

## 269 *An uphill battle*

I'm pleased to report that someone has engaged with me on my Model A/B analysis.<sup>[266ff]</sup> 'Stan' is a college friend to whom I mentioned my 'coming out' about gay marriage,<sup>[268]</sup> and he has read various of my articles. Thanks, Stan!

His question is: can we not have both Model A and Model B, given that God is too big to only understand in one way? Fair point. And he quotes Romans 5:6-11, saying of it that it's 'quite clear what Paul believed'.

Glossing over my concerns that *anything* Paul writes could be said to be 'quite clear', let's note that the passage is primarily about God's incredible love and the wonderful way that Jesus rescues us. However, it does contain the phrase, 'saved from God's wrath', which sounds a bit Model A.

I don't want to argue about the meaning of individual verses, but if you read that passage with Model B eyes, it can certainly be seen as God's amazing healing of our sin. So then we have to ask: What does God feel wrathful about? Is it wrath against us? I don't believe Jesus felt wrath towards anyone – well, maybe the Pharisees.

No, just as I feel a certain amount of wrath towards Alzheimer's, so God feels a *lot* of wrath against sin and the suffering it causes.

Sorry, Stan, but I have come to believe that Model A simply does not fit as a description of the Jesus-God. Unfortunately, we have all been taught that Model A is THE way God saves us. So, having had that view drummed into us for decades (the church has had it for centuries – even the Reformation didn't erase it), it's very difficult *not* to read every passage, and see Model A in it.

As an illustration of how we tend to see what we *expect to see* in the Scriptures – and I'm certainly not saying Stan is like this – one vicar, who says that (not just Model A but) penal substitution is THE way God saves us, offered to lend me a book that shows that penal substitution can be seen in 'every single book of the Bible'.

So, I've got an uphill battle if I'm trying to persuade people to fight against the indoctrination we've all experienced, and that God really *is* like Jesus, the friend of sinner, the eternal healer.

And of course the other uphill battle is to persuade ourselves that the gospel is *not* about 'me and my salvation'. The real good news is that Jesus is Lord, and that means that our task is not just to get saved and lead a good life, but to fight against sin and sickness and injustice (just like the God of the Old Testament told us we should), and that takes guts.

If the passage you're reading paints a picture of God that's *not* like Jesus-God, then you are misinterpreting what it says. (I think the technical term is 'a Jesus hermeneutic'.)