam and Christ, expressed in terms of stubbornness and mercy. It's the same all. Concerning Romans 5 and Romans 11, respectively, condemnation belongs to stubbornness, and salvation to mercy.

When does God lock up all together in stubbornness? It happens when each of us are born. We are born stubborn. We are born not knowing much of anything. We have to learn about the world, slowly becoming aware of our surroundings: the smell of food, the sound of rain, the touch of our parents. We learn health and sickness, of warmth and cold, of satisfaction and want. One thing

we never do learn instinctively is the love and even the existence of the Power that created us and sustains our life, from Whom all things come. This information must be divinely imposed, in time. It is not loaded into the human software, at birth.



"Even those schools purporting to teach God merely affix His name to self-reliance."

As children, we all want our own way. We learn to rely on our earthly fathers and mothers. From an early age, our tutors train us in self-sufficiency. Even those schools purporting to teach God merely affix His name to self-reliance, whitewashing the tomb. The systems of humanity drive us to pride via self-care and accomplishment. We are to thank no one but ourselves. Even if we

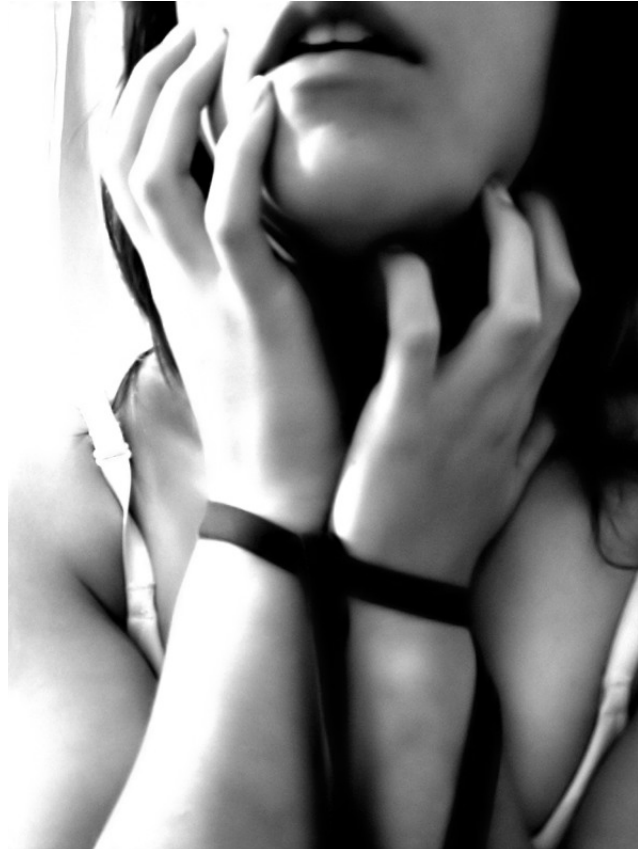
are taught to thank God, it is superficial and by rote. Our vision is this narrow. We fail to see past our own minds and dispositions. I am not speaking of some of us, but all of us. We never look out, but in. When we do look out, we apply it only to in. Everything in the world exists to satisfy *us*. Nothing else occurs to us. It is the stubbornness into which we have all been locked by God. None are exempt.

This predisposition is written into the human hard drive; *thou shalt be stubborn*. No one escapes it, “For God locks up all together in stubbornness.” The next question must be: Why does God do this? The answer is also here, in Romans 11:32. He does it because of a subsequent action that He will find far more enjoyable. God locks up all together in stubbornness because it’s so fun to unlock people. The rush of liberation happens only upon the removal of a bondage; there is no other way. God releases His creation from the black hole of self that it may at last appreciate the power and love that has not only always existed, but that has supplied even the most recalcitrant with life and breath and all (Acts 17:25). At the risk of belaboring the point, the joy of the release of realization, for the human, *cannot* occur apart from the temporary universal smackdown of the bondage of ignorance, stubbornness, and, yes, ingratitude.

EVENTUALLY

There is a woman I love who is an atheist. What can I do about it? I can tell her about God, and I do. But for now the information bounces off of her because it is not God’s timing to unlock her stubbornness. My time came before hers, but her time is not yet. It doesn’t make me better. God is the One controlling these things. These things are too big for me, or for any of us. It is not yet time for His flood of mercy to overcome this woman, though He is merciful to her in other ways—in some practical things in life—but the mercy of the realization of spiritual truth awaits.

She has been locked up in stubbornness and cannot see God, cannot apprehend Him, no, not even while gazing at a rose. She believes the teaching of humanity, that there is no God. Everything happened by accident, she tells me. The entire creation emerged from nothing via a “big bang,” and so forth. There was a random chemical reaction, or a random atomic explosion, and everything came into existence to begin functioning perfectly. (Human beings evolved from monkeys, she says, which themselves evolved from sea slime, which



came from the Big Bang.) So I tell her about God because I know that God uses human beings to enlighten other human beings, and I wonder if it might be her time and I might be the one.

