

160 - The Irony of God

I read a friend's message earlier this week that dealt with the Father's ironies in the Scriptures. We've seen many of these as we've studied other subjects on Light Up the Scriptures, but tonight, it seems important to look these instances of apparent irony as a way to understand the ways of our Father.

So often, it seems our lives take turns we don't expect. How often are we surprised by where we find ourselves, and mystified by the steps that led us there? How many of us could have imagined that we would wind up exactly where we are today? Yet, here we are, where all our choices have led us, and where the Father knew, we would be. Not that He made our choices; but, rather, He knew what we *would* choose, and planned accordingly:

Psalm 139:

0 Yahweh, You have investigated me and are knowing me;

2 You Yourself know my sitting down and my rising up;

You understand my thought from afar;

3 My path and my pallet You have measured off,

And for all my ways You have made provision.

...

16 And my days, all of them were written upon Your scroll;

The days, they were formed when there was not one of them.

Consider that the Father's Purpose of the eons, which Paul wrote about in Ephesians, was set in motion purely out of the Father's desire; actually, because it was and is His delight.

Ephesians 1:

3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who blesses us with every spiritual blessing among the celestials, in Christ,

4 according as He chooses us in Him before the disruption of the world, we to be holy and flawless in His sight,

5 in love designating us beforehand for the place of a son [or daughter]

for Him through the Messiah Yeshua; **in accord with [in agreement with] the delight of His will,**

6 for the laud of the glory of His grace, which graces us in the Beloved.

“**Delight,**” in Greek, involves **choice** – none of your life or mine, and no part of human history is in any way accidental or capricious; the Father wanted it this way. That fact is ironic in itself, given the events, circumstances and relationships in our own lives that we would have written differently; to say nothing of what looks like the gross tragedy and pathetic desperation demonstrated throughout human history.

“**Delight,**” in Greek, also involves “*good will, kindly intent, benevolence, pleasure, satisfaction,*” and even “*desire.*”

Last week, we looked at the difference between having the Father’s blessing and BEING His pleasure or His delight. Within His delight, we find His good will, His kindly intent, His benevolence, His satisfaction, and His desire. You and I are the beneficiaries of all of these qualities. We find the irony, however, in how the Father demonstrates His delight.

Yeshua certainly knew the Father’s irony:

Luke 3:22

“Thou art My Son, the Beloved; in Thee I delight.”

John 5:20

“For the Father is **fond of the Son and is showing Him all that He is doing.”**

Isaiah 53:9-10

**Although He had done no wrong,
And no deceit was in His mouth.**

10 Yet Yahweh **desires to crush Him,
And He **causes Him to be wounded.****

How often we have looked with awe at the **Agape** love of the Father, which stops at nothing short of the total fulfillment of His purpose of the eons – and that included Yeshua being crushed – brutally beaten, tortured, and killed. For you and me it means that we died with Him and that we **MUST** die – it costs everything and everyone to live in Him! Every dream, ambition, or desire; every relationship we most value; even the lives we hold dear, are all up for grabs. The Father can destroy them all for the sake of His purpose in and through your life and mine...and you who are listening to me now are veterans of His sovereignty in these areas. Who of us would want any part of His action in our lives to have stopped short? Who of us would want to be somewhere else, knowing that wherever that is, is *only* because we refused His delight?

Do you realize that wherever you and I are today is because of one of two reasons?

1. We have said YES to the Father in every area of our lives, which He is free, therefore, to direct without *us* asserting *our* wills into His plan.
2. We balked at some critical juncture and went off on our own, all the while THINKING that we're following Him. Somewhere along the journey, we decided that the Father meant something He didn't – that He intended something He didn't; we MISTOOK something in us for something in Him; we may have said something like, "Well, I believe that the Father is directing me here or there"; or, "Well, God would never . . . He would do this, or He would want that . . ."

One of the most fearful ironies is that the Father, Who is Sovereign – sovereign is one of those words that needs no modifier; in other words, we don't need to say that He is totally sovereign, because you can't be less than totally and utterly sovereign; just like you can't be sort of pregnant.

