



# ZWTF

Zapping You Whenever Thoughts Flow

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## God is One.

Just when you thought God might be schizophrenic, He's not.



**For we are reckoning a human to be justified by faith apart from works of law. Or is He the God of the Jews only? Is He not of the nations also? Yes, of the nations also, if so be that God is One, Who will be justifying the Circumcision out of faith, and the Uncircumcision through faith. —Romans 3:29-30**

Unless one is contrasting the two, only contrarians speak of law and faith at the same dinner party. The law of Moses was not of faith. God said to Israel, “If you do this, then I will do that. And if you don’t do this, then I won’t do that.” An Israelite didn’t really need to believe that God would do anything differently for him or her besides what He said He would do, based on human behavior. Thus, the law was clearly an “if/then” proposition. “If you jump into the Sea of Galilee, then you will get wet.” Why jump into the Sea of Galilee and have faith that you will remain dry?

Because they make sense to us, humans like cause and effect arrangements. Well-ordered worlds please our basest instincts—they require no faith. It’s healthy for us that when we put two bricks together with mortar in-between—and keep doing this over and over—we produce a wall. It’s fun to plant a banana tree and watch a banana tree spring up. How discouraging if planting a banana tree produced a wall every now and then; or if laying bricks produced the occasional banana tree. It would darken our mood and give us facial tics. It would discourage both banana-tree planting and wall-building. We like it that two plus two equals four. If two plus two sometimes equaled six, many of us would take to our beds and stay there. Any enterprise based on numeric calculation would regularly misfire. Planes heading for Los Angeles from Oklahoma City would on occasion land in Honolulu. In such a world, *everything* would require faith.

Justification by faith is just such a world. It crashes against what we presume to be right, taking us places we least expect to occupy. “The soul that sins, it shall

die” (Ezekiel 18:20). This makes sense to us. But when the soul that sins stands before God in beams of glorious light so that Christ Himself smiles and applauds the proceedings, every instinct tells us that something has misfired. We expect our “planes” to land in Death, but instead here we are in Honolulu with God Himself placing the lei around our necks, and Jesus handing us tropical refreshment.

## THE GOD OF EVERYONE

It is so common for us moderns to think of God as the God of everyone that we forget there was a day when one nation monopolized His favor. For many centuries, God was God of the Jews only. He let the rest of the nations go their own ways (Acts 14:16). Through the voice and writing of the apostle Paul, God announced a new program upon planet earth. He was now calling out another people from among the nations for a special task that He never gave Israel. This very notion would make an Israelite light a cigarette, pace the room and curse. Israelites—even those who did not smoke—hated the idea of other people honing in on their blessings and enjoying private conversations with their God. In their minds, they owned the franchise on the Creator of the Universe. If the other nations wanted a piece of Him, they had to employ Israel as the channel. Israel’s fees for this privilege were exorbitant: the nations had to give Israel its due as a necessary priesthood. When a few scraps from Israel’s table did fall to the “dogs” below, the nations had to remain subservient and demonstrate extreme gratitude to their benefactors; kneeling would be great, money even better. Yet now, through Paul, God spoke directly to these “dogs” of even greater blessings than those promised to the literal descendants of Abraham. “Worse,” the blessings came free of charge. How could this be? Was God schizophrenic?

## “BEING BIPOLAR IS GREAT—I HATE IT.”

Many people think that God is mentally disordered. They look at the God of the Old Testament and the God of the New, and they think that they’re dealing with either two gods, or a single God with a dual personality. This Being oscillates like an electric fan. First He blows on Israel, giving them the law and acting all mean about it. Next thing you know, He pivots on His swivel and blows on the nations, giving them grace

and acting all friendly, as though these pagan Greek idol-worshippers are so much His best friends that He doesn’t even make them do anything, not even sacrifice a turtle dove or gnash their teeth even a little.

This crazy God can’t make up His mind. Is He blown about by every wind of His own teaching?

“No!” says Paul. “God is One.” This is good to know. More than that, it is critical teaching. God had to tell us this for our peace of mind. This is necessary information in order for us to trust Him. Two capital-G Gods—or one God with two capital-G personalities—would agitate normal people, especially when these Gods would start *doing* opposite things. Which God would we believe? One capital-G God says that human beings are righteous only when they obey His laws. The other capital-G God says human beings are justified by faith *apart* from works of law. One God loves Israel and ignores the nations; the other God lavishes non-Israelites with unheard-of gifts and puts Israel on the back-burner. The simple answer to this potential dilemma is that God is One. Even simpler is the truth that God does different things at different times for different reasons.

John 1:17, “For the law through Moses was given; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.” This is so simple that it can barely even be called a concept. On Monday, the postman delivers your electric bill. On Tuesday, he delivers your winning million-dollar sweepstakes check. On Wednesday, here comes your sweater from Amazon. It’s the same postman, bringing different things at different times. He may wear different socks now and then, but does he ever stop being your postman? Does his name ever stop being Fred? Would you ever accuse him of schizophrenia?

Likewise, God. God meant law to instruct humanity as to the sinfulness of sin and the inability of flesh to please Him. For this, He sent Moses. When *that* lesson was finished, it was time to teach a new lesson meant to reveal deeper recesses of His heart. This new lesson has to do with a grace that could not be fully appreciated unless contrasted with law. Moses brought the law; grace and truth come through Jesus Christ.

God employs different messengers for different lessons at different times, but He never stops being God. He never stops being One. His character never changes.

He never even *wears* socks. —MZ