



Epistle to the  
**ROMANS**

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## Foreword

This epistle was written from Corinth, where the apostle had seen the marvel of the grace of God working in the midst of lowest degradation and evil, saving souls out of the revolting state common enough in Greece but notorious in this particular city. Appropriately therefore, this letter to the Romans discovers the sin of all mankind, exposes it thoroughly, and discloses that there is righteousness with God, so that God's wrath is revealed from heaven, allowing no excuse or shadow of justification for sin! But the same righteousness is revealed in good tidings of grace toward the ungodly, - grace which magnifies righteousness in justifying the guilty by means of the full, unmitigated penalty being laid upon the Lord Jesus Christ on the cross of Calvary.

God is before us as the Sovereign Judge, exercising His absolute prerogatives of condemnation and of justification, - sparing no evil of whatever degree, but on the ground of the death and blood-shedding of Christ justifying the previously judged sinner who believes in Jesus.

The absolute condemnation of sin is required for the maintenance of God's throne, and when a soul has known the blessedness of deliverance from the bondage of sin, he delights in the contemplation of that righteousness and truth, as in every other attribute of God. But in Romans, God graciously orders the presentation of the truth so as to meet the sinner where he is at the outset, and lead him experimentally through soul exercise out of bondage and darkness into liberty and light, establishing the feet in paths of truth according to His righteousness.

As the righteousness is "of God," so the Gospel is "of God"; He is before us as the source of all truth and all blessing; His sovereignty and counsels indelibly and brilliantly portrayed for those who have eyes to see. If He makes known our sins in all their awful repulsiveness, He also shows that He is greater than our sins: indeed, whatever objection may be raised (and even these are shown in their strongest and fullest character), God is proven far greater, triumphing gloriously over them all,

- and this triumph not as *over* men, but *on behalf* of them, - that is, on behalf of all who believe in Jesus. "If God be for us, who can be against us?" (Rom. 8: 31). God has taken *no* place of enmity against men: by the gospel He shows in deepest reality that He is for man. Blessed grace indeed! Beautiful answer to the enmity of our own hearts toward Him!

It is suggested that the reader should keep the text of Scripture before him in considering these verse by verse comments, for they are intended simply as a help in personal study and understanding of the infinitely precious Word of God. In those cases where the authorized version is differed from, quotations are generally from the "New Translation," by J. N. Darby.

# CHAPTER 1

## Romans 1

The salutation (unusually long) occupies seven verses, - laying down distinctly, as it does, the complete foundation of that Gospel of which Paul was a messenger - thus introducing him with the Gospel the Romans had received.

First, he gives lovely evidence of the bowing of his shoulder to the yoke of Jesus Christ; "Paul, a bondman of Jesus Christ," - bound to the obedience of Christ by a love greater than his own. But his humility is as firm as lowly. By the call of God he is an apostle; and though he affirms his own subjection to Christ, he affirms no less the position to which God has called him. Thirdly, he is "separated to God's glad tidings;" his business in the world singular; his identification with his message - the Gospel of God - so complete that it is his one engrossing occupation. Blessed to have a heart and eye so single!

This brief notice as to himself brings him to the gospel in which his heart is bound up, and which immediately leads him to the avowal of its source (confirmed by the testimony of prophetic Scriptures v. 2.) and its foundation or the heart of its nature, the Person of His Son Jesus Christ (v. 3 giving the testimony to His humanity, v. 4 to His eternal Godhead). The witness and proof of Paul's avowals in Romans is of deepest and most instructive importance in an epistle dealing with the dispensing of justice and righteousness.

"The gospel of God" is "concerning His Son Jesus Christ." If God is its source, Christ is its all-pervading essence: there is not a single characteristic of it but what is livingly, vitally connected with the Person of Christ. The "glad tidings" is that which concerns Him: it is to be found nowhere else, but *fully* in Him.

He has "come of the seed of David according to flesh." His genealogy establishes the reality of His manhood. Blessed and marvellous grace this condescension of the Lord of glory to be born of the Jews! He is thus too the Man who fulfills all the promises of God. But also "marked out Son of God in power,

according to the Spirit of holiness by resurrection of the dead." This the brief but conclusive evidence of His deity: there was in Him a power not human, "the Spirit of holiness," not merely "the spirit of a Man" (though this also is true), but a state of intrinsic holiness in conjunction with the abiding, ungrieved, unquenched presence of the Spirit of God, and manifested by His bringing life out of death. This is far above manhood - even perfect manhood, though in manhood the holiness of Christ is no less true, as also the ungrieved, unquenched presence of the Spirit, - but these seen as the fruits of *dependence* as Man upon God. Here it is personal *power* as God, which He exercised and proved in resurrection of the dead. In Him was *intrinsic* life and holiness, as before His birth, the angel said to Mary, "That holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God." This holiness was a character altogether above manhood, and unique to God alone.

Indeed, Adam unfallen was not the possessor of holiness, for holiness entails the knowledge of good and evil, and the absolute refusal of evil. This is primarily only in God, though in infinite grace He communicates it by new birth to the souls of men. So the holiness of the manhood of Christ (perfect indeed from birth) was dependent upon God, from which place of dependence He could say "I shall not be moved." Blessed indeed that manhood, which had *all* His springs in God, had no ear for any but the voice of God, drew His full provision only from the hand of God, had set God always before Him, knew no motive but the glory of God. Not because unintelligent concerning the existence of sin (as was Adam unfallen), but having in Him nothing that responded to sin, - instead a thorough abhorrence and rejection of it. Pure and matchless dependence indeed!

But the holiness here is the characteristic of Deity, - His own personal unity with the Spirit of God, and infinitely above our creature conception. The power of life was inherent in Him, and proven in His raising Lazarus and others from the dead, as in His own resurrection.

Powerful then is the voice that has called Paul, communicating to him "grace and apostleship in behalf of His Name for

obedience of faith among all nations." "Grace" is mentioned prior to "apostleship": *only* the grace of God can give the true motives and power for the exercise of apostleship, as of any other gift. But when God has given a gift, He also gives "grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ" (Eph. 4: 7). Good for us to know our measure, for we cannot expect grace to go beyond it. Apostleship brings with it authority from God, yet even God's authority is exercised in grace.

These two qualifications (grace and apostleship) are evidently both specially communicated to Paul in order that he might represent the name of Christ to the Gentiles, - that name the object for their "obedience of faith." Not the obedience of law, which is merely outward, but the obedience that springs from a heart purified by faith. The gospel requires, and produces, a thorough confidence in the name of Christ, that bows in subjection to Him.

Picked out from among the Gentiles, the Roman saints are designated as "the called of Jesus Christ." The salutation then addresses the epistle "to all that are in Rome, beloved of God, called saints." None of the saints in the city were excluded, though from Rom. 16 we learn that there were evidently a few different meeting places. Not that there was any schism; but probably on account of persecution their meetings were kept small and unostentatious.

They are saluted as other assemblies are, in accordance with the character and message of Christianity, - "Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ."

Verses 8 to 17 give to us the introduction, - a lovely glimpse into the heart of the apostle, who shows himself thoroughly bound in soul and spirit to the God of the gospel, and hence to *all* whose hearts the gospel has entered. How greatly also this is beautified by remembering that Paul had never seen the Roman saints. Far from any spirit of envy, his heart overflows with rejoicing at the work God has manifestly wrought in that distant land. His first thought as to them is one of thanksgiving to God through Jesus Christ, that their faith was manifest so as to be spoken of throughout the whole world. Moreover, he

prayed for them, and that God might by any means favor him with a visit to them. Notice the orderly and earnest backing up of his words: - "God is my witness, whom I serve in my spirit in the glad tidings of His Son." Can there be any doubt as to the reality of his prayers? Not at all. He had desired so deeply this visit that he would say, - "if by *any* means." God granted the petition: the means was as a prisoner carried there for trial, - and he still rejoiced in the Lord.

Taught of God, as he was, and the desire to see them being unquestionably a desire born of God in his soul, it was not the mere seeing them that he sought. God had given him, as the teacher and apostle of the Gentiles, a distinct message which he knew they required for their true establishment. This moved his heart mightily toward them; yet far from thus placing importance upon himself, the vessel of God's ministry, his motives go deeper still than ministering to them, - "that is, to have mutual comfort among you, each by the faith which is in the other, both yours and mine." His ministry would be the means of drawing out the intelligent exercise of godly unity and fellowship amongst the saints, - his own heart yearning for, and comforted by, the exercise of their faith, and they comforted by his. There is mutual comfort only when there is mutual cultivation of faith. This was not mere effusion: it had often before been the purpose of the apostle to visit the saints at Rome, but he had been hindered. Yet he allows no thought of preference for them above other Gentiles, though fully as concerned for them as for others. Love according to God is not partial: it is real and full.

The operation of the grace of God in Paul's heart, and the energizing power of the Spirit of God caused him to consider himself a debtor to *all* Gentiles in particular, - whether Greeks or Barbarians, - cultured or uncultured as to worldly distinctions and standards. God had entrusted him with that which they all needed, and with the responsibility of bearing it to them. He would be then thoroughly their messenger. As far as his ability went, and his heart's intentions, (though at present hindered by circumstances), he was fully prepared to preach the gospel to the Romans also. But though he could not



then by word of mouth declare unto them the gospel, he proceeds to do so with ink and pen. Blessed energy of faith, - by which even saints of the present day have infinitely profited! "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek." Here is the secret of Paul's energy. He was conscious that the gospel carries with it, not merely the mercy of God, but the *power* of God, and, as in verse 17, the *righteousness* of God. But the power of God is not such as appeals to the flesh, or gives occasion to the flesh: rather it is power "*unto salvation*," manifested on behalf of "every one that believeth," - not with partiality, although indeed the message came "to the Jew *first*," - a profitable reminder to the Romans, who were Gentiles. It will be noticed that in these few verses, Paul is carefully laying a basis for his arguments, - a basis that cannot be disputed. Hence the frequent occurrence of the words, "for" and "because," which give an indication of the distinctive character of the epistle, - that is, man meeting God on the throne, who brings the evidence fully to light, backing up every pronouncement with simple, solid truth.

But why the gospel? - why its necessity? Because God has in these last days revealed His wrath from Heaven, not a mere dealing of punishment to men on earth, but a wrath not placated by any amount of inflicted wrath on earth: in other words an *eternal* wrath against sin. John speaks of this in connection with those who die in their sins - "He that believeth not the Son, - the *wrath* of God *abideth* on him" (Rom. 3: 36). How unspeakably dreadful the thought; and what infinite blessedness and strength of character is seen in the gospel when we realize that it is the only deliverance from the *eternity* of God's wrath, "the blackness of darkness forever."

#### The Case of the Uncultured Gentiles

From verse 18 to verse 17 of Romans 2 the case of the Gentiles is considered, - a case in which there can be no plea of exemption from the revealed wrath of God. Their state is proven as not mere ignorance of the light, but as rejection of it. They were ungodly and unrighteous, "holding the truth in unrighteousness." No excuse will avail for the so-called

"ignorant heathen." If ignorant of God it is not their mere misfortune; it is their sin; their ignorance is wilful. How solemn an indictment upon the human race! No escape can be found in the plea that man is simply a weak sinner: he has been proven a wilful sinner. for he is not, as some would fain protest, without distinct evidence of God. Even apart from God's revelation in His Word, the very barbarian "holds the truth in unrighteousness": not gospel truth, assuredly, but the truth of God's "eternal power and divinity."

Creation is the undeniable witness of this. Nothing but utter dishonesty can deny the eternity of God's power and divinity in the face of a creation of such glory as that which we behold every day. "The heavens declare the glory of God" (Ps. 19: 1). "There is no speech nor language where their voice is not heard." And again, as the Lord questions Job, "Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth?" "Whereupon are the foundations thereof fastened?" "Or who shut up the sea with doors?" "And said, Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further: and here shall thy proud waves be stayed?" (Job 38: 4-11). The Lord simply demanded that Job face evidence that he was confronted with day by day. But how powerfully overwhelming an evidence for anyone who will hearken or take account! "So that they are without excuse." Blessed is the day that a soul will thoroughly and frankly realize and confess that *no* circumstance is an excuse for sin. Would God that we should know more fully how to condemn it without reserve, and this particularly in ourselves.

In the creation the Gentiles "knew God." This is indeed not the conscious, vital knowledge derived only from new birth, but the distinct evidential knowledge that renders their guilt inexcusable. They wilfully refused to give God His own place: no pulsebeat of thankfulness would they have toward Him. They would receive His blessings, cut off the very hand that gave them, and proceed to pervert them to the full. The inward reasonings of their minds, because bent on following their own wills, dragged them into folly; and their hearts, wilfully without understanding, were colored by the darkness they chose. Moreover, the very reasonings that led them to such darkness

they professed to be wisdom! - a profession which the more thoroughly declared them fools. This was their development - or evolution, if you will - "they became fools."

Yet this is merely the beginning of the story of man's deliberate, premeditated, determined course of evil. But it is a faithful delineation, such as God alone could give, or would give. Well it is for our hearts to see *themselves* in this true, unsparing exposure of the awful corruption of mankind in Romans 1. And they proceeded from evil to evil. Not content with vainglorying and rebellion against God, they would fain take delight in dragging His glory lower and lower; - first, to bring Him to the level of corruptible man (unspeakably awful wickedness!), and then to degrade Him to that of "birds," "beasts," and finally "creeping things." So base, so depraved does man become that he will eventually own no God save that which he can trample underfoot. But he blindly forgets that he necessarily puts himself lower than the god he worships - whether the lowest of creeping things; so that the objects of his worship bear vivid testimony to his wretched degradation.

"Wherefore God also gave them up" - not indeed that He was indifferent, but because His remonstrances by means of their intelligence and conscience had no effect upon their determined course of evil. As it was said of another, "Ephraim is joined to idols: let him alone" (Hosea 4: 17). Man will reap the bitter fruits of his refusal of the place of dependence upon God - his evil more and more manifesting itself in ways which at one time the very thought of would have been horrible and detestable to him. Then he will say, "I can't help myself." In this he speaks truth, but why does he not likewise confess the truth as to the *origin* of this shameful state - that is, that he has *refused* to retain God in his knowledge, wilfully turning the back on Him; and God has accordingly given him up to the uncleanness he really prefers? For it is *only God* who can protect a soul against evil, and if He is ignored, there is no predicting the depths of man's iniquity.

It will be noticed that after his refusal of God, man accomplishes his own personal corruption: he sins against himself - dishonors his own body. Few there are who think of

this as gross and absolute sin; and fewer still who think so concerning their ignoring of God. But the latter is the very source of evil, and the former the sphere of my *first* responsibility to Him. The proper care of my body is a peculiar personal trust given of God, and for which I must give account.

Sin against fellowmen is indeed no less sin, but to confine my estimate of sin merely to that which is public and manifest is only an added misery of deceit. It is simply wisdom to fully realize and acknowledge the horror of the more hidden secret sin against God and against myself. To refuse this exposes a heart wilfully hiding from God.

But man has been given up: God has given him up "to uncleanness" (v. 24) and "unto vile affections" (v. 26) because by determined rejection of God's testimonies in creation, he has "changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshiped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed forevermore." Man may dare to think he is merely neutral, merely uninterested concerning God, but this very attitude is an accusation of falsehood against God. For if the testimony of God is true, then neutrality is an utter impossibility. Neutrality is a deliberate (though it may be silent) rejection of the truth of God - dealing with it as with a lie. Speak of neutrality a man may, with utmost pride and complacency; but if he does not worship the Creator, then he *does*, in some way or other, worship the creature, though that creature be himself.

Given up of God, whether woman or man, the downward course to utter disgrace and shame is rapid. Yet there are present, governmental results: they soon reap what they sow, "receiving in themselves that recompense of their error which was meet." But with hardened, bitter hearts, they would stifle even the voice of penalty, despite their fear of, and complaints against it.

The New Translation (JND) renders verse 28, "And according as they did not think good to have God in their knowledge, God gave them up" etc. They would give no approval to having God in their knowledge - as much a matter of the mind as of the heart, both of these being corrupted. Hence "God gave them up

to a reprobate mind," a mind that rejects the good and is therefore rejected by the good - abandoned to its worthlessness and wilful lack of discernment.