So far, it’s not—and neither am I.

The only reason I am able to relay God to her is because God released my stubbornness (Round 1) at age five. This is when my parents explained to me that there was a God. I believed them. For me, it was that simple. But this was God actively removing my stubbornness and using my

“My time came before hers, but her time is not yet. It doesn’t make me better.”

parents to do it; nothing is simple. I was no spiritual genius; I was a recipient of God’s first round of mercy. It was God’s timing to remove a degree of stubbornness from me, and He used mom and dad to do it. It was not until my twentieth year, however, that I realized that God had spoken to humanity in the Scriptures and that I could read these Scriptures for myself to gain more knowledge of Him. This was 1979, the Spring. It would be 1986 when God merci-

fully removed the final vestige of stubbornness and I came to see the gospel of the grace of God as communicated by the apostle Paul. This was my faith for eonian life. It was not out of me, it was a gift of God (Ephesians 2:8-9). It was His present to me, given to me in this life, for the next life.

For me it was three stages, then: a) there is a God (1964) , b) I can know Him (1979), and c) everything is of Him (1986). For some people, these three things come at once. For some, none of these revelations come in this lifetime. Many die in spiritual darkness. But the promise of God remains: God will have mercy on all. Nothing is mentioned, in this passage, of the timing.



So I have told this woman about God—and nothing sticks. She is a Teflon surface of resistance to the things of the spirit. I can choose to become frustrated and I sometimes do. It is short-lived, however, because I know the truth of Romans 11:32. Here is how I comfort myself: Romans 11:32. I know that God has locked her up in stubbornness and that she *cannot* hear and receive the truth. It is literally impossible for her. It is not her fault. It helps me to know that she is not being stubborn on purpose. She has not locked herself up in stubbornness. I have proof that God did it: Romans 11:32.

My friend and loved-one is a good person. How do I know that God will not use me to reach her? I don't. I am

not a fatalist. So I do try. To date, it has not happened. I don't bang my head against the wall—and it *is* a wall. I do not incessantly try, for that would only push her away. I know when to rest, and when to stop. This is God's wall, not mine. I refuse to hurt myself on God's wall, though I would gladly do it for her, if called upon. I would sacrifice myself for her. But such banging is counterproductive. I would like to see results, but no results come. My nerves settle at a fresh personal application of Romans 11:32. Thus, I regain my peace. All proceeds according to God's plan. God knows what He's doing with this woman. He created her. She never was a monkey.

The time will come when she will grasp the truth. God will show her mercy. It may be at my word, or at the word of another. It may not be until she hears it from God Himself at the Great White Throne. I will be present to share in that joy. In fact, God may very well entreat her through me then, as He does now (2 Corinthians 5:20). It will still be "God Himself" enlightening her, but through me. The Word, then, will be perfect and will produce in her and for her the desired result, because it will be time for that very thing. I believe that God will employ me then, for this cause, for her benefit. I have prayed for it. I will be the divine messenger, then as now—but then with the full mind of Christ, in the ripened timing of God. This thought comforts me. I comfort myself by imagining her deliverance when, after years of self-chugging up the hill of life, this woman feels the deliverance of divine love, peace and care. Finally, answers to every question will settle upon her, as will balms for all of life's pain. What a day that will be.

This day eventually arrives for every member of the human race. The joy is in the release. The release (into spiritual realization) is impossible apart from the contrast of stubbornness. God locks up all together in stubbornness, not so that He can condemn all to an eternity of torment or to annihilation, but so that He can have mercy upon all, returning all humanity to Himself (1 Corinthians 15:21-28).

I must rest in this, and I will. —MZ

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MORE WRITING
Additional brilliance on the next page.



Martin, you said that I could keep my writings to you coming, because you like reading what other people write, especially if it's good writing. Here's some good writing, I think, and it's the truth at that! I'm writing this to you because you stirred a memory in me when you mentioned in one of last week's Revelation Series shows about how you thought about being buried and you envied the dead.

Ashes to Ashes

by Kristine Webb

I grew up in a town that had a tile factory—a factory that made round tiles, not flat ones. And I lived in a house that was the third from the end of the street that dead-ended where the tile factory began. On the other side of the tile factory was a park, and we would get to that park by taking a short-cut through the tile factory. There were a dozen kilns on the grounds of the factory that the clay tiles were loaded into for baking. These kilns were 15 feet in diameter, and



they were fired by gas. When they were turned on—without warning—they roared like a lion. If it happened, as it often did, while we were taking a short-cut through the factory grounds, we would run, scream

and laugh. But my brother, Lyle, went in alone one day, and he didn't laugh.

