



## The Cud...a little something to chew on.

September 5, 2003

### Satisfaction Guaranteed

I love shopping under the cover of a good return policy. I'll buy anything, at almost any price, if I know I can take it back. The other day I decided to buy a new vacuum cleaner. My old vacuum was making more deposits in my carpet than withdrawals, and I was tired of watching my guests wipe their feet on their way *out*.

So I went shopping. Who knew there were so many floor care options available to the modern domestic engineer? Even though there wasn't time for my usual comprehensive consumer research beforehand, under the store's generous return policy I felt free to buy with impunity. So I did what any middle-aged man with a credit card, a cruddy carpet and a 30-day cushion would do – I bought a Turbo-Cyclone 220Z bag-free, bacteria busting, pet hair vaporizing, self-repairing, GPS guided vacuum cleaner. I like to think I bought a vacuum I can grow into.

The Turbo-Cyclone 220Z is so powerful that when you switch it on, the National Weather Service issues a severe weather warning. Of course the beauty of the satisfaction guarantee is that if I decide I possess too much suction for my skill level, or for the local topography, I can return it.

Consumers aren't the only ones who benefit from a satisfaction guarantee. California has return policies for spouses and voters too. Under the country's first no-fault divorce law (the ironically titled "Family Law Act"), the legislature greatly reduced the hassle of returning an unwanted spouse. And under California's current recall provision, voters can elect a governor, develop a case of voter's remorse, and recall him or her before their term expires and the fall television season begins.

All this - the vacuum, no-fault divorce and recall provisions - got me thinking about the benefits of being one of God's elect. God doesn't return what He purchases, He doesn't divorce whom He marries, and He doesn't recall whom He elects.<sup>1</sup> I may be deficient and delinquent in my duties, but if God

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<sup>1</sup> God describes His relationship with believers as, among other things, a purchase, a marriage and an election (Acts 20:28b; 1 Corinthians 6:20; Revelation 19:7, 21:2; Romans 8:33; Mark 13:20).

commits His grace to me, He's committed forever. God's chosen ones are secure. The Bible assures me that "...the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable" (Romans 11:29).

The Lord doesn't need a return policy because He's always satisfied with His choices. He's satisfied because He always chooses with complete comprehension of what He wants and what He's getting.

When God elects a person or a nation to be the object of His grace (John 15:16; Deuteronomy 7:6), He does so with full disclosure. He elected Israel to most-favored-nation status knowing they'd have some good days and some bad decades. He elects a Church to inherit eternal life, fully aware of the idiocy destined to be issuing from its ranks. He knows where the bodies are buried, and where the skeletons hang and will be hung. He sees the end from the beginning (Isaiah 46 9:10). He has the number and nature of our days already on file (Psalm 139:16). There's no risk when God chooses, because there's no unknown. God's "satisfaction" is implicitly guaranteed.

When a purchase or a relationship doesn't meet my expectations, I'm disappointed. But the Lord is never disappointed. Disappointment implies expectation, expectation implies hope, and hope implies the unknown. God already knows all, so He doesn't hope; and because He doesn't hope, He has no expectations; and because He has no expectations, He can't be disappointed.

I may not be able to disappoint God, but I can and do displease Him. I have an unfortunate faculty for faithlessness and folly. And to make matters worse, I'm a repeat offender. I have a sickening proclivity for regression. My only solace is that I never surprise the Lord. I'm not shrugging off my bad behavior as foreknown-and-therefore-excusable, but I do find enormous comfort in remembering that the Lord knew what He was getting when He bought me.

Because He is omniscient, God does not traffic in hope. And *in spite of* what He knows, God promises to complete the work of grace He began in me (Philippians 1:6). He's made a safe place for me in which to "work out my salvation with fear and trembling" (Philippians 2:12). Of course that "fear and trembling" clause makes it a paradoxical place too.

Earlier I said, "If God commits His grace to me, He's committed forever." This begs the question, how do I know if God *has* committed His grace to me?

It's a vital question, one I'd like to address but will have to defer for another time. I'm busy now. I have 5 days left to decide if I'm committed to the Turbo-Cyclone 220Z.

For that day,

David

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