There follows a list of evils with which man has *filled* himself, such as might well make the heart recoil with horror. But having refused God the right of possession, then evil has taken possession of him. He is not the neutral self-controlled man he would fain boast of being, but the abject slave of sin. let us notice in this list that it strikes particularly at the thoughts and passions of the heart. Assuredly the evil displays itself openly in time, but God here discovers and exposes man's inner being - that with which he is "full" - the thoughts and lusts of his mind and heart. Who can escape the conclusion that we are detected?

God's righteous judgment against such things, and the fact that those who do them are worthy of death, is not a matter of ignorance with them: they know this: the testimony of intelligence and conscience leaves them no escape. But it makes no difference to their evil course. They know that they shall reap as they sow, yet go on sowing the abominations to which they have yielded themselves. Not only this, but they enjoy the evil of others, finding pleasure in the very contemplation of sin, and encouraging it by congenial companionship with those bent upon it. How bold, how arrogant, how debased, how enslaved is the creature who was once "made in the image of God"!

## CHAPTER 2

### Romans 2

#### The Case of the Cultured Greek

But there is a class of Gentiles who are quite keen in seeing these evils in others, and unhesitatingly judging them for them, while never considering that the same judgment rests upon their own heads. Is it so with my reader? Have you a stern measure for denouncing the evils of others, and a lesser one for yourself? Do you plead extenuating circumstances for yourself? Or do you persuade yourself that your refined, respectable methods of self-indulgence, your cultivated ability to cover your guilt with a fine veneer, has the actual effect of annulling or lessening that guilt in the eyes of a holy and discerning God?

God here turns with a solemn accusation to the cultured Greek - the first 16 verses of Romans 2 exposing the shallowness of a fine exterior, the utter vanity of confidence in intellect, and declaring the stern unwavering, impartial reality of the judgment of God. Man's judgment of others is his own condemnation; for however cleverly he may conceal his guilt, God tells him pointedly - "Thou that judgest doest the same things" - while the very fact of his ability to judge bears record of a conscience that speaks, but which he chooses to soothe in respect to his own sin.

"But we are sure that the judgment of God is according to truth against them which commit such things." Solemn, straightforward, admirable statement! What folly to attempt to deceive myself! To do so is as much as to hate my own soul, and to hasten that soul to eternal ruin. For God is not deceived. He judges not according to my thoughts and feelings, my excuses and self-righteousness: He judges "according to truth." What unreasonable foolishness to ignore the truth! Can a man think - a man who is adept at accusing others and excusing himself - that *he* shall escape the judgment of God? Solemn, wholesome considerations for the souls of men!

But apart from the rather indefinite hope of escape, there is another attitude - a deeply incriminating one - that man dares to assume; and this again is put to him in the form of a searching question, "Or despisest thou the riches of His goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?" In verse 3 his thoughts favor his own immunity from the judgment of God: in verse 4 his thoughts despise the goodness of God. How contemptible the pride of man!

But we may well pause to consider the virtue, the beauty, the wonder of that which man despises - that is, "the riches of God's goodness and forbearance and longsuffering." Here is the secret of the allowance of the awful march of evil through the world today, the present allowance of man's proud will to assert itself. The more deeply the subject inquiring heart considers the enormity and persistency of man's growth in evil, the more profoundly is the exceeding marvel of God's patience seen. But man, so thoroughly corrupt, will take every possible advantage of the patience of God, while the greater his abuse of it, the greater his contempt for it.

All this is well known, if men would but weigh it well. A point however, that they know not, nor consider is that "the goodness of God leads to repentance." Not the justice or wrath of God here, but the goodness of God. How unspeakably blessed, how altogether above the questions and cavillings of men, yes, how deserving of their deepest, most heartfelt respect and admiration! But repentance is far from the natural heart: fear of punishment there may be indeed, but brokenness and contrition for sin is foreign to the proud will of man. Nothing will, or can lead him to it but the goodness of God - goodness that has melted and subdued many an arrogant, wilful heart, and caused the tears of most hardened sinners to flow in profusion. Hence, truly grievous beyond expression is that folly and wickedness that despises "the riches of His goodness and forbearance and longsuffering."

Choosing to follow his own hardness and impenitent heart rather than trust the goodness of God, man is deliberately laying up a treasure of wrath against himself. Living only and

fully for this present world he surely is, but he is multiplying *eternal* results. He may be most complacent that in this world he is reaping nothing of the wilfulness he sows; but it will only mean the greater reaping of wrath "in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God." God needs not to be hasty in settling His accounts, but not one will be left unsettled. He will render to every man according to his deeds. Deeds manifest the man. Subjection to a faithful Creator is displayed by patient continuance in well-doing - an attitude of expectant desire for eternal glory, honor, and incorruptibility. It is of course not a matter of absolute holiness or perfection here; but the heart distinctly shows itself. Does the heart set itself upon that which is good? Does it patiently continue to follow what is pure and true? Does it bear the unmistakable impress of eternity - the consideration of everlasting realities? Is it seeking "glory, honor and incorruptibility"? The end of such a path is entrance into eternal life - the full joy and blessedness of the presence of God for eternity. (It may be remarked that Paul here looks at eternal life more in its future aspect, that is, when separated from the very presence of sin, and in its own proper sphere - Heaven itself. But this does not deny, nor is it inconsistent with the truth found in John's writings, that "he that believeth on the Son *hath* everlasting life" (John 3: 36). It is not a matter of hope, simply, but of fact: every believer is a possessor of eternal life at present, but that life is out of its own essential home, in the midst of foreign elements, the world character being altogether contrary to it, so that its full display must await the pure circumstances of Heaven's glory.)

But on the other hand, is the heart rebellious against the truth? Is there contention rather than subjection? Do you yield yourself to unrighteousness rather than to the truth of God? For there is always yielding of some sort: there must be obedience either to what is true or to what is unrighteous. The very word "obedience" is obnoxious to the hardened heart, but he has nevertheless yielded himself to obey unrighteousness.

Thus he takes his stand. Very well, God, though "slow to anger and plenteous in mercy," will eventually take His own stand in



"indignation and wrath." Terrible to think of this as the attitude He will then take toward the unrepentant; while, as two words describe His attitude, so two words describe the consequences for every soul of man that has chosen evil - "tribulation and anguish." But who can realize the awful terror of judgment comprehended in those brief words? As the gospel is "to the Jew first," so is the judgment to those who refuse the gospel; but it is "to the Gentile" just as surely.

But God takes no delight in the punishment of unbelievers, though it is an absolute necessity. His delight is unspeakably deep, however, in those who bow to Him, as verses 7 to 10 bear witness. For the declaration of His awful judgment is *both preceded and followed* by the assurance of unmingled blessing to those who have chosen the good - "glory, honor, and peace, to every man that worketh good, to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile." Incomparable contrast to the eternal destiny and condition of those who in this world had no less opportunity of forgiveness, but "found no place for repentance"!

"For there is no respect of persons with God." How worthy indeed this truth of our deep earnest consideration! Who shall influence God on his behalf? Who shall plead his personal prominence, importance, earthly position or advantage before the only true God? Whatsoever they are is no matter to Him: "God accepteth no man's person." Personalities may mean a great deal in the proud, vain estimate of man; but let no man think to pass God's scrutiny wearing such a cloak: let him rather look well to his credentials, that they are in order - in such order as to meet the demands of perfect righteousness and truth. But neither the Jew's boast in the law, nor the Gentile's confidence in his learning and cultivation will avail at such a time. "For as many as have sinned without law shall also perish without law: and as many as have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law." Sin cannot escape the judgment of God, no matter where it is, whether in circumstances of greatest austerity and dignity, or whether in the lowest, most ignorant classes of humanity. No excuses, no exemptions will have the least shadow of consideration. This is justice, pure and perfect; this is righteous, holy judgment - which things we are told "are

the habitation of God's throne" (Psalm 89: 14). Verses 13 to 15, it will be noted, form a parenthesis, while verse 16 in few words tells us the time, the discernment, the measure, and the executor of God's judgment. The parenthesis meets the natural selfish protests both of the learned and unlearned. Learning does not justify (v. 13); and lack of education does not excuse (vv. 14 & 15). For in the latter case the Gentiles ("who have not the law" - a demarcation ever distinctly drawn in Scripture) manifest in their very nature a recognition of right and wrong such as the law declares. Not that they are by this means correct in every detail: such is not the point. But they naturally conceive some standard of moral regulations, so that "these, *having not the law*, are a law unto themselves."

"Which show the work of the law written in their hearts." It is certainly not the law itself written in their hearts, but the law's work. And there is surely little difficulty in seeing that the law's work - its very purpose - is to bring sin to remembrance, to convict the heart and conscience of sin. See Rom. 3: 20. Even those without law have a conscience that bear witness to their sin, while their ability to judge others and their attempts to cover their own sin by excuses, only more fully exposes them. It is a true exposure of man's natural reasoning as regards sin, in whatever state or circumstance he may be; their thoughts accuse or else excuse one another. Either they assume a hard, legal spirit on account of the sins of others, or else a lightness that glosses it over with excuses. But accusation will not atone for sin, nor will excuses put it away. Is there no other attitude toward one who has sinned? Ah yes, indeed, the *only* one of true value and of pure motives. Do we *pray* for such as this? - pray from a heart touched and compassionate toward the one who has so dishonored God? Surely this will leave a spirit neither accusing nor light and flippant at the thought of the sins of others. It will lead me more thoroughly and honorably to judge myself and to seek with deepest meekness that the other may also judge his own sin. For God can put sin away, while all my accusing or excusing is shallow, wretched vanity.

All of these things shall however be brought to light, "for there is nothing covered that shall not be revealed; neither hid, that

shall not be known." Not only the glaring manifest sins of men will be brought to account "in that day"; but "God will judge the *secrets* of men by Jesus Christ," who is Himself "the true Light," - the light by which everything is fully manifested in its true character. Nothing can escape its searching, brilliant rays. Nor will the judgment be according to men's estimates of right and wrong, but as Paul says, "according to my gospel." Paul's gospel is essentially "the gospel of the glory of Christ" (2 Cor. 4: 4) - the gospel of the once humbled, despised and rejected Son of Man now exalted at the right hand of God, given a Name above every name, at which "every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." Man has once dared to judge this lowly, sinless One: *then* the tables will be turned, and by perfect right *He* will sit in the seat of judgment.

Could the indictment of the Gentiles be any more complete or conclusive? Who can again lift his head in pride and haughtiness in the face of a record so devastating - a thorough, unadulterated, unalterable record in the Book of God? The summary of the guilt, both of Jews and Gentiles, awaits Romans 3, but Rom. 2: 16 ends the specific treatment of the Gentiles.

#### THE CASE OF THE JEW

Verse 17 summons the Jew to the bar of God to hear the special accusation against him. This will be more quickly noticed in the New Translation (JND), "But if *thou* art named a Jew" - etc. For in previous verses where Jews were spoken of, it was for the sake of Gentiles who would fain excuse themselves on the ground that they did not have the same opportunity as the Jews did.

The apostle immediately strikes at the complacency of the Jew in the mere fact of his outward position of nearness to God - resting in the law, making his boast of God, knowing God's will, approving things that are more excellent - on account of the instruction of the law - confident that he is a guide of the blind, a light for those who are in darkness, an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of babes - and all of this because he has the form of knowledge and of the truth in the law.

How exceedingly presumptuous man can be in turning his advantages and privileges (given him by the kindness of God) into occasions of self-exaltation and of belittling others - as those "who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others" (Luke 18: 9). Solemn indeed that God is compelled to speak thus to the Jew, the one so signally blessed of Him in every conceivable way, as regards earthly advantage. Yet, nearly two thousand years later, at the present time, although the Jews have been cast out of their land and scattered to the ends of the earth, there is still in many of them the pride of assumed superiority on account of their having originally received a revelation from God - some even claiming that their scattering throughout the world was in order that they should the more fully teach the blind, those in darkness, the foolish, and the babes! And this signal mark of God's displeasure and discipline becomes to them an occasion for increased boasting of superior light and position.

But let *everyone* who has the Word of God take warning from this. For if we (Gentiles) have the further revelation and advantage of the New Testament, are not the same perverting evils becoming more glaring amongst ourselves? Who is he who boasts of an open Bible, yet calmly ignores and disobeys its plain injunctions? Can we dare to flatter ourselves that the sin of Christendom is less atrocious than that of Israel under law? Indeed not; for the abuse of the doctrines and privileges of the manifested grace of God is greater evil than disobedience of the law of God. But our consideration in Romans 2 is not the perversion of Christianity, but man in need of the Gospel, and simply the introduction of Christianity. The Jew had been already proven under law, and verses 21 to 24 give us the law's righteous exposure of him.

He not only (as the Gentiles) had a conscience that condemned evil in others, but having the Word of God, he taught others in regard to good and evil, but he did not keep what he gloried in teaching. This is the most plainly manifested guilt of all. For to teach the truth is more than to know it; so that the responsibility of the teacher is a grave one indeed. Not without good reason does James tell us - "Be not many teachers, my

brethren, knowing that we shall receive greater judgment" (James 3: 1, JND).

But despite his teaching abilities, the Jew is here accused before God of 1. evil work (v. 21); 2. evil walk (or associations); and 3. evil worship (v. 22) - concerning all of which he gives the most exemplary teaching. In this, however, the most serious issue is brought decidedly to the fore; that is, that of all people, it was the Jew who had brought direct dishonor upon the Name of God. For his high pretensions which amounted to nothing more nor less than hypocrisy, were the occasion of the ridicule and contempt of Gentiles toward the God that such people professed to worship. The Gentiles took their impression of the God of Israel from the conduct of Israel.

To the Jew circumcision (the sign of his identification with the system of Judaism) was a distinct advantage, but its profit was entirely lost if he broke the law, for the law was the very basis of Judaism; and for a man to boast in that which in practice he casts aside is the most contemptible form of vanity. But disobedience of the law was an outward denial of circumcision, for circumcision (the cutting-off of the flesh) was the distinct sign of self-renunciation for the sake of subjection to the law. Nevertheless, circumcision had brought the Jew into a place of real privilege, for it involved the profession of God's Name - although, of course, unfaithfulness to such a profession called for a stern measure of judgment. Yet, if even an uncircumcised man kept the requirements of the law, would God refuse him merely because of uncircumcision? - indeed would not God rather count his uncircumcision for circumcision?

Notice here that this argument is one that strictly concerns Judaism. But we may easily transfer the principle to Christendom today, where baptism, the outward sign or badge of Christianity is often boasted in and trusted in, while the soul is far from God. And shall not the godly faith of an unbaptized person be counted for baptism - and the baptism of the perverter be counted as no baptism? Not that we would belittle baptism, any more than circumcision is belittled in verses 25-26 in connection with Judaism; but let it be known that baptism is no substitute for, and no supplement to, the reality

of faith. Therefore the uncircumcised man, if he keeps the law, is the very judge of the Jew who, having the letter and circumcision, is a transgressor of the law. For the outward claims and pretensions of a man do not make the man. The Jew whose inward motives are not subject to God cannot have a place in "the Israel of God," no matter how rigid and meticulous his formal observance of the rites of Judaism.

The Jew in the eyes of God is that one whose inward faith and hope are in God, and true circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, not in the letter. The letter here speaks not of the actual words of the law - for these are truly inspired by God - but of a man's outwardly exact adherence to the law's forms. And such a thing without a purified heart - even in Judaism where ceremonialism was in order - is nothing but barren desolation. How much more as is in Christianity, which leaves no room for the elaborate ritual of Judaism! For Christ Himself is given as the altogether absorbing Object of the heart and eyes - the fullness that displaces Old Testament shadows - the Living Son of God by whom all mere religious formalism and machinery is exposed in its cold, heartless haughtiness. "Whose praise is not of men, but of God." The true Jew is not that one who lives and acts for the eyes of men, but for God's eye - who lives not "in the presence of his brethren," but in the presence of God. Jewish parentage rightly requires such character. If it is lacking, a claim based on Jewish relationship is valueless.

## CHAPTER 3

### Romans 3

What Advantage Has the Jew?

Since God requires subjection *of heart* from the Jew, and at the same time honors a like subjection of heart in the Gentiles, the question arises, "What advantage then hath the Jew? or what profit is there of circumcision?" What value is there in the very institution of the system of Judaism - instituted, in fact, by God Himself? It is answered plainly, "Much every way: chiefly that unto them were committed the oracles of God." There is no argument here that this evident fact assures God's acceptance of them personally, for it does not. But it put them into the unique position of being the only nation to whom the will of God was made known - to whom His counsel and ways were made manifest in former times. Thus He reminds them in Amos 3: 2 - "You only have I known of all the families of the earth," and in Deuteronomy 4: 7, 8, "For what nation is there so great who hath God so nigh unto them, as the Lord our God is in all things that we call upon Him for? And what nation is there so great that hath statutes and judgments so righteous as all this law?"