The Father is sovereign, yet He deals with us as if we were in charge of our lives. His sovereignty **accounts** for everything we think do or say, no matter what it is – some might say the Father allows for our "free will" by His

“permissive will,” although those terms do not appear in the Scriptures anywhere. The point is that in this eon – and ONLY in this eon, mind you – We can direct our lives and think the Father is, or He can direct our lives and we KNOW He is. Let me say that again: In this eon, we can direct our lives and think the Father is, or He can direct our lives and we KNOW He is.

How’s that for irony?

You know how I can talk to us about both sides of this? Because I’ve been on both sides; I haven’t just observed both sides, I’ve LIVED on both sides intimately enough to tell the difference. I can’t tell you how many times the Father has given us direction for someone, through words of knowledge and of wisdom, who are where they are today because they either took it as from the Father and are living today as His delight, or who took it as from us and are living the consequences of that mis-take. We know of at least one person who died as a result of such a mistake; and others who are where they were when we last saw them. Remember the principle that revelation, only when followed by obedience, is met with confirmation and then the blessing flows. The Father never said that He would give revelation to someone directly, as He did to Abraham, Joseph, Moses, Yeshua, or Paul. More often, revelation came *through* someone else.

Let’s go back to how I began this train of thought:

You and I are where we are today because of one of two reasons:

1. We have said YES to the Father, and He is therefore free to direct us without *us* asserting *our* wills into His plan.
2. We balked at some critical juncture and went off on our own, all the while THINKING that we’re following Him.

Wisdom is knowing the difference between the two, and the further irony is in Yeshua’s words:

Matthew 7:16 and 7:20

14 Yet what a cramped gate and narrowed way is the one leading away into life, and few are those who are finding it.

15 "Take heed of those false prophets who are coming to you in the apparel of sheep, yet inside they are rapacious wolves.

16 "From their fruits you shall be recognizing them. Not from thorns are they culling grapes, nor from star thistles figs.

17 Thus every good tree ideal fruit is producing, yet the rotten tree noxious fruit is producing.

18 A good tree can not bear noxious fruit, neither is a rotten tree producing ideal fruit.

19 Every tree not producing ideal fruit is hewn down and cast into the fire.

20 Consequently, from their fruits you shall surely be recognizing them.

Yeshua was not talking about the same subject as the one we're discussing; that's OK: we're dealing with a principle here, which simply gives us the wisdom to recognize the genuine from the false in our own lives by the fruit we produce. It's also important to note – and this is another great irony – the fruit that can be seen is far removed from the seed that is planted. We aren't looking for instantaneous results, but for lives of people who are ultimately saved, delivered, healed, and set free to find and fulfill the purpose for which they were created.

We all want the fruit, but the irony is in what happens to the seed first:

John 12:24-25

"Verily, verily, I am saying to you, If a kernel of grain, falling into the earth, should not be dying, it is remaining alone, yet if it should be dying, it is bringing forth much fruit.

25 He who is fond of his soul is destroying it, and he who is hating his soul in this world, shall be guarding it for life eonian.

Only the Father sets things up so that to win the prize, you have to lose your life! His ways are so often completely opposite to ours – that’s why **GOD is GOD and We Are Not** – and that’s why that statement makes such a great book title!

The Father’s irony is everywhere, from the beginning of this creation to its end!

Look at Eden: two trees in the midst of the garden; one imparting life and the other knowledge of good and evil and, thereby death. That isn’t the real irony, but the fact that the Father knew what would happen and the rest of human history depended on it happening that way! What looks like a huge mistake provided a way for you and me to come to the Father, to know Him and understand Him – at least to the degree that we are capable – through the life and death of Yeshua, Who would never have come if Eve hadn’t been deluded and Adam hadn’t disobeyed in Eden!

Moses would never have taken Israel out of Egypt if Joseph hadn’t been sold to Ishmaelites by his brothers!

Who but the Father would rank according to the least, rather than the greatest?

Matthew 20:16

Thus shall the last be first, and the first last.

