

DESIDERATA¹
BEAUTY OUT OF ASHES
ALDERWOOD COMMUNITY CHURCH
Romans 9:22-33

BIG IDEA: DIVINE JUDGMENT IS HARD ON THE OUTSIDE BUT IT HAS A SOFT CENTER!

NOTE THE CONTEXT: Paul is still working on two questions:

1) Has God's promise regarding Israel failed? **VERSE 6**, *But it is not as though the word of God has failed...*

2) Is God capricious and unjust? **VERSES 18-19**, *So then He has mercy on whom He desires, and He hardens whom He desires.* ¹⁹ *You will say to me then, "Why does He still find fault? For who resists His will?"*

FIVE INSIGHTS ABOUT THE JUSTICE AND THE KINDNESS OF GOD

CF: Romans 11:22 *Behold then the kindness and severity of God; to those who fell, severity, but to you, God's kindness, if you continue in His kindness; otherwise you also will be cut off.*

1. **GOD IS SLOW TO WRATH. VERSE 22**, *What if God, choosing to show his wrath and make his power known, bore with great patience the objects of his wrath-- prepared for destruction?*
 - A. **Days of Noah**
 - **Genesis 6:5-7** *The LORD saw how great man's wickedness on the earth had become, and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time.* ⁶ *The LORD was grieved that he had made man on the earth, and his heart was filled with pain.* ⁷ *So the LORD said, "I will wipe mankind, whom I have created, from the face of the earth-- men and animals, and creatures that move along the ground, and birds of the air-- for I am grieved that I have made them."*
 - B. **Four Hundred Years for the Amorites**
 - **Genesis 15:16**, *In the fourth generation your descendants will come back here, for the sin of the Amorites has not yet reached its full measure."*
 - **See Leviticus 18:21-30. Cf. Leviticus 20:2-5; 1 Kings 11:5-7; Jeremiah 32:35**
 - **Or they will make you sin. Deuteronomy 20:17-18** *Completely destroy them-- the Hittites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites-- as the LORD your God has commanded you.* ¹⁸ *Otherwise, they will teach you to follow all the detestable things they do in worshiping their gods, and you will sin against the LORD your God.*

2. **GOD BLESSES EVEN AS HE JUDGES. VERSES 23-24**, *What if he did this to make the riches of his glory known to the objects of his mercy, whom he prepared in advance for glory--* ²⁴ *even us, whom he also called, not only from the Jews but also from the Gentiles?*
 - A. **He Saves the Gentiles, VERSES 25-26**, *As he says in Hosea: "I will call them 'my people' who are not my people; and I will call her 'my loved one' who is not my loved one,"* ²⁶ *and, "It will happen that in the very place where it was said to them, 'You are not my people,' they will be called 'sons of the living God.'"*

¹ *Desideratum: Something considered necessary or highly desirable.*

- Cf., Hosea 1:10
- B. **He saves the Jewish Remnant, VERSE 27**, Isaiah cries out concerning Israel: "Though the number of the Israelites be like the sand by the sea, only **the remnant will be saved**. For the **Lord will carry out his sentence on earth with speed and finality.**"

- Cf., Isaiah 10:22-23

NOTE: Habakkuk 3:1-2, A prayer of Habakkuk the prophet. On shigionoth. ² LORD, I have heard of your fame; I stand in awe of your deeds, O LORD. Renew them in our day, in our time make them known; **in wrath remember mercy.**

3. **GOD DOESN'T FLINCH WHEN IT'S TIME. VERSE 29**, It is just as Isaiah said previously: "Unless the Lord Almighty had left us descendants, we would have become like Sodom, we would have been like Gomorrah."

A. **Quote from Isaiah 1:9**

B. **Cf. Days of Noah**

- **Matthew 24:37-39** As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. ³⁸ For in the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark; ³⁹ and they knew nothing about what would happen until the flood came and took them all away. That is how it will be at the coming of the Son of Man.
- **1 Peter 3:18-20** For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive by the Spirit, ¹⁹ through whom also he went and preached to the spirits in prison ²⁰ who disobeyed long ago when God waited patiently in the days of Noah while the ark was being built. In it only a few people, eight in all, were saved through water. Cf., **2 Peter 3:3-10. D. Ezekiel 14:12-14** The word of the LORD came to me: ¹³ "Son of man, if a country sins against me by being unfaithful and I stretch out my hand against it to cut off its food supply and send famine upon it and kill its men and their animals, ¹⁴ even if these three men-- Noah, Daniel and Job-- were in it, they could save only themselves by their righteousness, declares the Sovereign LORD.