Thus the Jew had the advantage of circumstances, environment, and training. If he ignored all this, of course, he had only himself to blame for robbing himself of his soul's only hope. For doubtless some did not believe. But what of this? Shall their unbelief utterly close the door of faith? Can *they* annul the truth by *their* refusal of it? Does the faith of God cease to operate because some despise it, or oppose it? "Far be the thought: but let God be true, and every man false." Man's reception or rejection of the truth has no bearing whatever upon the truth itself: it remains in its solemn, solitary grandeur, unalterable, invincible, irrevocable; while man's most violent opposition is merely his self-destruction against an immovable rock. God is true, and it matters not what man opposes His truth - that man is false.

Psalm 51: 4 is quoted to confirm the necessary truth that every other consideration must give way to the words and judgments of God. He is to be justified without qualification in His sayings: He is to overcome absolutely when He is in judgment. It is the elementary principle of righteousness. Sin itself will be but the occasion of His fully displaying His power over it. He will make the wrath of man to praise Him, and will restrain the remainder of wrath.

But another question arises in the minds of men - that is, if our unrighteousness has resulted in such a manifestation of the glory of God's righteousness, why then should we be punished? Would He not be heartless in pouring out vengeance on mankind - the Jews in particular? But it is merely a man's question, and the answer is decisive - "Far be the thought: since how shall God judge the world?" And the Jew would certainly approve of His judging the Gentile world. But the Jew's case was morally the same - in fact worse, if his privileges are considered. Moreover, the very execution of judgment is a part of the display of God's glory and righteousness; and cannot be dispensed with.

If the truth of God has been displayed more marvelously on account of my falsehood, why then should I be judged as a sinner? Has not the evil I have done resulted after all in good? Yes, and further, the wilful heart will argue - "Why not do evil that good may come?" Some had even accused Paul of teaching this very thing; but he is most peremptory in his denunciation of those who dare to adopt such principles. Their damnation is just. Theirs is merely the license of rebellion. Dreadful the state of soul which asserts such things; dangerous that which assumes them. Sin, in whatever degree, or whatever circumstances, can have no semblance of excuse or shadow of justification. It is abominable, hateful, abhorrent to God. If indeed God triumphs over it as He does, manifesting His power and bringing forth greater blessing for man than ever before, that is no credit to sin; for neither God's glory nor man's blessing are secured on account of sin, but on account of the absolute condemnation of sin. Let us dare to defend sin, and we



take our part with it under the condemnation of God, who is greater than sin, and greater than we.

#### ALL CONCLUDED GUILTY

Verses 9 to 18 give us the summing up of the guilt of all mankind, Jews and Gentiles. The favorable privileges of the Jew made him no better than the Gentile: the proof was conclusive - Jews and Gentiles were all under sin. Nor was this merely the conclusion of the apostle's argument. The Scriptures had before spoken in such terms, and the summing up of man's guilt is given in direct quotations from David's Psalms and Isaiah 59.

"There is none righteous, no, not one" - a sweeping condemnation of man's *moral being*. "There is none that understandeth"; the very *intelligence* of all is corrupted by sin. "There is none that seeketh after God": not even a *right object* is before them, there is no *concern* for knowing God. "They are all gone out of the way," taking a *contrary, independent course*. "They are together become unprofitable," - a *united degrading* of themselves to vain and useless pursuits. "There is none that doeth good, no not one," - *without deeds of manifest goodness*.

But there is something that comes out from man's heart - passing from the throat first, where there is the utter corruption of death - an open sepulchre, revolting to the eyes of the living. Then the tongue, contaminated, becomes the tool of deceit, and the lips, which *might* have hindered both the throat and tongue, only increase the scourge of evil, adding to it the venomous poison of asps. Little wonder then that the "mouth is full of cursing and bitterness"! Souls may little realize the awful evil of "hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against" God; but "for every idle word that men shall speak they shall give account in the day of judgment." Here then it is that which comes out of the mouth *from the heart*, that is first condemned. Verse 14 sums of man's *words*; verse 15 his *walk*; and verse 16 his *ways*. It is the complete positive condemnation of man; while to add force to this, verses 17 and 18 speak from a *negative* standpoint, showing that there is absolutely *no* redeeming feature in the picture.

They have *not* known the way of peace: there is no fear of God before their eyes. This last point is after all really the center and spring of all evil; for little as we may comprehend it, *all* sin is the result of a negative attitude toward God.

Now, with the guilt of man so fully exposed as he stands before the judgment bar of God, the next question to arise is, What does the law have to say? This is briefly but fully answered in verses 19 and 20: it needs no more, for the answer is evident to an exercised conscience and intelligence. But the principle is first noted that the law addresses itself to "them who are under the law." Rom. 2: 14 proves that these are not Gentiles; while Deut. 5; in which chapter the law is summarized, is very plain in its address - "Hear, O Israel, the statutes and judgments which I speak in your ears this day" (v. 1).

Yet Gentiles, while not required, as Israel, to keep this law, could as easily learn one thing from it. That it condemned mankind was plain: no one could dare open his mouth in the face of it. If the Jews were condemned by it so that their mouths were stopped before God's judgment throne, could the Gentiles fare any better if they attempted to assert their own righteousness? No indeed: their mouths were as effectively stopped: the law made it clear that *all the world*, being guilty, is under judgment to God. Blessed, though humbling, is the moment in our history when first our mouths are stopped! Only then are we prepared to listen undividedly to God - prepared to receive blessing. So that the very object of the law was to close every mouth and to place all the world under judgment to God. Can it then justify anyone? Impossible! "By the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in His sight." Its very character demands the opposite. "By the law is the knowledge of sin." It exposes sin: it cannot cover it. It condemns the sinner: it cannot justify him.

The law therefore binds man for judgment: it gives no avenue of escape. So that, if the law binds the action of God, it is all up with man. But thank God, He is greater than law - for law is merely His servant to accomplish the full exposure of sin, in order that He might display His own righteousness apart from law, and transcendently above it - His own ability to fully and

gloriously triumph over sin on behalf of those who were in bondage to law on account of sin.

#### GOD'S RIGHTEOUSNESS REVEALED

"But now": these words are most blessedly expressive of a marvelous change in the dealings of God with man. It is a change to which God Himself has looked forward with deepest desire since the foundation of the world, for this change brings the manifestation of His own character. Yet, deep as was unquestionably the longing of His heart to make Himself fully known to man, for four thousand years He waited in infinite wisdom and patience, until man for his own sake was exposed as utterly in bondage to sin, without strength, and his very nature a contrast to that of God - an enemy of God by wicked works. Such is the verdict of man's four thousand years of testing and probation.

"But now." How full of comfort these words to one who has learned his sinfulness in the sight of God! Yes, much more, how full of relief to the heart of God that the fullness of time has come, that He should send His holy, sinless Son to make Himself known to man! Now He can display His character of perfect, absolute righteousness altogether apart from the law - apart from everything which He Himself had formerly instituted. Matchless glory! Marvelous power! Infinite wisdom! "But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets."

Not only has God manifested His righteousness unhindered by law, and having a glory far greater than law: but the law itself, and the Old Testament prophets, had borne witness in their time of such a manifestation to come. Blessed testimony to the sovereignty and glory of God! The law itself testified of God's ability to righteously save the sinner without its help - without reference of any kind to it. Thus the law is in its proper place as merely a servant to God - nothing more.

Verse 21 therefore begins a distinctly new section and subject.

Verse 22 shows this righteousness of God (which could not be manifested in or by law) perfectly manifested in Jesus Christ.

But it is important to remark that the point stressed here is that God's righteousness is manifested *on behalf of man* - indeed "unto all" - that is, on behalf of all men. God excludes no one from this marvelous blessing. Yet it can have effect only "upon them that believe," of course. It is available for all, but the hand of faith alone can receive it. That righteousness of God is manifested *only* in Christ: hence *only* faith in Christ can secure it for my own soul. It is a righteousness manifested impartially for the sake of all men, but operative only "by faith of Jesus Christ."

This was an absolute necessity if any man was to receive blessing, for all were in the same case before God - "all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." Despite the reality and depth of God's grace, and His longing desire to forgive - forgiveness is impossible apart from righteousness. God must do right: it is His essential character. He cannot ignore sin. His justice demands satisfaction concerning sin, and cannot be treated with impunity. "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" were the words of Abraham - more as an assertion than a question. And the Psalmist declares, "Righteousness and judgment are the foundation of thy throne" (Ps. 89: 14 JND).

But the glory of God's righteousness is this - that while it absolutely condemns sin, it is able to justify the sinner. There is indeed love behind it - infinite, unspeakable, unfathomable love - for it necessitated the giving of His own Son to the awful sufferings of Calvary's cross, where He Himself endured the full, unalleviated penalty and judgment for sins - "the Just one for the unjust, that He might bring us to God." The full weight of God's righteous judgment against sin fell upon Him in those dread hours, so that His soul, moved to its inmost depths, was expressed in words of heart-rending pathos - "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?"

But only thus could the love of God be shown toward us in perfect righteousness. Only the cross can fully display the depths of the love of God, and the perfect purity of His righteousness. And at the very throne of God, grace takes the place of law,-bringing justification in place of condemnation. Simple, concise, plain, yet marvellous beyond thought are the

words of verse 24, "Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." The soul that believes in Jesus Christ is fully and freely cleared of every charge of guilt, by the grace of God, in virtue of the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. And the clearance is a perfectly righteous one, for the guilt has been fully met and atoned for on the cross. Blessed relief for a soul once bowed down with a sense of shame and distress on account of sin, who sees such a refuge in God! There is nothing like trusting entirely to the grace of God and the work of His Son on the cross.

Now God has set Christ in the foreground, for the consideration of men. Set forth as a propitiation, - a mercy-seat to which all men may come if they will, to find perfect justification "through faith in His blood." Through Christ alone God dispenses mercy, - and He is not hidden so as to be approachable only by a select class. He is the propitiation, "for the whole world" (1 John 2: 2). And every soul who comes to God through Christ, receives forgiveness of sins, justification, a full clearance from guilt and from judgment.

But the Lord Jesus Christ, thus set forth before men, is He by whom God declares His righteousness - a righteousness in respect to the passing by of sins committed even before the cross (as is the force of the last part of verse 25), with which God exercised long forbearance. "The sins that are past," - or those which were committed aforetime - has reference, doubtless, to the quotations from the Old Testament in verses 10 to 18. For those sins were discovered long before the cross, but God could forbear judgment in view of the cross of Christ, which was already a settled matter in His purposes - which in fact Abraham's words to Isaac plainly show - "My son, God will provide Himself a lamb for a burnt offering."

So that the virtue of "the redemption that is in Christ Jesus" reaches both backward to the beginning of the history of fallen man, and forward to the end of that history - a redemption covering effectively "all they that are of faith."

Patiently God waited for "the fullness of time" that He might send His Son and "at this time" "*declare*" "His righteousness."

His righteousness was, of course, always a settled matter - always the same - but it awaited the cross of Christ for its declaration to man. Surely the subject, thoughtful heart can only marvel in beholding such patience, such wisdom, such grace, such righteousness, such power, such unspeakable love. Blessed beyond expression are the character and ways of our God!

So that God is manifestly declared as a perfectly just God, and at the same time "the Justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." The law could accuse, but only God can justify. "It is God that justifieth: who is he that condemneth?" (Rom. 8: 33,34). How quiet, calm, and holy a resting-place for the soul who believes in Jesus!

There is no more room for the proud boasting of man. "It is excluded." Blessed relief when it is so! But does a man's trust in his own works exclude boasting? No indeed; but the opposite. Confidence in works is mere *self-confidence*, *self-assurance*, *self-assertion*, *self-exaltation*. Hence, when a "law" is spoken of it is "the law of faith" - a law that requires faith, not a law that requires works. "Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law." Lovely conclusion of the whole matter: marvelous and sublime in the glory it gives wholly and solely to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! Moreover, how different a conclusion to that of the book of Ecclesiastes, where in Ecc. 12: 13 we read, "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep His commandments: for this is the whole duty of man." Is there contradiction in the two conclusions? Not at all. For Ecclesiastes deals with "*man's duty*," (while he lives "under the sun"), and God's *judgment* (in the very last verse); while Romans presents to us *man's complete failure and guilt*, and *God's justification*. The entire difference consists in this - that the cross of Christ comes between the two books.

But the conclusion might be a startling one to a Jew. For if a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law, this would favor Gentiles as much as Jews. This very fact has been a great stumbling block to the Jews ever since Christianity has been preached. But "Is God the God of the Jews only? is He not

also of the Gentiles?" Shall He who has created all men deny to some of them the possibility of being justified from their sins, while at the same time granting this blessing to others? Impossible! "There is no respect of persons with God": if "all have sinned," the Gospel is "unto *all*." If all do not receive it, that is another matter; they shall die in their sins: but God's offer is to all, without partiality.

For He is "one God" - His character is unvarying in dealing with whatever people. Those under law He can justify only "by faith" - that is, on the principle of faith as opposed to the principle of law. Those without law - "the uncircumcision" - He justifies as fully "through faith," - that is simply if they have faith in His Son.

Will the Jew object that this nullifies the law? Will he claim that Paul so stresses faith as to "make void the law"? The very thought is an unworthy one. Faith establishes the law: it puts law in its proper place; gives the law its very strength; regards it in its absolute sternness, justice, and inflexibility; acknowledges fully its "ministration of death," - its ""ministration of condemnation" - that it condemns, and will not justify a sinner. Hence, faith cannot impute to it "the ministration of life," "the ministration of righteousness," for these ministrations are not by the law of God, but by the grace of God (2 Cor. 3).

## CHAPTER 4

### Romans 4

#### Abraham and David Justified by Faith

Now there is deepest patience and grace shown on the part of God through Paul, His instrument in writing this epistle: for it is blessed to see that He gives no mere peremptory statement of truth. There is rather a perfectly ordered reasoning from a basis of known and admitted facts - a reasoning that cannot but appeal to spiritual wisdom. Every objecting argument, whether of Jews or Gentiles, is fully met.

Romans 4 then takes up two test cases to confirm the conclusion of Romans 3: 28. The first of these is Abraham - a most important consideration for Jews in particular; for being the father of Israel (they making him their chief boast), Abraham was the original depositary of all the promises of God for blessing, to the nation Israel specially, but indeed also to Gentiles. No Israelite would dare to gainsay this truth, though doubtless they gave little attention to the distinct promise of blessing to Gentiles - "all nations of the earth."

But the matter of Abraham's own *personal* justification is first raised. Can it be said that Abraham was justified before God? - and while he was still in flesh? and if so, how was he justified? Did his works justify him? If so, he had an occasion for boasting, "but *not before God.*" His works are doubtless a testimony that justify him *before men*, but "in God's sight" it is a different matter. The eye of God penetrates more deeply. James 2: 18, 21 reminds us of Abraham's being justified by works when he offered up Isaac; but James deals with justification before men, not before God. His words are "*Show me thy faith without thy works, and I will show thee my faith by my works*" (James 2: 18).

"But what saith the Scripture? Abraham believed God and it was counted unto him for righteousness." Now this is mentioned in Abraham's history many years before he "offered up" Isaac. The former is in Genesis 15: 6, the latter in Gen. 22.



How thoroughly distinct then is justification before God, from justification before men.

It is blessed to contemplate this simple, sublime statement so early in the history of men - "Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness." This is the whole character of justification. For naturally man has utterly no righteousness. But God supplies the righteousness He demands. On man's account is a great debt of unrighteousness; but "through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus," God credits to the account of "him that believeth in Jesus" a righteousness that fully and forever removes all debt, all unrighteousness; and leaves an account in which God Himself can take unfeigned delight.

Now one who works for a reward does not at the end consider that it is given him by grace: he has earned it and would be most resentful if anyone suggested that it was a "gift of grace": his working has made his employer his debtor. Does God so employ men on this business basis? Men may suppose so, but their work is nothing to Him. He has given them no such contract. They are like men working, with no authoritative instruction, to build a railroad where no train will ever travel.