Listen to this section of Paul’s letter to the Corinthians – it is such a portrait of the Father’s irony:

1 Corinthians 1:

17 For Christ does not commission me to be baptizing, but to be bringing the evangel, not in wisdom of word, lest the cross of Christ may be made void.

The evangel has to be heralded, as Paul says later on in this section; it has to be spoken, and people have to hear it. At the same time, He says he didn't bring the evangel in wisdom of word, because focusing on the words – and probably the speaker too – makes the cross of Christ empty, forces it and makes it devoid of contents; that's the definition of void.

1 Corinthians 1:

18 For the word of the cross is **stupidity**, indeed, to those who are perishing, yet to us who are being saved it is the **power of God**.

Haven't we all seen this play out in people throughout our lives – I can recall how I considered the word of the cross as stupidity. Until I died to myself, under great impetus from the Father, which ironically was His mercy, I did not understand this Scripture. Look at this Scripture from a backward angle, so to speak: The Father's power is of no effect – no use or benefit, if you will, if not for salvation (that is, the saving of our souls out of the sentence of death into the abundance of incorruptible bodies and immortal life with the Lord); and salvation itself is impossible but for the cross. Therefore, the power of God and the cross of Christ are linked in a way that dying people think is stupid, just like I did.

1 Corinthians 1:

19 For it is written, I shall be destroying the wisdom of the wise, and the understanding of the intelligent shall I be repudiating.

20 Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the discussor of this eon? Does not God make stupid the wisdom of this world?

This is a direct, frontal assault by the Father on human wisdom and intelligence; on the philosophers and even the theologians, which society lifts up as paragons of human achievement. The Father says, "You may have a good head on your shoulders, but your so-called smarts and faux-insight is entirely stupid to Me." Now that is rich irony.

1 Corinthians 1:

21 For since, in fact, in the wisdom of God, the world through wisdom [its wisdom, that is] knew not God, God delights, through the stupidity of the heralding, to save those who are believing,

So human wisdom can't even know God – even if we try in our own form of what WE call wisdom, we will fail to know the Father. He “delights” – He exercises good will, kindly intent, benevolence, satisfaction, and desire to save us who will believe Him because of the heralding of the evangel, which appears stupid to our humanity. I only came to Christ because the sound of a gymnasium full of people praying and singing in the spirit captivated me. The Father won me over with the sound of pure, uncluttered and completely unreligious worship.

1 Corinthians 1:

22 since, in fact, Jews signs are requesting, and Greeks wisdom are seeking,

23 yet we are heralding Christ crucified, to Jews, indeed, a snare, yet to the nations stupidity,

Yeshua did so much in the way of signs to demonstrate Who He was; but still, the Pharisees asked. He had to tell them that none would be given, except the sign of Jonah, and even when that was fulfilled in His resurrection, they still denied . . . as they continue to deny Him today. The Gentiles, represented here in Corinthians by Greeks, seek wisdom – they want to know things, and Paul will dispense with them shortly. So, to the Jews, Yeshua is a snare; they are caught by Him and cannot escape Him, but they practically gnaw their own legs off to get away from Him. To Gentiles – or Greeks – the Messiah is pure stupidity, probably because Yeshua is too simple, too narrowed a focus, unlike Buddhism and other disciplines that are far more complicated and broad in their appeal; forgetting the fact that they lead nowhere.

Verse 24 contains the great caveat:

24 yet to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ, the power of God and the wisdom of God,

The Greek actually reads, “**to those, the called.**” The reference echoes Yeshua’s words in Matthew 22:14:

For many are the called, yet few are the chosen.

To the called, Christ crucified, in verse 22, is the power and the wisdom of God. The irony is in its apparent stupidity to those who are not among “**the called.**” I’m fascinated with the absence of explanation by Paul as to what distinguishes someone who is among “**the called**” from someone who is also among “**the chosen.**” The difference is, I believe, back where we began in **Ephesians 1:**

3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who blesses us with every spiritual blessing among the celestials, in Christ,
4 according as He chooses us in Him before the disruption of the world, we to be holy and flawless in His sight,
5 in love designating us beforehand for the place of a son [or daughter] for Him through the Messiah Yeshua; in accord with [in agreement with] the delight of His will,
6 for the laud of the glory of His grace, which graces us in the Beloved.