C. **Objections...**

- We want a God without wrath who took man without sin into a kingdom without justice through the ministrations of a Christ without a cross. (**Reinhold Niebuhr**, *The Kingdom of God in America*)
- Few would want to follow Marcion, the ancient church heretic who edited out offensive portions of Scripture, including the Old Testament God who was "lustful for war."
What remained for Marcion was a climax with a truncated plot, with the main character split in two: A God of creation and wrath pitted against a God of salvation and love at the Cross.²
- It is no longer possible to believe that every word of the Bible was inspired by God. Fundamentalists still do, but they can keep up such self-delusion only by scrupulously avoiding all forms of scientific inquiry.... God may be "slow to anger and quick to forgive," but he is also terrifying and at times as arbitrary (as in his dealings with Saul) as any Mesopotamian monarch. I don't think it should bother us that he is no Hallmark greeting card. If God is to be God the Creator of all, he must be utterly beyond our comprehension—and, therefore, awfully scary.... [I]t remains true that there is no way of attributing mass carnage and vindictive slaughter to a God worth believing in. Even the fiercest believer among us must, I think, admit that these operations

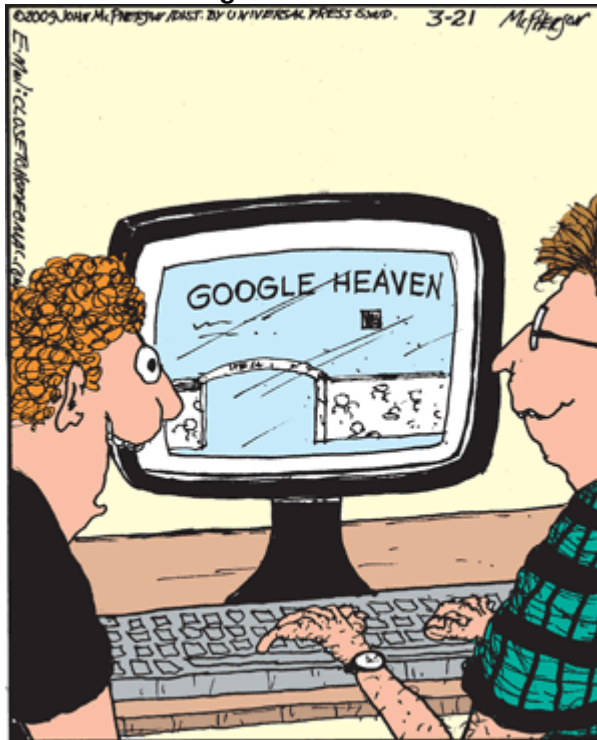
² Daniel G. Reid and Tremper Longman III, "When God Declares War," *Christianity Today* (October 28, 1996), 14

were the work of human beings who had wrongly convinced themselves that God was on their side.³

- *Is it not against all natural reason that God out of his mere whim deserts men, hardens them, damns them, as if he delighted in sins and in such torments of the wretched for eternity, he who is said to be of such mercy and goodness? This appears iniquitous, cruel, and intolerable in God, by which many have been offended in all ages. And who would not be? I was myself more than once driven to the very abyss of despair so that I wished I had never been created. Love God? I hated him!—Martin Luther.*

4. **GOD CAN'T BE BOUGHT OFF.” VERSES 30-32, What then shall we say? That the Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, have obtained it, a righteousness that is by faith; ³¹ but Israel, who pursued a law of righteousness, has not attained it. Why not? Because they pursued it not by faith but as if it were by works.**

• **CARTOON—Google earth**



“It’s great. Just type in the name of someone who died and it’ll tell you if they made it in there or not.”

- Some years ago our son, who was about eight at the time, was having a generally squirrely day. He was headed for trouble.. I warned him that if he didn’t settle down soon, he would face serious consequences involving the availability of Mr. Nintendo. Then came a spill of Exxon Valdez proportions.
“Okay,” I said, “you know the consequences.”
This eight-year-old boy pulled a dollar bill out of his pocket, waved it in front of my nose, and suggested slyly, “Maybe Mr. Washington can change your mind.”
There is one before whom we will all stand. He is loving, holy, gracious, and just, but he intends for us to understand that we really will give account to him of our lives.

³ Thomas Cahill, *The Gift of the Jews* (New York: Doubleday, 1998), 245-246.

We will not be able to finesse our way around that throne; Mr. Washington will not change his mind.⁴

5. **GOD IS EITHER YOUR DREAM OR YOUR NIGHTMARE—IT'S YOUR CHOICE!**
VERSES 32-33, They **stumbled** over the "stumbling stone." ³³ As it is written: "See, I lay in Zion a stone that causes men to **stumble** and a rock that makes them **fall**, and the **one who trusts** in him will **never be put to shame**."
- A. Man on Rock, Good!**
- On Christ the solid rock I stand, all other ground is sinking sand...
- B. Rock on Man, Bad!**
- **Augustine**—The only way a man can lose You is to leave You; and if he leaves You, where does he go? He can only run from Your pleasure to Your wrath.

Timothy G. Walton
April 19, 2009

⁴ John Ortberg, *If You Want to Walk on Water, You've Got to Get out of the Boat* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), 41.