"But to him that worketh not, but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness." God is no debtor to man: He is a Giver; and any blessing from God to man can never be on the ground of man's works, but only on the ground of God's grace. Judgment is according to works; but salvation, thank God, is according to grace. And this verse 5 is marvelously plain and decisive for eyes that have been opened by the Spirit of God. "Working" is put over against "believing on Him that justifieth the ungodly." Do I work for justification, or do I receive it freely by God's grace through faith in His Son? It is one or the other. There is no mixture: the two are distinct. But God cannot impute righteousness to my account in virtue of my works. Why? Because they are not perfect in righteousness: they savor all too strongly of unrighteousness. But the virtue of the work of Christ is a different thing: it is perfect, faultless, unadulterated; and on

this ground God can freely impute righteousness to the account of "him which believeth in Jesus."

Now briefly considered, more or less as a parenthesis, is the testimony of "David also." Here is the first king of God's choice in Israel. Unlike Abraham, he was born, and lived "under the law." But did he therefore have a different means of justification than did Abraham? It is a vital question, but one that David himself answers with marvelous clarity and decision. In Ps. 32: 1,2 he "describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin." Where is the law in all this? Where are man's works? There is no place for them. David himself recognizes such blessing as absolutely and only the work of God in unmingled grace.

David here speaks of blessing to one who has disobeyed the law - a sinner, a transgressor. Now in such a case the law spoke only of cursing. Blessing was indeed promised by law, but only on the ground of obedience; while disobedience called from it an absolute curse.

David speaks of forgiveness *as obtained*: the law could accuse; it could not forgive. David speaks of sins covered *now*: the law exposed sins; it could not cover them. David speaks of the Lord not imputing sin; whereas the law had been compelled to impute sin: it could not do otherwise. But He who gave the law is greater than the law, and by the exercise of grace is able to reverse the imputation.

The reader of Psalm 32 will quickly see that David flies not to law for his refuge on the occasion of his grievous sin. When Psalm 51 (written concerning the same occasion) is also read, this will be most abundantly plain. He did not even seek relief by means of sacrifices provided under law (Ps. 51: 16,17); for he knew that such sacrifices could not meet his case: his sin demanded immediate death, if law was to be carried out. But his plea is simply, "Have mercy upon me, O God, *according to thy lovingkindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender*

*mercies blot out my transgressions*" (Ps. 51: 1). Moreover, in Psalm 32 (v. 5), he can say "Thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin." Blessed answer, according to mercy, certainly not according to law!

But verse 9 raises the question - is this blessedness obtainable only by those who are circumcised - that is, those outwardly connected with God's earthly testimony? The answer is evident: Abraham received this blessing - was counted righteous by faith - *before* he was circumcised - indeed at least thirteen years before.

Circumcision was a sign, however (and merely a sign) which he received as an identifying seal of the righteousness of faith he already possessed. It signified simply the cutting-off of the flesh - thus impressing the lesson that this righteousness was not mixed with any fleshly activity or merit, upon which circumcision put the outward stamp of death.

Abraham was thus the first man "in whom real separation to God was first publicly established." (See note in New Translation). Hence, he is "father of all them that believe" - that is, publicly their father - whether or not there is the same public separation with them. The point is not at all in their outward identification with Abraham, for Abraham's own outward sign was the seal of previously imputed righteousness - a seal that marks him as "the father of all them that believe; that righteousness might be imputed unto them also."

So that he is "the father of circumcision" not only to those who are circumcised, but to those who walk in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham, which he had being yet uncircumcised" - those who have the same faith on account of which Abraham was circumcised.

For the promise to Abraham that he should be heir of the world was *not* by law, and *not* therefore *conditional* upon his obedience to law; but rather by the righteousness of faith - that is, as a *result* of righteousness already fully established, not required *to be* established by future works. The promise was therefore unimpeachable; there was no possibility of its failure. Genesis 17: 1-8 gives us the promise in no uncertain terms, as

an absolutely settled issue with God, needing only time for its fulfillment. Only after this (in vv. 9-14) do we see God giving Abraham the sign of circumcision.

Now if, as the Jew would feign argue, only those who are of the law have title to the inheritance, faith would be made a vain, useless thing, and the promise of God would be as worthless and ineffectual as the word of a wicked man. What folly and virtual infidelity, what blind, unyielding unbelief, what vain confidence in flesh and despising of God is that man guilty of, who insists that he can be justified by works, or who objects to grace being shown to those who have gone out of the way.

"Because the law worketh wrath; for where no law is, there is no transgression." A sinner, forbidden under penalty, to sin, will only incur the penalty. Hence, to impose law upon a sinner is to bring him under wrath, for he becomes a transgressor (not merely a sinner: he was that before the law was given: transgression is disobedience to a given law). Sin was certainly in the world before, and for sin the Gentiles as well as Jews are under judgment to God; but the law put the Jew *demonstratively* under wrath by making him a transgressor.

"Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed." Not one of the true seed of Abraham is to be excluded, as would be the case if the promise were given on the principle of law; but the principle of faith is the only ground upon which all the seed could be blessed, while at the same time this principle shuts up all to the grace of God as the only spring of blessing. But only thus is the promise sure to either Jew or Gentile believers, yet absolutely sure.

Before God, Abraham "is the father of us all" - all those who are of faith. God declared this before Abraham had yet obtained Isaac - he whom God called his "only son," not considering Ishmael, for being born of a bondwoman, he was a bondman. But at the time all natural circumstances were utterly opposed to the fulfillment of the promise. Abraham was virtually dead, and Sarah also, so far as the birth of a child was concerned. But Abraham's faith rose far above circumstances when God spoke.

So indeed did Sarah's (Heb. 11: 11), though at the first she doubted.

But this is a blessed example of the patience of faith that believed in a God of resurrection. At the birth of Isaac, just as at his being bound on the altar as an offering we see that Abraham recognized even in death no hindrance to the fulfillment of God's promise. Plainly he saw that it is God's prerogative to call "those things which be not as though they were."

Contrary to all natural hope, he "believed in hope" - that is, he fully trusted God although it meant purely anticipative faith, not that the word "hope" suggests the least thought of doubtfulness. The spoken word of God he bowed to, accepting it simply as such: in God's sight he was then made the father of many nations, according to the Word spoken in Genesis 15 - "So shall thy seed be."

He was not weak in faith: he simply accepted the Word of God as true and unbreakable, apart altogether from the consideration of circumstances - whether it was his own dead body or "the deadness of Sarah's womb." He knew that God was not dependent upon the energy of natural life, whether in himself or in another upon whom he might be naturally inclined to lean. Faith in the living God always involves the repudiation of confidence in flesh.

Only unbelief and confining God to man's limitations, would have caused Abraham to hesitate: but he "was strong in faith, giving glory to God." Blessed simplicity indeed; blessed reality! Yet it is the only proper attitude for any creature, let us mark well. To "give glory to God" is the very reason for our existence. If we do not practice "the obedience of faith," we are robbing God of His glory: we neither take our own proper place, nor give Him His. May our souls contemplate this seriously and well.

Are we "fully persuaded" of the truth of the Word of God? Are we prepared to stand upon it, whatever the expense or personal humiliation? Will we stake everything upon this, that what God promises, He is able to perform? To speak of our

faith is one thing: to speak and act in faith is another. To be "fully persuaded" of the truth of God, is to be fully submissive to it, and to thereby have a character of calm, unruffled, uncomplaining patience - not indeed indifference, but the patience of an exercised and chastened spirit, that trusts the living God, and distrusts all that is of the flesh.

Abraham therefore was counted righteous because of faith in the God of resurrection. But the written Word concerning this result is not given merely for Abraham's sake. This is plain: there is a value far more comprehensive than this: the Word is written for the sake of souls in every age. "But for us also, to whom it (righteousness) shall be imputed if we believe on Him that raised up Jesus from the dead, Who was delivered for our offenses, and was raised again for our justification."

There is of course, a manifest distinction between Abraham's position and ours. Abraham believed the *promise* of God, though not accomplished. *We* are asked to believe God in regard to the *accomplished* work of Christ in death and resurrection. Abraham believed in the *promise* of resurrection: we believe in the *fact* of resurrection. Yet it is not merely belief *in* resurrection that is required, nor belief *in* any other truth, simply, but faith in the living God, who has raised Christ from the dead.

But our justification is inseparably bound up with His resurrection. He was delivered up to death for our offenses. But if He had remained in the grave, where would be our comfort and assurance? How could we believe He had justified us if He were not living? But He "was raised again for our justification." Blessed be God for the unspeakable peace of this knowledge! Faith can have no doubts as to the full accomplishment of righteousness when it beholds the One who suffered for sins now raised by the glory of the Father - perfectly accepted by the God who had judged Him fully for sins. Thus His resurrection is proof that He has utterly exhausted the judgment: sin put Him to death; righteousness raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory. That same righteousness now justifies "him which believeth in Jesus." He is a Savior whom death could not hold: He is "alive

forevermore." Blessed Object for faith! Perfect, unchangeable assurance to the heart renewed by grace!

## CHAPTER 5

### Romans 5

#### Blessings Attending Justification

Now as to the *means* and *assurance* of present justification, every question has been answered, every doubt fully banished by simple, straightforward truth. Thus every obstacle cleared away, the apostle turns to the joyous work of giving the effects of this justification in its present manifold blessing. This he does in the first eleven verses of Romans 5. (Verse 12 introduces a new subject, dealing, not with justification from sins, but with the question of sin in the flesh as the enemy and hindrance of one who has been justified.)

Let us remark that as regards these blessings, there are only two cases where the present tense is not used. First, in the latter part of verse 9 - "we shall be saved from wrath through Him." But the first part of the verse makes it clear that our justification now is so complete that the future day of God's wrath will have nothing to do with us. Secondly, the end of verse 10 - "we shall be saved by His life." But here again, our present reconciliation is first referred to, and the salvation spoken of is a daily salvation from the evil influences and effects of this world's circumstances. This is accomplished by His life in resurrection, and thus we have confidence as to our future *in the world*.

In verse 1, "we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." It is well to see that peace is not a primary thing, but the *consequence* of justification. Peace flows from "*being* justified by faith." This word, "being" is afterward repeated twice in this section - interestingly and instructively (vv. 9,10). Yet let us never fail to remember that this "peace with God" is only "through our Lord Jesus Christ."

"Access" also "into this grace wherein we stand" (a place of liberty and confidence in the presence of God) is by Him alone, through the simple exercise of faith. Do we carefully consider this? - that communion with the God who has dealt with us



(and does deal with us) in grace, having freed us from all guilt, is given and maintained only through the Lord Jesus Christ. Hence, as well as salvation, all enjoyment depends upon our attitude toward Him. Then we "rejoice in hope of the glory of God." The glory that begets only dread in the heart of the natural man, has become to us a prospect of joyous anticipation. Blessed miracle of grace! Naturally, we "come short of the glory of God," but the grace of God has made sure our full and unhindered participation in it.

This completes the past, present, and future, as regards our *relationship toward God* - only three simple, blessed statements. But there is more. There is also an infinite change in respect to our connection with the world.

"But we glory in tribulation also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience (or endurance); and patience, experience; and experience, hope."

At the very outset, the Christian ought to settle it in his heart to *expect* a path of tribulation. Justification gives *no* assurance of an easy earthly path: quite the reverse. But it brings heavenly joy into the midst of the trouble - beautiful testimony to the grace of God! Sorrow and trial become the very sphere of the conquest of eternal joys, which will not be defeated by these mere momentary hindrances. And it is no mere bearing our troubles with submission (more or less), but of rejoicing in them, realizing that they are working steadily to an end of more exceeding blessing for us and glory to God. Tribulation (properly regarded) is the teacher of endurance: endurance soon bears fruit in abundantly valuable experience - valuable in regard to all our relationships of life, whether in making personal decisions, whether in contacts with the saved or the unsaved, in home affairs, in the assembly, in business. In all these things, no one would deny the value of hard-learned experience. And experience is the very nourishment of hope. For true experience teaches the vanity and shallowness of all that is of the world. Such is the very plain recording of the book of Ecclesiastes, written by a man of wisdom declaring the findings of his own experience. But if this is so, how much more fully will experience (rightly regarded, of course), draw the

heart toward Heaven and quicken in the soul the hope of glory. The reality of this all who have tasted it know well. Another point, however is this - that while experience teaches the transitoriness of life on earth, it is also always the proof of God's abiding faithfulness, and such realization cannot but stir the hope of the soul to be eternally in His presence.

"And hope maketh not ashamed." There is no thought of mere wishing or doubtful anticipation in this "hope," of course. It is a hope "sure and steadfast" (Heb. 6: 19); otherwise it would give no one the incentive to be unashamed. "Seeing then that we have such hope, we use great plainness of speech" (2 Cor. 3: 12). There is no reason to be ashamed or afraid when we know the glory that is to be revealed. Such hope feeds courage.

Yet it is more than the fact of hope that gives us the power for an unashamed testimony. Hope is objective, but there is also a subjective power that occupies our hearts with such hope. "The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us." If the world were to ask us why we are not ashamed to be identified with Christ, we should rightly answer that the day is coming when every knee shall bow to Him, and confess that He is Lord. There would be no reason to speak of the Spirit of God within us who gives us power to be unashamed. Nevertheless, this is our only source of strength for such testimony. Without the power of the Spirit of God we should be as weak as water, because of the overwhelming consensus of the world's opinion against Christ.

But the power that He gives is love - the love of God. Now love does not occupy us with self or selfish feelings: when it operates in the soul, we are not anxious as to how people regard us: we think of their souls' welfare apart from how they will receive our ministrations toward them. This is the searching test of all that professes to be love; for such is the love of God.

The expression "shed abroad in our hearts" is lovely. The exercise of His love does not diminish it, and there is not the least restraint in His bestowal of it, rather an abundance sufficient to fill and overflow the heart.

For we were without strength when Christ died for us. His death is the only foundation for the giving of the Spirit: strength is the result only of accomplished redemption: for it is God's strength exercised on our behalf and by His Spirit in us. This point (the fourth in our chapter) is impressed upon us by occupying five verses (5-9). For strength is impossible while man is ungodly, a sinner, and an enemy of God: there must be redemption, justification, reconciliation. But these things are entirely *God's work*, and in themselves manifest *God's strength*. If we want strength, let us look to the perfect stability and power of God in the work of Calvary's cross, where the power of sin and of the devil was gloriously defeated. Hence in every way strength is connected with Christ, objectively, whether with the cross or the glory in view, while with the Spirit subjectively.

The "due time" is doubtless the time when God had fully proven man ungodly and without strength.

"Christ died for the ungodly." Blessed manifestation both of the strength of God and the love of God, which indeed are so closely connected. But it is a subject so exceedingly precious that the apostle cannot but dwell upon it in verses 7 and 8, in order to more clearly set forth the love of God in its unique and incomparable character.

"A righteous man" is one strictly accurate in his dealings with others - both paying and demanding all that justice requires. It is hardly thinkable that another man would consider dying for his sake. "A good man" is one not exacting, but generous toward others: for him "some might even dare to die." But who would die for an evil enemy? or who would offer a son to die for his enemy? Yet by this very means God commends His love toward us (not only manifests His love, but commends it, with a heart deeply desirous of our receiving it). For while we were neither righteous nor good, but sinners, Christ died for us. Matchless expression of love! Sublime, unquestionable proof of it!

"Much more then, being now justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him." Not only are we now justified,

but knowing the unchangeable blessedness of the positive love of God resting upon us - love that has made us its object of pleasure - there is no room left for the slightest fear or apprehension as to future wrath. Firm, calm confidence is ours as we view the future: "we shall be saved from wrath through Him." Doubtful thoughts concerning this would be a distinct dishonor to the power and reality of God's love. Yet again we have impressed upon us the words "through Him" - that is, through Christ. No other name than this avails to give the soul the confidence of perfect certainty: but this one Name is abundantly sufficient.

We were enemies of God: He was not our enemy, but in fact labored with a view to reconciling us to Himself, and has, by matchless grace, accomplished this in the death of Christ, His Son. How transcendently marvelous a gospel! But being so, "much more" "we shall be saved by His life." Necessarily this is the life of Christ in resurrection, - "raised in the power of an endless life." It does not speak of *eternal salvation*, but of His divine power *now* engaged in saving us from evils and dangers that threaten us day by day in our path through the world. This then is the sixth feature of our blessing in this section - the priestly intercession of Christ at God's right hand, caring for us in regard to every circumstance of earth.