1 Corinthians 1:

25 for the stupidity of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.

26 For you are observing your calling, brethren, that there are not many wise according to the flesh; not many powerful, not many noble,

Paul is saying, as graciously as he can muster, “Look at you! Look around you! You’re not a group of smart people, at least as the world sees smart; you’re pretty rag tag, certainly not noble. This is who the Father called together to form this ecclesia – and the even stronger irony is that He called you sorry bunch deliberately to demonstrate HIS wisdom:

27 but the stupidity of the world God chooses, that He may be disgracing the wise, and the weakness of the world God chooses, that He may be disgracing the strong,
28 and the ignoble and the contemptible things of the world God

chooses, **[Wait! There's more!]** and that which is not, that He should be discarding that which is,

29 so that no flesh at all should be boasting in God's sight.

30 Yet you, of Him, are in Christ Jesus, Who became to us wisdom from God, besides righteousness and holiness and deliverance,

31 that, according as it is written, He who is boasting, in the Lord let him be boasting.

Chapter 2

1 And I, coming to you, brethren, came not with superiority of word or of wisdom, announcing to you the testimony of God,

2 for I decide not to perceive anything among you except Yeshua the Messiah and Him crucified.

3 And I came to be with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling,

4 and my word and my heralding were not with the persuasive words of human wisdom, but with demonstration of spirit and of power,

5 that your faith may not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.

It is so important to the Father that we focus on Him and the evangel of God, and not a man or woman who might persuade us with lofty speech. Ultimately, Paul says, it is "*demonstration of spirit and of power,*" that inspires true faith, because the Father's operation in your life bears witness to the word that is being heralded.

6 Yet wisdom are we speaking among the mature, yet a wisdom not of this eon, neither of the chief men of this eon, who are being discarded, 7 but we are speaking God's wisdom in a secret, wisdom which has been concealed, which God designates before -- before the eons, for our glory,

8 which not one of the chief men of this eon knows, for if they know, they would not crucify the Lord of glory.

9 But, according as it is written, That which the eye did not perceive, and the ear did not hear, and to which the heart of man did not ascend -

- whatever God makes ready for those who are loving Him.
10 Yet to us God reveals them through His spirit, for the spirit is searching all, even the depths of God.

For a season, I read a few blogs that are full of theological argument; all very precise and boringly laborious. The Father showed me the futility of it all – these are the modern day “**chief men of this eon, who are being discarded,**” who are not perceiving the Father’s wisdom, Paul says, which He reveals “**in a secret**” that they don’t know and can’t see while their understanding is darkened by their own dogma.

John 4:10

If you were aware of the gratuity of God, and Who it is Who is saying to you, 'Give Me a drink,' you would request Him, and He would give you living water.

Hebrews 12:29

for our God is also a consuming fire.

When we look at our lives or this world through our flesh eyes; when we try to discern with our flesh minds and human understanding – as easy as that is to do – we are looking only horizontally and we bind ourselves to the limitations of our own flesh. When we turn our gaze vertically, literally ignoring the most obvious and concrete evidence all around us, we join Jeremiah and other prophets who saw from heavens view because they heard the Father’s invitation and called on Him.

Jeremiah 33:3, beginning in verse 2

*Thus says YaHoVeH Who is making it,
YaHoVeH Who is forming it to establish it,
YaHoVeH is His Name:
3 Call to Me, and I shall answer you,
And I shall tell you of great things,*

And of unsearchable things which you have not known.

Only YahHoVeH can call forth light out of darkness and separate the two into night and day. Only the Father could conceive and set in motion a purpose before anyone or anything came into being, and then execute it in such an apparently convoluted way to fulfill it exactly according to the council of His will. Perhaps the real irony is not in his purpose or its execution, but in our pitiful attempts to comprehend it and our arrogant judgment of it. When the creature judges the creator . . . that must be the true irony.