Lyle was one year younger than I, and around the time we were 9 and 10, my best friend, Johnny, and I caught him sitting on a tile crying. We asked him why he was crying, but he said he didn't know. So we walked him home and went on our way to the park—cutting back through the tile factory, of course. And a kiln fired up. And we jumped, screamed and laughed. Then we got an epiphany as to why my brother was sitting on a tile and crying. So I made up a little ditty as we walked along:

*Poor little Lyle sat on a tile,
and he began to cry,
oh ma-ah, oh ma-ah,
poor little guy am I.*

Every once in a while that ditty would come back to me over the years. And, as I got older, I had forgotten about it—until something happened to my brother, Lyle. He got sick, and I cared for him in my home until he died. And, before he died, he told me he wanted to be cremated and buried on my property with flowers all around him. We both loved

flowers, so I said yes, I would do that.

He died in March, and I wasn't able to prepare the ground for his memorial garden of flowers until May. In the meantime my older sister came to ask if she could have some of his ashes to bury in the cemetery where our parents' graves were. I told her she could take the whole of them back with her—save for a small portion to be buried in the garden. So I began looking for a small jar that would be good to use for the occasion, and I found a baby food jar that I thought would be good to use. I scooped out a portion to fill the jar and gave her the rest to take back home with her. I put the baby jar of ashes away for safe-keeping until the ground thawed out for preparing the memorial garden.

Oh, and another important part of this story is this: The

town where we all grew up had recently taken out all of its parking meters, and they sold them to the townspeople as a keepsake of a bygone era. My sister bought one and brought it up for me to use in the memorial garden I was going to create for our brother, Lyle. His middle name was our mother's maiden name: Parks. So we were going to park his ashes below the parking meter—the parking meter that had a red flag inside the glass window that said, *expired*. And, if

*“If you put a
quarter in the
meter, you
could spend
time with Lyle
while walking
barefoot
through the
garden.”*

you put a quarter in the meter, the red flag would go down for about an hour, and one could spend some time with Lyle as one walked barefoot through the garden.

May came, and I began to dig the ground for the garden—contemplating what I would put where, and what flowers I would plant, and how to best utilize the parking meter. Then I remembered I had some tiles from the old factory, and I thought I would use one to put his baby jar full of ashes in—like a mini sarcophagus. So I went and got the tile and buried it in the ground in front of the parking meter. And I dropped the baby jar down into the tile. And, as I did so, lo and behold! That little ditty I had long forgotten about came back to me. *Poor little Lyle sat on a tile...* And I began to cry. And I had an epiphany: “The soulish man receives not the things of the Spirit of God (which is in us) for they are foolishness to him, neither can he understand them, because they are spiritually discerned.”

Lyle didn't know why he was crying as he sat on that ‘cremated’ tile, but the spirit—his spirit—did. His spirit knew what his fate would be in the end of him, that he would end up ashes to ashes and dust to dust in a baby jar inside of a tile. This true story is the eulogy I gave for him when the family came to plant flowers around his grave. And they all cried while planting the flowers, and they all said it was the best funeral they ever attended. —Kristine



I NEED YOUR HELP!

Ok folks, I need some editing assistance. If anyone out there feels called to epicness, have I got a word for you. I probably may have asked this before but I am the control-freak type who gives out work and then changes his mind and takes it back. (God never changes His mind, but I do.) I finally realized that I must get unlocked from this stubbornness. I already have one person working on some of my files, but I need more. The work just isn't going fast enough. Our time is short, and books need printed and delivered so that as many as possible can get the truth in what is to many the most convenient format—books. I don't seem to be able to prepare these books on my own. I am too busy writing new ones. I need a production person who can keep up with my literary output.

For starters, I want to print the first edition of the Romans Series: *Zender on Romans; Volume 1*. For this, I need someone to take all the original InDesign files and put them into one file. Even better if this person—any person—has design or typesetting experience in Adobe InDesign. This is my design program. I do this newsletter in Adobe InDesign. If you have any experience with this high-end software and you would like to do noble work and earn yourself many reward points and wreaths and medals at the dais of Christ, then please step right up.

Next, everyone is clamoring for *What is a Believer* to be put into book form. I have much additional material for this book, and yes, this is also priority.

I always need files in certain formats converted to other formats. It would be great to have someone on-call who could turn a Word document into an InDesign document without losing text formatting. Or turn a pdf into an InDesign document. Or turn lead into gold.

Thanks for your help, if you've got it.
I'm drowning in a sea
of my own verbiage;
somebody please toss
me a bucket.

—MZ