Verse 11 carries us far above all other blessings and provisions, to speak of our proper attitude toward God personally. So that in this case, the words, "And not only so" bring us to the culmination of all blessing and glory. The heart is drawn away from self, drawn away from every possession and blessing received, to be occupied with God Himself. "We joy in God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the reconciliation. This is the highest, most glorious employment that any ransomed soul can find: it will be our soul's delight throughout eternity, when sin is forever done away. But blessed exceedingly is our privilege and portion of being so occupied while still in a world of sorrow! And it is our normal proper character.

DELIVERANCE FROM SIN CONSIDERED

## A CHANGE OF HEADSHIP

We pass on in verse 12 to an entirely distinct subject. The question of our sins, raised in chapters 1 to 3, has been so perfectly settled that "we joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ." Such a question is not therefore raised again.

But, as believers, redeemed from guilt by the blood of Christ, we are still faced with sin (not sins) as a powerful enemy of the prosperity of our souls. The sad discovery is made by the redeemed soul that the horrible root of sin is still within him, and determined to break out with a power greater than he can overcome. Now it is this power of sin that the apostle deals with thoroughly from Rom. 5: 12 to Rom. 8: 4. It is made more vivid, and plain by his personifying sin as the enemy of God and man. Let us watch this carefully in reading these chapters.

He goes back to the very beginning of sin in the world, and death as the result of sin - the sentence justly and firmly imposed by God. "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned."

Sin came by Adam, the first man, the head of a lost and ruined race - the head of a race appointed to death. For "in Adam, all die." All sinful mankind is then briefly comprehended in one man, Adam. His posterity have inherited his fallen nature: they are consequently sinners by nature and by practice: they fall under the same sentence of death as Adam. There is no escape from this sentence: it is only perfectly righteous and necessary, if the honor of God is to be maintained. Death is God's answer to sin: there is no other. Man may attempt to get rid of death; but he must first get rid of sin, and this he has neither ability nor desire to do. So that whatever his fear or abhorrence of death, it is one appointment that he cannot avoid.

Children of Adam are "children of wrath," justly exposed and condemned to death. Of this we find honest, candid confession on the part of the thief on the cross - "we indeed justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds" (Luke 23: 41).

Sin was in the world before the law came - that is, the law given by Moses, as is the case wherever the expression "the law" is used without any qualifying clause. "But sin is not reckoned up (or tabulated) when there is no law." Does this suppose that man is less guilty when he has no law? Not at all. Sin is sin, and the perpetrator of it is fully responsible, whether with or without law. Was Cain not criminally guilty in slaying his brother Abel? Yet there was no law. Was the world of Noah's time not responsible for their corruption and violence? Was Sodom not richly deserving of God's unsparing judgment? These points can give no difficulty to any reasoning mind. Still, God had given no law to forbid their sin. However, there was the perfect order of creation, there was the speaking of conscience, and the promise of God that the Seed of the woman would bruise the serpent's head - that is, that Christ would triumph over the devil and sin. Thus, while there was no direct prohibition, there was abundant testimony to man's guilt, if he would but listen.

But we can easily discern this, that under such circumstances, the unutterably corrupt and deceitful heart of man would brazenly defend and excuse himself by saying that there was no rule to forbid his indulgence in evil - and perhaps such things were not sin after all - that the warning voice of conscience was merely some superstitious fear remaining from the traditions of an unenlightened parentage!

But the law gives man some definite account of his sin *before* he is called to judgment. Man without law may be looked at as a thief entering a store, taking and pocketing goods from the shelves, confident that he is not detected. But from a balcony above, every movement has been watched. He is about to leave, when stopped short, he is faced with a bill listing every item he has stolen. Such is the work of the law. It brings a faithful estimate of sin before man is called to God's judgment bar, bringing *former* sins to light, as well as forbidding *sin*.

"Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses; even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression, who is the figure of Him that was to come."

Death is the proof of man's responsibility for sin. So death reigned *before* Moses gave the law, and *after* Adam's transgression. For Adam was given a commandment, that he should not eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. He disobeyed, and the sentence of death came upon him. But his children, "from Adam to Moses" were under no commandment: hence they were not transgressors, as Adam was. Yet "death reigned" even over them, for though they were not transgressors, they were sinners, and by sin death entered the world.

But the end of the verse 14 announces One of whom Adam was a figure. These are the two men considered in this section - Adam and Christ. 1 Cor. 15 makes very manifest that these are the heads of two distinct races - the first being only a type of the second. "The first man is of the earth, earthy; the second man is the Lord from heaven" (v. 47). Between Adam and Christ there was no man of a different nature than Adam. All were comprehended in "the first man"; all were the fallen children of fallen parents. Moreover, it is plain from v. 45 that there neither has been, nor will be any other man since Christ: He is "the last Adam" - "a life-giving Spirit." He cannot be displaced, for He is the complete fulfillment of the "figure" seen in the "first man Adam." Indeed, it is by Him that resurrection from the dead has come. And today "He liveth in the power of an endless life." Adam's sway is abruptly interrupted and ended by death. Not so with Him who "is alive forevermore" - who "has abolished death, and brought life and incorruptibility to light through the gospel."

The remainder of our chapter then draws distinct contrasts between these two heads of races and between the effects for those under each headship.

"But not as the offense, so also is the free gift." The free gift is thus not merely a restoration of what the offense took away. It is a far greater blessing than Adam had while unfallen - every point of contrast being in favor of the "new creation" introduced by the work of Christ.

"For if through the offense of one many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one Man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many." Let us mark well the words, "much more." The offense of Adam has brought death to his entire race; but "the grace of God" far transcends the offense and its consequences. Our sin has been great indeed, but the grace of God is "much more" great. Our penalty - the penalty of death - is justly great; but "the gift by grace" is "much more" great. It "hath abounded unto many" - as many as are of the faith of Jesus Christ.

Verse 15 puts the *penalty* of the offense in contrast to the free gift - that is, the gift by grace far outshining "the wages of sin," which is death. Verse 16 rather puts the guilt of our *many* offenses in contrast to the free gift. It is not merely that the free gift covers the guilt of Adam's one offense, which offense brought judgment with no prospect but condemnation: but it is applied to the absolute discharge of many offenses, its very purpose justification - a state of accomplished righteousness. Before his sin, Adam knew no such state: there was rather a state of innocence - not of righteousness or holiness.

By Adam's one offense "death reigned by one." In the creation over which Adam was given dominion, he has forfeited his rule: he has no more dominion: death reigns instead. But "much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ." While Adam reigned in Eden there was the ever-present danger of death's usurping his reign; but these who are under the Headship of Christ "shall reign in life," - a life that is eternal, with no possibility of the interference of death. Here plainly it is a future reign in a settled state of life. In Heaven at least, when we shall reign with Christ, there can be no question of death ending that reign.

Adam in Eden was in a conditional state of natural life: Christ places us in a settled state of spiritual life - eternal life. The contrast is infinite. Adam was entitled to earth as his sphere of blessing - conditionally: we are introduced by Christ to Heaven - unconditionally.



But is the possibility of this blessedness confined only to a select class? Verse 18 is the effectual answer. What bearing did Adam's sin have? And upon how many? The bearing was toward condemnation, and "upon all men." Its effect (the effect of Adam's offense) was to bring all men under prospect of condemnation. The bearing upon all men, on account of the righteousness of One, is toward justification of life. None is prohibited from coming under the virtue of the work and Headship of Christ - the result of which is "justification of life." This is a justification which not only clears from every charge of guilt, but transfers the believer from a state of death into a state of eternal life - not only gives him a new *standing* before the throne of God, but also a vital *relationship* with God, by which to enjoy his standing. It is the contrast to the condemnation of death, under which many lay by virtue of Adam's headship.

Verse 18 speaks of "all men": verse 19 uses the word, "many," - a change necessary to be noted. The former speaks of *God's provision*, made without partiality and commended to the acceptance of all. The latter has reference to those who receive His provision: only "many" - not all - are "made righteous." Thus verse 19 presents to us those who are actually under the headship of Christ. As the head, so are the people. Adam's one disobedience made "many" the children of disobedience. The obedience of Christ, in humbling Himself even unto death for our sake, makes many righteous - indeed "as many as received Him."

"But law came in, in order that the offense might abound" (v. 20, JND). The law has no bearing either on the offense of Adam, or the righteousness of Christ, except to expose more fully the evil of the offense. "But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound." How exceedingly matchless the glory of this grace, defeating entirely the awful curse of sin, and transcending infinitely the blessedness of a former innocence. It is pure, and real, and powerful, bearing with it the perfect love and holiness of God, unsoiled by the human taint of self-indulgence or licentiousness - catering not to the evil of the flesh, but transferring the believer out from under the

authority of sin, into the liberty of subjection to Him whose yoke is easy and His burden light. Abounding grace indeed!

Verse 17 has told us that we "shall reign" - contrasting our *former* captivity to our *future* triumph. Verse 21 contrasts the former authority of sin to the present triumph of grace. Unspeakably blessed themes! "Sin hath reigned unto death," but now "grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." Sin and death have been indeed a powerful combination, but grace has infinitely transcended them, while perfectly consistent and united with righteousness. Nor is it only a two-fold cord, but three-fold. Grace and righteousness are in intimate connection with eternal life. Christianity has made these three stand out in matchless glory, a glory enhanced by the Name of "Jesus Christ our Lord," the Name by which these things are accomplished and bound together. Let us once more remark the constant stressing in the chapter that all true blessing is "through Jesus Christ our Lord."

## CHAPTER 6

### Romans 6

#### A Change of Masters

With the headship of Christ established for the believer - a headship which has to do with new life in contrast to the old life inherited from Adam, and grace reigning where sin had reigned, grace abundantly above the enormity of the sin - there is a question that some would be much inclined to raise. The apostle anticipates and answers this in lovely, incontestable style. "What shall we say then?" What conclusion can be deduced from the plain truth of grace abounding over the mighty tide of sin? "Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?" Who indeed who has known the blessed reality of the grace of God could tolerate the unholy assumption? "Far be the thought." It is of course a suggestion plainly of the devil, yet God would face it immediately.

The thought is contrary to Christian character and nature. "How shall we that are dead to sin live any longer therein?" This chapter deals pointedly and plainly with the truth of our death to sin by virtue of association with the death of Christ, who "died unto sin once." Romans 7 rather speaks of our death to the law as a means of producing fruit for God.

As to sin, God has judicially and fully ended its power by the death of His Son. Every believer, being identified with Him, has therefore necessarily died to sin. The judgment of God has been executed: death has taken place, separating us from the very realm in which we once walked. And when God has, by death, separated us from sin, how shall we dare to connect ourselves with it again? Indeed, how can I take pleasure in that which gave the Lord Jesus His unutterable agony on the cross of Calvary? O, let our souls fully renounce and abhor the unholy thought! Yet, the true basis of this abhorrence of sin is in the absolute, established, unchangeable fact of truth, that "we are dead to sin." Moreover, submission to the truth and righteousness of this judgment of death, is the only basis of a life henceforth pleasing to God.

Now the initial ordinance of baptism unto Jesus Christ is intended to teach the signal lesson of our identification with death: we "were baptized unto His death." Water baptism is of course spoken of, and the teaching is not, therefore, concerning eternal life. But by baptism we are associated with the death of Christ. "Therefore we are buried with Him by baptism unto death." The act of baptism is burial in identification with the Lord. Thus I signify having done with flesh - baptism being, not the expression or result of death, but the figure of death, which I acknowledge, publicly associating with Him who has been crucified, as taking the same sentence upon myself. The figure is of course based on the fact of the death of the Lord Jesus. But following this as an essential, logical consequence, our practical responsibility is based upon the fact of Christ being raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father. If Christ has been raised from the dead in a perfectly new condition of life, it is in this sphere of life that I am to live - certainly not in the old ungodly sphere of corrupted life which has already come under sentence of death.

It will be noticed that here we do not find dwelt upon our *position* as being raised with Christ, although this doctrine is necessarily connected with the ministry here - but rather our death as identified with His death, and our *responsibility* of walking in newness of life because *He* has been raised up from the dead. Our connection with Him in resurrection is looked at as a *future*, yet settled, prospect. Note verses 5 and 8. In Colossians our position of being at *present* "risen with Christ" is very distinctly entered into in accordance with the character of the book. But in Romans our future living together with Christ is presented as a powerful incentive of present subjection to Him.

For, since we have been identified with Him in the likeness of His death, it is but a matter of time until our public identification with Him in His resurrection - a settled thing, yet looked at as a prospect in Romans. "Knowing this, that our old man has been crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be annulled, that we should no longer serve sin" (JND). Here we have final, absolute death - "the old man" having been once and

for all crucified with Christ. It is no matter of experience, but of fact as regards the state in which we were born as children of Adam. God's judgment has been passed: sentence has been executed; the body of sin has received its absolute annulment. *Nothing* of its claims or character can ever again be recognized or considered before God's judgment throne: God has fully considered, met, and judged it in the cross of Christ.

By the cross "the body of sin" is "annulled" (the proper word); and the devil himself is annulled - his power broken entirely as regards the dominance he once held before the cross over those even who were God's saints, but "through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage" (Heb. 2: 14, 15). His mastery has received its death-blow, and so has sin's mastery, by means of the blessed cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.

It necessarily follows therefore, "that henceforth we should not serve sin." If he (for sin is here personified) had had his mastery annulled, why give him the satisfaction of acting as his servants?

Moreover, his mastery, as to us, is annulled because we have died with Christ, and death delivers us from that former bondage: our liberty has been gained - and gained righteously: it is no mere matter of getting free, but of securing an honorable discharge from a cruel master. "He that has died is justified from sin" (JND). "Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him: knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over Him."

Having "died with Christ" refers only to actual believers - not to those who have merely been baptized *unto* His death and thus simply *outwardly* identified with Him. It is the *reality* of identification with Christ in His death, as also in verse 5. The argument proceeds from the *form* to the *reality* of identification with His death, and from thence to identification with Him in His abiding life in resurrection. If there is reality in our identification with His death - that is, if we have indeed died with Him - we have assurance of faith that we shall live

with Him. It is faith as to the future, assuredly, but a principle of faith to be applied in practice *now*.

For death, having dominion in the world when Christ came, because of Christ's identification with sinners, wielded dominion over Him by putting Him to death. But He is risen now, in a different sphere, where life and glory dwell, and death has no dominion, nor can ever enter - for sin has no place there.

"For in that He died, He died unto sin once." Death was the complete separation of Christ from the realm of sin into which He had entered at birth; and His death has set aside that realm once and for all.

"But in that He liveth, He liveth unto God." In the old realm, sin having abounded, it could not be ignored; it must be considered. In the new realm of life in which Christ is raised, sin is no longer even a consideration: "all things are become new, and all things are of God": God is the one absorbing consideration for the soul. Blessed emancipation indeed! Unspeakable sweet and holy liberty!

"Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord." Here is the application of the truth to ourselves in practical manner. Verse 2 insists that we "*have* died to sin": it is an established *fact*, judicially. Verse 11 exhorts us to "reckon" ourselves as such - and "alive unto God." Is this the daily reckoning of our souls? Do we faithfully remind ourselves that we "have died, and our life is hid with Christ in God"? (Col. 3: 3) - and specially so when the world's unnumbered allurements rise up to press themselves upon our attention? Is there then the simplicity of faith that says calmly and firmly, "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me"? This is laying hold upon "what is really life" (1 Tim. 6: 19, JND).

"Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof." If I have died to sin, it is no longer my master: it has reigned over me before, but now grace reigns through righteousness. Hence I am now to refuse sin any authority whatever. I have another Master: why should I be

obedient to sin? Its claim and title have been broken: shall I then allow it any prerogatives over me? God forbid. "Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfill the lusts thereof" (Rom. 13: 14).

"Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God."

It is the wisdom of any creature to candidly recognize that he is under authority. Even the most rebellious, degraded wretch in the world is so: even the most proud, respectable, reputable peer of society - independent and self-sufficient as he may consider himself. Divergent as their natural characters may be, yet being without Christ, they have both *yielded* themselves to the authority of sin. Man may intensely dislike the very word, "yield," but it is in his very nature to yield: to do otherwise is an impossibility for any creature. If he does not yield to God, he is plainly yielding to sin.

Well may the souls of Christians be stirred at the solemn thought! Our preservation from the power of sin lies only in subjection to God. Constantly, though oftentimes unconsciously, we are yielding our members, whether to God or to sin. Every word, every little action manifests it. Stubbornness, pride, independency of God are merely the results of yielding to a sinful will. "Love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, self-control" are on the other hand the fruit of yielding to God - and of refusing my sinful will any title of authority. It is only our intelligent service, "as those that are alive from the dead."

The connection between Romans 12: 1 and these verses is evident. The members of our bodies are instruments which as long as we live are in use, bringing forth details of conduct that give evidence of subjection to some master. But let us remark that in yielding to God, it is not merely the details of conduct mentioned; not merely our members, it is rather *first*, "yield yourselves unto God," and afterwards "your members." Blessed, profitable instruction here! Let it not escape our wholehearted

obedience and meditation. For it is one thing to seek to make my conduct conformable to God's desires: it is another to yield *myself* to Him. Yet then indeed, after once having fully, unreservedly yielded myself, let my members become consistently "instruments of righteousness unto God."

"For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace." Most admirable, simple conclusion! If we are delivered from the bondage of law (which though it condemned sin, could never deliver from sin), and brought under the blessed reign of grace, where indeed is there any place left for sin? Grace has saved us from our sins, and from the dominion which sin once wielded. Unspeakably blessed emancipation! Let us value grace at its proper price, and hold fast the sacredness and purity of its character. "Under law" means simply in a position where law holds authority, such as was Israel from Mount Sinai until the cross of Christ. "Under grace" has reference to a position in which grace holds sway - a contrast absolutely and distinctly drawn. The two things cannot be mixed. "Under grace" is our position resulting from the blessed cross of Christ: "under law" was a position that supposed no cross, no salvation from bondage.

"What then? Shall we sin, because we are not under law, but under grace? God forbid." This question, and that in the first verse of our chapter, are the natural skeptical queries of unbelief. But they are both candidly and fully faced. It is made plain that there is no mere fact of our being blessed by the benefits of grace, nor is there any thought of grace being toleration of, or license for sin; but that we are delivered from a position of bondage into a position of grace and liberty where righteousness has its perfect abiding place. Shall we dare then to suggest that sin be allowed free reign? This would be thorough despising of grace rather than understanding and appreciation of it.

"Know ye not that to whom ye yield yourselves bondmen for obedience, ye are bondmen to him whom ye obey, whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?" It is a simple principle: if I yield myself to sin, I am the servant of sin - with death as my wages: If I yield to the obedience of Christ,



such is my servitude, and righteousness the result. This draws distinct lines: we can serve only one master. But Paul would not unsettle the Romans by questioning the abiding character of deliverance from the bondage of sin. Rather he insists upon it, thanking God for it. They had obeyed from the heart the form of doctrine which they had been instructed, and in actual, unquestionable fact had been "made free from sin," becoming "the servants of righteousness." He will not by any means accuse them of returning in fact to the former condition of bondage of sin. Such a thing could not be, except the profession of Christianity had not been the result of genuine faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Of this latter question the epistle to the Hebrews treats; but in Romans it is not the consideration. But *practical* deliverance can come only from the proper knowledge of *actual* deliverance by means of the crucifixion of Christ.

The two principles, sin and righteousness, are personified as opposing masters. Paul speaks thus after the manner of men, considering the infirmity of our flesh. For it is not that we are mere slaves to righteousness: our actual Master is Christ. But dealing with the desire for a righteous walk on the part of a believer, he puts it in this way to give distinctness to his argument.

Verse 18 deals with actual fact: verse 19 with practical character. This is easily discerned, specially in the New Translation, where verse 18 is given more forcibly - "Now, having got your freedom from sin, ye have become bondmen to righteousness." Verse 19, on the other hand, exhorts us to "now yield *your members* servants to righteousness unto holiness."

"For when ye were the servants of sin ye were free from righteousness." We recognized no claims of righteousness over us while in sin's bondage. Now, as servants of righteousness, sin's claims are to be as thoroughly repudiated.

"What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed? for the end of those things is death." In my former bondage my practice was coincidentally shameful. And then I

had no thought of "fruit" for God, let alone bringing it forth. *Now* my former conduct can only make me ashamed. Let all who have been redeemed by the precious blood of Christ learn more fully to be ashamed of "the past time of their lives" in which they "walked according to this world," with little sense of God's claims upon them. "The end of those things is death": the only direction they lead is toward death.

But the Romans had obtained their freedom from sin and had become servants to God. The result is "fruit unto holiness." Blessed emancipation that works with such effect! "And the end eternal life." These things are conformable to eternal life rather than to death, the end of my former conversation. There is lasting fruit rather than perishing works. It is no question of my person, but of service.

Service under sin can but receive its just wages - death: such is the *deserved* result. But for the believer such bondage has been broken by the free gift of God - "eternal life in Jesus Christ our Lord" - not deserved, but freely given. How could we not rejoice in such a change of masters?

## CHAPTER 7

### Romans 7

#### Change of "Husbands" But a Struggle for Freedom

In Romans 7 we are faced with the case of a renewed conscience recognizing the claims of righteousness - or more correctly, holiness - hating evil and desiring good - while his utter powerlessness to do the good fills him with dismay and wretchedness. His is plainly the case of a soul born of God, for no unbeliever actually hates evil. The new nature in the believer, however, being the very nature of God (2 Pet. 1: 4) is that which gives him an abhorrence of evil. Still, here the soul must learn that abhorring evil and loving good is not in itself the power for doing good.

Now the most common, yet most destructive mistake when the soul is so burdened, is the assumption that the law is to be the rule or standard of a life lived for the Lord - that which must govern the soul in order to bring forth fruit. Or if not the law as given by Moses, yet a certain standard of conduct (perhaps largely self-conceived) which requires obedience as an exaction. The first few verses of our chapter are a plain declaration that it is not God who imposes such exactions upon the redeemed soul - nor merely a declaration of this, but an explanation of the believer's thorough deliverance from the law, not merely in regard to justification, but in regard to bearing fruit unto God. Justification has been thoroughly entered into and fully settled in chapters 3, 4, and 5, and this question is not raised again. Hence, let us be clear that our question now is that of a justified person bringing forth fruit unto God (v. 4).

And at the outset may we remark that "legality" is not to be confined to that attitude that seeks to gain or maintain a standing before God by means of obedience to law; but as in our present chapter, it is the attitude of a justified saint who seeks to bring forth fruit unto God by obedience to law. This latter attitude is as harmful to growth as the former is to peace.

In verse 1 those who know the law are addressed, for the better a soul knows the law, the clearer will be his conviction that it does not assert any authority over a dead man. For it regards man as alive in the flesh and addresses him on that ground, claiming dominion over him only "as long as he liveth."

Verses 2 & 3 adduce the illustration of marriage, the law binding a woman to her husband as long as he is alive, but when he is dead, that law has no more to say to her: she may marry another without the slightest suggestion of infringing the law which, while her husband was living, would call her an adulteress for such a thing. The point of the illustration is simply that death, while it does not destroy or change the law, does away with the authority of law in *that case*.

Verse 4 applies this principle pointedly to believers, to show that the law, in their case, makes absolutely no claim. "Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to Him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God."

Romans 6: 2 has declared that believers are "dead to sin"; Romans 7: 4 goes a step farther, to declare them "dead to the law." Who can deny therefore that the saints of God are delivered as fully from the authority of the law as from the authority of sin? "Dead" means *dead* in any case, and law can have no more to say to a dead man than sin can. The doctrine is simple: we are "dead to the law by the body of Christ" - not by physical death, nor by an experience of self-denial or self-mortification. Identification with the death of Christ delivers me as fully from the law's claims as He by His death is free from them. Every believer is identified with Him in His death. "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink His blood, ye have no life in you" (John 6: 53). Thus a believer becomes partaker with Him in His death.

It is plain that the verse contemplates two distinct masters (or husbands) - "the law," and "Him who is raised from the dead." There can be no such thing as identification with both at once. This the figure makes clear. It must be clean free from the one

if joined to the other. Death *alone* can procure this freedom, and Christ's death is my death, so that my connection with law is absolutely broken, in order that Christ may be fully and singly my possessor and Master. This is the *only* basis of bringing forth fruit unto God. Law demanded, no doubt, but it did not, could not, bring forth fruit. It could go as far as death, but could have nothing to do with resurrection. Christ is raised from the dead: this is fruit: indeed "He is the firstfruits." Law then is but a "thing"; Christ a Living Person, and the very life of the saints. Compare Colossians 3: 4. Blessed deliverance from an irksome bondage into a joyous freedom! It changes our motive entirely - no longer to be harassed by the feeling that we *ought* to do what is right, or good; but strengthened and comforted by the motive of delight *in pleasing the Lord*. This is liberty, for which there is no substitute, and no imitation that can remotely compare with it.

The bolder relief is given to the picture by the retrospect of verse 5. "When we were in the flesh" is of course the reminder of our unsaved state (compare Rom. 8: 8,9). The *result* of that former state, as experience has taught us, was bringing forth fruit unto death. But it is solemnly instructive to notice the *means* of this - "the motions of sins which were by the law." Has not every awakened conscience verified this in experience? Law laid imperatively upon the soul has not restrained sin: it has stirred up the motions of sins in self-will and rebellion. Man revolts, and sins more when he is sternly commanded to do this, or to not do that. And we also, while in the flesh, thoroughly resented an imposition laid peremptorily upon us, and were embolded to rebel.

Verse 6 gives the present contrast - "delivered from the law, having died in that in which we were held" (JND). It is not that the law had died, of course, but *we* have died as regards the law. The deliverance (as easily understood) is to the end "that we should serve in newness of spirit and not in the oldness of the letter." As verse 5 has reminded us of our former experience, so verse 6 gives us what is to be our new and proper experience as believers.

Verse 7 refers back to verse 5, which had said the motions of sins were by the law. Does this infer that the law is sin? Far be the thought. It is "the strength of sin" (1 Cor. 15: 56), that is, its stern prohibitions only stirred man's evil nature to more determined sin and rebellion, and sin became the stronger in its defiance of God. Is the law to blame for this? Certainly not: man's evil nature is to blame. But, as Paul says, "I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, "Thou shalt not covet." Thus the law exposes sin in all its horror. Law commands me not to covet, and I see my evil nature assert itself because of the very prohibition. Can I then deny that I am a sinner?

Thus the commandment gave sin a point of attack (v. 8). Sin rose up against the prohibition, only to work in me every lust. The law was a whip for the slave (in a sense), who uses it as a cause for rebellion: it brings out the sin and evil of the heart. No scourging or treatment of the most harsh kind could ever draw from our blessed Lord the bitter enmity that similar treatment would from the natural heart of man. Why? Because *"in Him* was no sin." Nothing could come out but what was in. Law could only confirm His purity, while it draws out and exposes the evil of our own natural hearts.

"For without the law sin was dead." This refers to our experience, of course. As long as no imposition was placed upon me, sin's power meant nothing. "For I was alive without the law once." Alive in the flesh, without the law, I felt no burden of sin with its solemn sentence of death. As long as I may indulge my own will, with no prohibition, sin as to me appears to have no power - I am alive, sin is dead. But let law forbid my self-will, and I see sin revive in its bold and bitter rebellion, and I find in myself no power to control it after all. "When the commandment came, sin revived, and I died." The sin in my flesh, which I had so little suspected, when the commandment came, sprung into a strong activity, and I could not but feel in its determined working the sentence of death upon myself. "I died." This is of course a vivid description of the apostle's experience, an experience necessarily preceding proper deliverance. It is not the truth of "death with Christ"

here, which is a judicial fact for all believers, but a matter of the soul's experience.

The commandment, which had said "This do and thou shalt live," I found in my case to be "unto death," not life. "For sin, getting a point of attack by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me." We shall notice here again that sin is personified as a monstrous, deceitful enemy, striking my death-blow by the commandment.

"Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good." Holy, it fully repudiates evil: Just, it is a scourge only to the sinner, and hence unquestionable in justice: Good, it calls for love, which "is the fulfilling of the law." Can that which is good then be the means of my death? But no. Sin cannot be ignored this way, and the law be blamed for what sin has done. But sin, that it might appear in its abhorrent character, working death in me by that which is good; that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful. The commandment then exposes sin for what it is - that we might perceive its exceeding sinfulness. This result in itself is good for us. Its prime object is personal self-judgment, and is only learned properly when this is the case. Thus in our chapter it is an intensely personal experience.

This is most strikingly seen in verse 14, where, speaking of a well-known fact, he says, "*We* know that the law is spiritual," but looking, not at men generally, but himself, he adds "but I am carnal, sold under sin." This he knew to be the truth as to himself. Not at all that this would be his state after deliverance was known, but it was the practical experience of his soul when he knew not the liberty of the Spirit of God. After the knowledge of deliverance (in Rom. 8) there is not this self-occupation at all: there is neither self-denunciation nor self-exaltation. Of course there is no reason why a believer should be carnal, but the experience of this must always come before deliverance, in whatever measure, for we have been the slaves of sin, and of law in some sort. The opposite of carnal is spiritual which all believers ought to be, though never to claim to be such. Carnality is certainly not a normal Christian state but to honestly face it when there, is necessary if there is to be

deliverance. This then is intensely personal experience, detailed a little more in the succeeding verses.

Notice in this that there is an "I" in bitter conflict with another "I." For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I." Now even an unbeliever often approves what is good, tries in a measure to do it, but more often weakly gives way to the evil - nay, in fact actually prefers it. Reality of desire is not there, and of course neither is power.

But the child of God hates evil because it is the character of his new life to do so: for the same reason he truly desires good. But despite the earnestness of *desire*, the *power* for good seems as far from him as in his unsaved state. This is his perplexity. The Spirit of God also dwells in him, the more stirring his desires after holiness, though the Spirit is not mentioned here at all, for the experience does not take His power into account. This in fact is the reason of misery. Also the bad mistake is made of mixing spiritual desires with fleshly energy, as if the flesh could produce the virtues of the Spirit.

It is then *my conception of what I should be* for God fighting against *what I actually am*. In other words it is (shall we say good?) flesh in conflict with confessedly bad flesh. But whether I think it good or bad, it is nevertheless "flesh." It is "I" in either case. There is no power in flesh to put down the flesh. The first "I" will never triumph, however righteous. If it could be so, the first man (Adam) would never have had to give place to the second (Christ). He shall have the glory of conquering in the lives of His saints. Hence the only value in the conflict of flesh with flesh is to teach us the utter vanity of flesh, whether it is "grass" or "the flower of grass," - its finest form.

Nevertheless, there is this much promise of deliverance, - that I consciously take sides with the law against myself. This at least is the spirit of repentance and self-judgment, in which state of confessed helplessness, the Lord delights to meet with and bless the soul. But it is still low ground. The soul taught of the Spirit takes sides with God against self - not with law against self. For law is but a thing and has no life to triumph over sin.



When I see the power of God for me, as against sin, then I rest, for the triumph is sure.

However, reasoning from verse 16, there is the conclusion of verse 17. It is not I, as to will and intention, who do the evil, "but sin that dwelleth in me." Involuntarily, despite my precautions and determination, the evil principle of my nature, like a fretting leprosy, breaks out again and again. Thus sin is at least distinguished as the terrible and powerful enemy of the soul. And this is good, for it were ruinous to fail to recognize an enemy or to underestimate his power. When it is plainly seen what is the true character of our souls' enemies, it may stagger us to compare with it the poverty of our own forces, but it would drive us to seek other refuge - in Him who only is stronger than all enemies.

So that there is no doubt progress in this learning by experience: indeed in verse 18 it comes to the deeply-felt conviction that "in me, (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing." This is truth and deeply important truth, but it is not yet deliverance, of course. There is still occupation with self, and a sort of review of the thoughts and feelings of the soul when the sense of its poverty lies heavily upon it. There seems the still lingering hope that *the will* may be able to triumph over sin in the flesh. How often this is the case with souls even who utterly condemn themselves and see nothing good whatever in their flesh. It is inconsistent, of course, but which of us will easily give up self, whatever its proven worthlessness? This in fact but illustrates more vividly the thorough perversity of the heart and magnifies the need of another Deliverer. We must learn that strength of will-power is of no value in such a case: sin is too much for it.

Struggling with self as the soul is, he comes to distinguish sin from himself (vv. 19, 20) and to attribute the evil he does to the sin that dwells in him. This quietens the struggle somewhat (when he almost repeats what he had said in v. 17, and is evidently considering the significance of it), for he sees that at every point his defense gives way to the superior power and subtlety of sin. What use is fighting if there is defeat at every

turn? Yet capitulation would be treachery against the truth, and his very nature would cry out against it.

From verses 21-23 we have the deduction from these experiences that a law of sin binds the soul, whatever its desires. Thus occupation with doing good results only in bringing out the evil of our hearts. It is occupation with Christ that keeps us from evil - not merely with doing good. This awaits Romans 8 however, where the soul is lifted fully above its "doings."

"For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: but I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members." This delight he speaks of is no doubt proper enough, but it is also plain that his occupation is more with "the law of God" than with God Himself, and his misery is not to be wondered at. He must learn that "the law of God" is neither to be his standard of conduct, nor his resource of strength, but must find these in the Son of God. In these verses (22 & 23) he sees two distinct laws - that is, governing principles - in conflict, each claiming him, but the "law of sin" consistently vanquishing "the law of God," so that he, despite his own will, is carried captive. It is a profound perplexity to him, and he is thus no doubt learning that "the law of God" is not "the power of God" (compare Rom. 1: 16; 1 Cor. 1: 24). "The law of God" is not to be the governing principle of the redeemed child: this must be the prerogative of the indwelling Spirit of God - as in fact Rom. 8: 2 will give us.

Finally, in verse 24 his soul cries out in the utter misery of confessed helplessness - "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Can he surrender himself to sin, which has such power? Never! How could he ever make peace with that which is so horrible an enemy of God? But does he now say "How shall I deliver myself?" No: he has given up hope in this direction, but looks for another to deliver him - "*Who* shall deliver me?" Is there any wonder, when this thought breaks in upon his soul, that there is the brightly awakened hope of v. 25? - "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord." Thus, looking outside of himself, he thanks

God. He realizes his impotence, and that he must trust another deliverer. This gives calmness to consider the deliverance itself, which is described in the first four verses of Rom. 8.

For verse 25 (Rom. 7) is not the language of a delivered soul, but of one who has recognized the impossibility of self-deliverance, and that he must look out from himself to Christ. It is an honest confession he makes, "So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin," - but he is still the sufferer, only now as it were bringing his illness to the divine Physician, with a frank explanation of the symptoms. A delivered soul does not with the mind "serve the law of God," nor find himself still given over to the law of sin which the flesh would serve. The proper state of the soul is, "Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye have died, and your life is hid with Christ in God" (Col. 3: 2,3). The mind is to be on Christ, not on law, though it be "the law of God." The point of importance then is that he here puts himself, in his *wretched state*, into the hands of the Lord Jesus Christ. Pride would seek a good state first, before presenting ourselves into His hand, but this would not do. He must have the glory of being the only Deliverer.

## CHAPTER 8

### Romans 8

#### Deliverance Simply by God's Truth

We come now, in the first four verses here, to the deliverance itself. Is this to be by means of experience? A mere glance at the verses will show us it is decidedly not so. Experience does not, and *cannot* produce liberty. Liberty, on the other hand, *when known*, is in itself an experience. But the *means* of finding liberty experimentally, rests altogether upon the testimony of God. What can be more striking than that here we have but a few pointed, absolute statements of *fact*? What does the wretched man of Rom. 7 need but a solid basis to rest upon? - and to build upon? How can he find stability in the shifting uncertainty of experience? Thank God, His pure, plain truth is an unshakable foundation. This is what we have here. It is not what "I" have done, what "I" am, or what "I" feel, but it is what stands immovable as the work and word of God. The proud word "I" has no more place, as previously (in Rom. 7) it occupied the whole field.

As has often been pointed out by translators, the latter part of verse 1 has been wrongly inserted - the best Greek manuscripts do not include the words, "who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." Apparently some early copyist considered that the words closing verse 4 would be well placed at the end of verse 1 - certainly a most disrespectful way of handling the Word of God, to say the least.

The verse then is blessedly clear and decisive - "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." Is this not a silencing answer to sin in the flesh, and to the law also, with its ministry of condemnation? What has sin, law and condemnation to do with those who are "in Christ Jesus?" Law applied to the flesh means condemnation, as the experience of Rom. 7 confirms: but there is no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus. Then of course law can have no application to those who are in Christ Jesus, for "in Christ" is a clear contrast to being "in Adam" (1 Cor. 15: 22). The present

dispensation has brought a change of headship. Christ has come, and the headship of Adam must give way to Him in the case of every soul who trusts Him. The change is absolute and conclusive: the old system of things is completely displaced.

Nor is there merely an official change of headship - important as this is - but the new dispensation of God involves a distinctly characteristic work in *souls* - a work not accomplished in other ages. The Spirit of God has come to remain in the saints of God today. It is not merely the truth of new birth (which is of course applicable to all ages) but of the personal presence of the Spirit of God, who at Pentecost came to take up His dwelling in the church of God collectively, and in the body of each believer individually. (Compare Acts 2 and Gal. 4: 1-6). So that in verse 2 we have "the law of the Spirit" introduced. This connects with "life in Christ Jesus." The law of God given through Moses (as we have seen in Rom. 7: 13), only connected me with death. The governing principle of the Spirit of God operating within the believer, writing upon the fleshy tables of the heart, delivers me fully from that governing principle of carnal commandments inscribed in tables of stone (2 Cor. 3).

Let us carefully notice the absolute finality of this verse. It is no attainment of experience or of spirituality that made Paul feel free from the law of sin and death. Nor did he merely feel free: such was not the question. Feelings must not be trusted here: we must have established facts, not feelings. And such we have here - "The law of the Spirit, of life in Christ Jesus, hath made me free from the law of sin and death." Blessed, unchangeable truth - applicable to every saint of God, though indeed not realized by all. But be this as it may, it stands in all its noble grandeur, always the same, ready to be appropriated by the faith of all who take it as it stands. "*Hath* made me free": this is rest indeed. It is nothing to be grasped at nor sought with the strivings of human labor, experience, or feelings: freedom is accomplished through Christ Jesus - the Spirit of God also attesting it in the soul.

This was "what the law could not do." Why? It was weak through the flesh. The flesh - sinful flesh - could only draw the displeasure of law and bondage to its judgment. The law itself

had no strength to redeem souls from its bondage. It could *leave* a man free who had never sinned, but it could not liberate one who had sinned.

So God has done what the law could not. But it required an expense unspeakably beyond human thought. He must send His own Son, and send Him "in the likeness of sinful flesh." What a sacrifice on the part of the Father; what humiliation for the Son! "Found in fashion as a man" (Phil. 2: 8), the One in whom "is no sin" (1 John 3: 5), "who knew no sin" (2 Cor. 5: 21), "who did no sin" (1 Peter 2: 22), "humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." Blessed beyond expression to think that He in whom there could be no sinful flesh has yet been sent "in the *likeness* of sinful flesh," for the sake of meeting sin and condemning sin in the flesh. This has been done at the Cross. God is the source of it, His Son the fulfiller of that glorious work.

Let us remark again, it is "sin," not "sins," that is in question here. "Sins forgiven" and "sin in the flesh condemned" are two truths very different in character. The former are the deeds, the latter the nature by which deeds of sin are produced. The nature has been condemned in the cross of Christ. It has before proven itself incorrigible, incapable of any change, fully opposed to God. Nothing could do for it but crucifixion: it could not be forgiven, could not be improved, and must come under condemnation. But it is not for me, thank God, to accomplish its condemnation. God has already condemned it in the cross: it has no more place: it is banished and put out of His sight forevermore. Does this seem hard to accept as true? Does it express neither the feelings nor experience of the soul? This may well be, but it is a matter of *truth*, not of feeling and experience. Just as the knowledge of forgiveness of sins is based, not upon feelings or experience, but upon the plainly declared Word of God - "I write unto you, children, because your sins are forgiven you for His name's sake," (1 John 2: 12) - so the Word of God also declares unmistakably that "God sending His own Son - *condemned* sin in the flesh." This is final and conclusive: there can be no question left about it. Blessed secret of strength and rest to the soul!

So that the righteousness required of the law might be fulfilled without the law. Thus the law itself is displaced as a standard for righteousness, but the righteous requirement of the law is confirmed and fulfilled in those who being under grace, "walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." Law applied itself to the flesh, requiring righteousness: but it could not produce righteousness: indeed there was no such thing in the flesh to be brought out. Grace leaves the flesh aside - indeed condemns sin in the flesh - but provides the power for righteousness - not law, but the gift of the Spirit of God to dwell within the believer. Hence it is the believer's blessed privilege to forget himself - turn entirely from the flesh, and walk according to the Spirit. His object thus becomes Christ alone, no more himself and his own conduct. for the Spirit of God sets Christ Jesus pre-eminently before the soul, and all else in comparison becomes vanity. Would we think of imposing a law to do right upon the Spirit of God? It would be utmost folly: to do wrong we know is an impossibility for Him. Can law then be imposed upon those who have the Spirit of God, to demand righteousness from them? Certainly not. They are free - free to be the wholehearted, willing servants of Christ. This is truly deliverance, bondage gone, and the soul at liberty in the presence of God. May His boundless mercy make this a living reality in countless souls.

These first four verses then give us deliverance, which we see involves an absolute change, first in position - second in God's inward operation, and third in the standard for righteousness.

#### THE WORK OF THE INDWELLING SPIRIT

Now the operation of the Spirit of God in the individual saint, as in the Church of God, is a matter of utmost importance in the present day. His presence is as real as was the presence of the Lord Jesus for His few years walking the earth in flesh. This chapter has been a special joy for countless saints, and rightly so, but its significance is even then but little laid hold of as the distinct manifestation of the work of the Spirit of God personally present on earth to accomplish the will of God. The secret of the blessedness of the chapter lies simply in this, that it is the Spirit's work, with man fully put in the shade.

But it is well known that the latter part of the chapter is that which engages the delight of the greater number of souls, whose attention is little drawn to the earlier part. Can their delight then be as full as God intended it? Or are they not rather satisfied with a certain measure of comfort and joy, while not really entering into the fullness that God's wisdom has provided? Can He have made a mistake in what He has put first? No, the first part is of vital necessity, too often ignored.

If we are to understand the Spirit's work, we must thoroughly understand this, that there can be no mixture of flesh with it. And lest in this we make a mistake or are deceived by the fair appearances of the flesh, which ever seeks to stimulate the Spirit, there is a blessed safeguard for the soul in the ministry of the first part of the chapter, and the rubbish of man's work and self-importance is cleared away for the distinct display of the work of the Spirit. It is wisdom to consider this well.

Verse 5 gives us concisely the two opposite governing principles operating in souls. There are only two: they have no real similarity, no point of agreement in any single particular, and between them there is no possibility of making peace. Those who are according to flesh are of course unbelievers: those according to the Spirit, believers. The mind of the one is set on fleshly things, the mind of the other on the things of the Spirit. The principle is a simple one, that the object upon which the mind is set, will govern conduct - though there are inward workings which set the mind one way or the other.

"For the mind of the flesh is death; but the mind of the Spirit life and peace" (JND). Verses 6, 7 and 8 give us the essential opposition in these two things - the end of the former being death, the end of the latter life and peace. The flesh, with all its objects is brought only to death: it has no better anticipation: its eye sees no further, because it cannot. The mind of the Spirit, which has Christ for its object, of course, is life and peace. Christ is risen from the dead, in a sphere of perfect rest and peace, and this being the assured portion of him who has the mind of the Spirit, death has become merely an incidental thing: the end is life and peace, and the present takes its character from the end.



"The mind of the flesh is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." What more strong pronouncement can we think of than this? Insubjection to God is enmity against Him, and the mind of flesh *cannot* be subject to Him: it has a fixed character of rebellion. Solemn, dreadful truth to contemplate! We must remember that such is the natural mind of man, according to which even a believer may foolishly act, when not making use of the mind of the Spirit which is his rightful heritage.

But verse 8 speaks not simply of the "mind," but of "they that are in the flesh." These are unsaved persons, of course, who have not the Spirit, as is confirmed by verse 9. Note also Romans 7: 5. Whatever else they may be able for, whatever their fine qualities and admirable virtues before men, "they - cannot please God." This is the unequivocal conclusion, impossible of compromise. Let no one be deceived: the most exemplary, attractive, honorable, sincere model of man in the flesh "cannot please God." Please men he may, and perhaps preeminently himself, but nothing can please God in reference to men save the work of His Spirit within them. Only Divine workmanship can accomplish Divine pleasure. This is a solemnly important lesson for man.

But we go on to the definitely stated condition of all Christians - "ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His." Here is the full excluding of all who do not have the Spirit of Christ. They are not Christ's. Doubtless the expression "the Spirit of Christ" is intended to convey the thought of what is characteristic to saints of God: they manifest (in whatever degree) the same Spirit that Christ manifested in the world. But this would be impossible if they did not have the same Spirit personally. "The Spirit of God," "the Spirit of Christ," "the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead" is of course the same Spirit, but connected with different truths. In the first case it is the fact of God dwelling by His Spirit in the believer; in the second the characteristic manifestation of the Spirit as exemplified in Christ; in the third the future hope of glorification by the power of the Spirit.

Let us here remark, however, that it is not the work of the Spirit that has been set before the soul in order to the finding of peace. In the previous chapters it is rather the work of Christ which is the object of the soul's faith and the foundation of his peace. We must not look for peace on the basis of the Spirit's work in us: that would be merely a subtle form of self-occupation. The Spirit, though it is true His work is *subjective*, always would occupy the soul with what is *objective* - that is, outside of the believer - while yet it is necessary to know *whose* power it is that worketh in us. The truest evidence of the Spirit's work in us is our occupation with all that God has done and revealed in and by the Lord Jesus Christ.

"And if Christ be in you" (as He dwells by the Spirit in every believer) "the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness." Here it is plain that "Christ in you" does not mean sin eradicated. For although He is within, yet there is no change in the body: it is still dead because of sin. The flesh remains in its corrupt state until the resurrection at the coming of the Lord. The sin-tainted condition of the body must await its eradication until "the adoption, that is, the redemption of our body" (v. 23).

"But the Spirit is life because of righteousness." Cf. 2 Cor. 4. It is not to the body I must look for the manifestation of life or righteousness: it is as yet connected rather with sin and death. But the Spirit of God dwells within me, on the only righteous basis - the death of Christ. Life is connected with Him. Righteousness has been first secured by God as regards me: there is liberty for the Spirit, who is life. The truth in this verse is most important to consider. Even now, the Spirit of God, who is life, dwells within our "dead bodies." It is a vivid portraying of the contrast between our two natures.

But verse 11 goes on to the future redemption of the body. The same Spirit who dwelt in Christ, who was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, because He also dwells in us, is the pledge that we shall have our mortal bodies quickened. It is a settled and secure prospect, for which faith can wait quietly and rejoicingly. No need hence to be discouraged because of the presence of sin in our mortal bodies: we must only expect it

until that blessed day. But it is nevertheless our privilege to live above it, by the power of the Spirit who dwells in us - and this the next three verses make plain.

"Therefore, brethren, we are debtors" - this is evident, for everything bears witness that we are dependent creatures - the cross of Christ of course above all else. But if debtors, it is certainly "not to the flesh, to live after the flesh." The flesh has been nothing but a thief, ravaging and destroying. Do we owe it more than the awful toll it has taken? Ah no! our debt is to One who has redeemed us from the wasting oppressor. Shall we then be spending our substance on this sinful flesh as though we were still servants to it? Let us hear Romans 13: 14 - "Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfill the lusts thereof." If I feed the flesh it is sure to be strong: if I do not feed it, it will soon become inactive.

"For if ye live according to flesh, ye are about to die, but if, by the Spirit, ye put to death the deeds of the body, ye shall live" (JND). Death is the eventual result of living according to flesh: it could not be otherwise: nothing that is not *for* God and *of* God can abide for eternity. But the Spirit within the believer has power to "put to death the deeds of the body," and the believer, making use of this power, proves the reality of life that is eternal.

This true living - being led by the Spirit of God - connects with sonship (v. 14). It is characteristic of every saint of God, of course. If there is no leading of the Spirit, all is mere flesh. Hence, whatever the measure of subjection and obedience to the Spirit's leading, every true believer is led by the Spirit. Otherwise there could be no fruit whatever. The flesh may be driven by law or by circumstances to do certain things that appear good, but it is vanity. To be led of the Spirit involves voluntary, loving subjection to the Lord Jesus - and what true believer can utterly refuse this? Certainly not one! There can be no one today called a son of God who has not the Spirit of God. Galatians 4: 1-7 deals clearly with the subject of sonship, as being a dispensational blessing of the present day of grace, in contrast to former bondage under the law before the death of Christ. For the believer, redemption puts him into the

position of a son, having received the adoption (v. 5), then the sending forth of the Spirit (v. 6) puts the seal upon this. *Everyone* who is a son, God endows with His Spirit; hence a claim of sonship without the Spirit cannot be allowed. The leading of the Spirit is an indispensable part of Christianity.

Verse 15 however again carefully guards against this producing doubts in the souls of saints, and fear as to whether they will ultimately be accepted of God. They had not received a spirit of bondage to simply put them in fear again, as they had been when under law. It is not as though Christianity says the same things as law, only a little more hopefully: this would be mere mixture of principles, and confusion. What is the spirit in which Christianity is to be received? Surely in the same spirit as it is given - "from faith to faith"; as is said in Rom. 1. God gives freely on the principle of faith, and we are to receive on the same principle, with a spirit of confidence and thankfulness. This is what He loves. Bondage and exaction are far from His mind: let them be far from ours. We have received not a spirit that makes us mere slaves, but "the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry Abba Father." This is the assured dignity and liberty of sons. It leaves no room for doubts and fears, or for an obedience that is merely servile, looking for Heaven as a reward of serving God; for Heaven is the perfectly sure portion of the believer: in serving God, he is to do so without any doubts as to this. Such is the liberty and peace of the Spirit of adoption. He gives conscious nearness to God as a Father.

So also in verse 16 He bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God. To understand this well we must remember that all saints from Adam downward have been *children* of God, though until the cross of Christ they did not have the position of *sons* of God. The Greek words in v. 14 and v. 16 are distinctly different - the latter implying *birth*, the former referring to the dignity of position as *adopted*. But while, as we have said, even Old Testament saints were children (not sons) of God, yet they had not the same confirming witness of this that we have today. There was not the same proof of it enjoyed in their souls: they were yet infants (Gal. 4: 1), truly born again of God,

but little conscious of the blessedness of their relationship. But the gift of the Spirit is a witness to us - within us - bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God. This is a witness that Old Testament saints did not have. We today enjoy the relationship of children in the same measure in which we pay attention to the witness of the Spirit. The Spirit of course draws our affections out to Christ and gives us to delight in the things of God - the more so the more fully we allow Him His place. The fact also that we are sons of God by adoption, in virtue of redemption, is in itself proof that we are "children of God." Adoption and new birth are distinct truths, of course, teaching most precious lines of thought, but there is no adoption without new birth, and since the cross of Christ every new-born soul has also received the adoption. New birth speaks of filial relationship: adoption speaks of positional dignity.

"And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ." Blessed truth indeed, applicable to every saint from Adam down to the coming of Christ - for every child is an heir, though he be in infancy and not realizing his title to the inheritance. Indeed, how many of the saints of God before the first advent of Christ had any understanding that they would reign with Christ in glory? But such is the plain revelation of Christianity. (Compare 1 Cor. 6: 2, 3; 2 Tim. 2: 12; Rev. 3: 21; Rev. 5: 9,10).

But meanwhile it is the time of suffering - waiting, enduring in patience. Such is our character of identification with Him today: it is the test of faith to be united to a rejected Lord. Soon we shall be united with Him in glorification. Blessed answer to the little time of suffering!

From verse 18 to 25 the present suffering in connection with the old creation, together with the anticipation of deliverance from it, comes before us. The sufferings are not to be compared with the glory to be revealed in the saints. The one is brief and transitory: the other eternal; the glory far more than compensating for even the thorniest path of suffering on earth. It is no mere theory, but the careful, deliberate reckoning of a

man who suffered for Christ's sake perhaps above any other. Blessed example of the power of Christ resting upon a soul!

But the scene of the saints' sufferings has itself a more blessed prospect awaiting it. Creation has an earnest expectation in waiting for the manifestation of the sons of God. It must wait for its liberty until the sons of God (who *now* indeed enjoy the liberty of grace), are manifested in the liberty of glory.

It is man who is of course responsible for the blight of sin upon creation - thus man, to have glory, must first be the subject of grace. But the creation did not of its own accord - "not willingly" - "become subject to vanity": it was not a moral question, as with man, but because of man's sin all creation has suffered; it is "by reason of" man, "who has subjected it."

Hence it is not grace that the creation needs, but the redemption of power. So there is waiting "in hope that the creation (creature) itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the liberty of the glory of the children of God." Then the creation, which was forced into corruption by man's sin, will be identified with the glory of the children of God. "For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now." All of creation joins in the mournful dirge: every part has been affected.

"And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body." "The firstfruits of the Spirit" gives us a foretaste in anticipation of that bright day of glory; but despite the unutterable blessedness of this, we are still in the body connected with a sin-tainted creation. So that our rejoicing is mingled with groans. Thus God gives His renewed saints to feel the sorrows of the old creation, and to yearn with more earnest desire for the glory to be revealed. We see here there is an added meaning given to adoption, when comparing v. 15 and Gal. 4: 1-7. In one sense we have received the adoption (Gal. 4: 5-7), becoming sons of God by *faith*. In this case we *wait* for the adoption, the redemption of the body - that is, our bodies being

delivered from this sphere of sin and corruption, and conformed to the image of Christ, we shall be *publicly manifested* as sons of God. *By faith* we have the adoption *now*; by manifestation we shall have it in glory.

Indeed, in verses 23 and 24 the truths of adoption, redemption, and salvation are all given a future application; yet each one is elsewhere spoken of as a *present* possession of every believer. Compare also Eph. 1: 7; Eph. 2: 5, 8; 2 Tim. 1: 8, 9. This can imply no doubt as to the future, rather instead the absolute assurance that the blessings we have *now by faith*, we shall have *then by manifestation*.

"For we are saved in hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it." Hope is an essential part of Christian character - "an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast" (Heb. 6: 19), not a matter of indefinite uncertainty: if it were so, we should not wait with patience, but with doubts and fears. Faith gives the certainty that hope shall be fulfilled - when, we know not, but faith also makes us content to wait patiently. This is true "patience of hope."

But our condition in the world is also one in which intelligence is by no means perfect - intelligence as to the bearing of all evil and trouble, so as to be able to know what is necessary to meet these. Such infirmities however are the very occasion for the operation of the Spirit of God. Our ignorance of how to pray as we ought shows us surely our need of the Spirit's work, and would give us the more to submit ourselves to Him.

The groans connected with the old creation we often find ourselves unable to translate into words, while our inmost souls may be profoundly affected. It is but another means by which God teaches us dependence. Much may be pent up in the soul which can find no outlet in words, so that even in the presence of God only groans are brought forth. But if indeed intelligence is lacking, the need is fully met by the indwelling Spirit of God. His personal presence gives quietness and rest of soul - for if we cannot trust our own intelligence, we can fully

trust Him. Thus we are assured that our God, who searcheth the hearts, knowing perfectly what is the mind of the Spirit, is rightly intreated, for the Spirit makes intercession, not according to our selfish desires or natural thoughts, but according to the will of God. Blessed comfort indeed!

#### TRIUMPHING IN THE LOVE OF CHRIST

But from verse 28 to the end we have things before us that are *not* uncertain to our intelligence: it is definitely assured knowledge that is characteristic of Christianity - the proper language of every saved soul.

"But we *do* know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to purpose" (JND). Is this the wholehearted expression of our souls? Every Christian certainly agrees with the truth here, but how many Christians enjoy it as a real, practical power over the soul, and therefore rest fully in the unceasingly operative love of God toward us? This is a different matter, of course; but the Word is given us to this end, that it may have vital effect upon our lives.

It is to be noticed here that "those who are called according to purpose" are only "those who love God": it is not the same call as in Matthew 22: 14 - the call of grace to all, which is refused by many. Here it is rather the call of divine purpose, that cannot be refused - nay, which "the called" would not think of refusing. There is marvelous blessing and comfort in these following truths concerning the perfectly sovereign work of God in grace - that is, for those who have trusted in Christ. The order is of course worthy of God Himself, and all is calmly deliberate, for it has been settled before ever the earth was.

First is His foreknowledge. It is unthinkable that it could be otherwise with God. Before His creating word was spoken, He well knew "the end from the beginning." Indeed, it is utterly impossible to find rest in any but such a God, and when my soul is saved I may look back and rejoice that God foreknew me as one whom He would save by the gospel of grace.



Next is predestination to be conformed to the image of His Son. It is not, let us mark well, merely predestination to be saved, but for future glory as conformed to the image of Christ, who is Himself "the image of God." Doubtless the moral side of the truth is the prominent one here - that is, that the purity, holiness, and every other blessed virtue of our Lord, will have its bright reflection in His saints. Marvelous purpose indeed, and worthy of such a God! Elsewhere, of course, we learn that even physically our bodies shall be fashioned like unto His body of glory (Phil. 3: 21). How blessedly complete the gracious purpose of our God. To our own hearts today could anything compare with being like Him who has saved us both from our sins and from the power of sin? To contemplate such a Person is to long to be like Him.

His title here - "the Firstborn among many brethren" - is plainly one of priority in Person, not in point of time of birth. Colossians 1: 15, 16 confirms such a principle as to the "firstborn." Christ is "the firstborn of every creature." Why? "For by Him were all things created." Psalm 89: 27 bears clear testimony also. Speaking of David as typifying Christ, God declares, "I will make him my firstborn, higher than the kings of the earth." It is an official dignity far above any mere question of time. In Old Testament times the firstborn according to nature was accorded the priority over his brethren, but this rigid custom was yet oftentimes reversed by God, who gave the birthright to a younger. So now, God would make clear that Adam has been fully dispossessed of all the rights of the firstborn, and these are now eternally held by the Lord Jesus. Yet we may thank God that in grace He (Christ) has "*many*" whom He is not ashamed to call brethren (Heb. 2: 11).

The calling (v. 30) comes in due time. And to us who are saved, can we not say it has been by a voice of irresistible power and grace? - awakening us out of the mass of corruption and ruin of this world - to hear "the voice of the Son of God," - and live. 1 Thessalonians 2: 12 and 2 Thessalonians 2: 14 speak of this call, by which the Thessalonian saints were turned to God from their idols - so strong a call as to separate them from their own countrymen at the price of bitterest persecution (1 Thess. 2:

14). And Paul perhaps above all others knew the wondrous power of that call, which brought him, "a blasphemer, persecutor, and injurious," to fall trembling and astonished at the feet of Jesus (Acts 9; Gal. 1: 13-16).

"And whom He called, them He also justified." Little need be said here for the justification of him that believeth in Jesus as this has been already fully discussed in earlier chapters of Romans. But justification *must* come in here, for He has called us from under a burden of sins and from a state of sin. Now the claims of righteousness are shown to be fully met.

And glorification is immediately introduced, with no other intervening operation. This is truly worthy of a sovereign Creator and divine workman. The end is as it were secured from the beginning - so fully so that He can speak of the glorifying of believers as an already accomplished work. Does it not remind us of the words of the Lord Jesus in His prayer to the Father - "And the glory which Thou hast given Me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one; I in them, and Thou in Me, that they may be made perfect in one: and that the world may know that Thou hast sent Me, and hast loved them, as Thou hast loved Me" John 17: 22, 23. There is the perfect dignity of a divine speaker here, who looks upon the whole course of time as lying fully open to His gaze, and the future glory as a present settled thing. We become sharers in the glory God has given Him - not in the glory He had with the Father before the world was; but the glory He has acquired by His humiliation and suffering as Man in the world, and is invested with today at the right hand of God. It is the glory of moral beauty and perfection, of devoted obedience to the will of God; - obedience even unto death, and the spoils He has gained by His blessed sacrifice. In all of this His saints will blessedly share - the fruit of His own wondrous work. What holy joy and sweetness is the calm certainty of all this!

And now, it is time for conclusion to be drawn, beginning with verse 31. Nor is it merely a statement of conclusions; but rather the Spirit of God seeking to draw out from every Christian heart definite, conclusive answers, the heart committing itself fully to the firm conviction of the truth. Yet it

is assuredly the proper language of the elect unitedly. It is "what shall we then say to these things?" While, when coming to verse 38, the word is, "I am persuaded." There is personal settled persuasion and joy, but such as must also go out toward every other saint, including them in the perfection of the blessing of God.

There are then a number of challenging questions. Indeed, from verses 31 to 35, every statement may be rightly interpreted as a question. In the Greek, the expressions "It is God that justifieth" and "It is Christ that died," may be regarded either as assertions or questions - thus "Shall God, that justifieth?" and "Shall Christ, that died?" etc. The same form of speech is used in v. 35 - "Shall tribulation, or distress?" etc., where the use demands a question. The words "it is" and "shall" have no equivalent in the Greek. But it is the Spirit of God asking us what we shall say to these things. Let every Christian respond with an unequivocal, wholehearted confession of confidence in the faithfulness of God.

"If God be for us, who can be against us?" It will be seen in verses 31 to 33 that God is preeminently before us, the Source of the gospel, as we have seen before. It is not merely Christ interceding for us, as is a blessed truth, of course (v. 34) but God for us. Verse 32 presents Him thus as giving up the dearest object of His heart, to the dread suffering of the cross, not sparing Him from the unmitigated judgment against our sins, the horror of being made a curse for us. Wondrous sacrifice on the part of God Himself! And if so, can He withhold any real blessing from His own? Shall He not with Him also freely give us all things? Notice, it is "with Him also," - never apart from Him, for nothing will ever prove a true blessing if not in connection with Christ. But have we then any just cause for complaint? - whatever be our circumstances? Let the Christian heart answer. What are "things" to God in comparison with His own Son? The lesser blessings He will certainly give, if He has given the greatest.

"Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? Shall God, that justifieth?" These three verses give us three steps - first, God for us; secondly, God blessing us; and thirdly, God

justifying us - or clearing from every charge. For who has a right to lay anything to our charge? God surely alone has such a right. But shall He do this - He who has on the contrary justified us?

"Who is He that condemneth? Shall Christ, that died? - yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us." As to condemnation, John 5: 22 tells us "The Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son," then v. 27 - "And hath given Him authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of Man." Christ then has authority to condemn. Shall He do so? - that is, in reference to the elect? Why, He died for us, He is risen for us, He is at God's right hand making intercession for us! Certainly He will condemn the impenitent eventually, but shall He do so to those who trust in Him?

Or, on the other hand, when He has shown such a positive, infinite love for us, "who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" Is it a possibility? What of all those things that try the faith and test the heart - things which may to the natural eye seem to contradict the constant, unfailing care of God for souls? "Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Are they not rather but special occasions of casting us more upon that love?"

So the questions end with v. 35, but there is the written word quoted to confirm the soul as to the last one - "As it is written, For Thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter." It is for *Christ's* sake that these afflictions are allowed to come to the believer - that they may the more deeply prove the reality of His love and the power of that love, which, when known in the soul, is far more than a match for the most terrible ordeals that may be known. We know this to have been proven practically in the cases of martyrs unnumbered.

When considered to be for Christ's sake, the greatest affliction will beget the deepest joy. Suffering for wrong doing is certainly a different thing; but in any "need be" trial, coming in a path of subject obedience, there may be the calm, sweet

assurance that it is but a trial of faith. The devil seeks, it is true, to separate us from the love of Christ - hence the afflictions calculated by him to this end are actually for Christ's sake. Let us but see this, and we shall have the more patient rejoicing through it all.

Indeed "in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us." This is proper Christian character: victory is a fully assured thing. Christ has loved us: how then could it be otherwise? "More than conquerors" is a blessed word: it is not merely triumphing over opposition: it is the soul lifted far above it all into God's own presence of infinite and eternal bliss - "through Him that loved us."

Is it any wonder then that Paul does not hesitate to record the deep persuasion of his soul concerning the blessed, sure portion of the beloved people of God? "For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creation, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." *Death* is mentioned first - that which is man's greatest fear and dread. But its sting is gone for the believer (1 Cor. 15: 54-57). But what of life with all its vicissitudes, trials and adversity? It is but a brief transitory thing, a little thing compared to His greatness. Or all those things positionally above us - angels, principalities, powers? God is greater than they: and *He* is for us. And things - whether present barriers that appear insurmountable, or future possibilities, or that which is higher than our understanding, or low mysterious depths of evil that chill men's souls? Again, the ringing answer is simply "God for us." None of these, "nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Here indeed we have the swelling song of victory on the shores of the Red Sea, (Ex. 15), "Sing unto the Lord, for He hath triumphed gloriously." Fitting and wondrous conclusion to the consideration of God's deliverance, first from the guilt of sins, then from the power of sin. Thus ends the discussion of God's

sovereign counsel in grace and blessing, commended to all men everywhere, and applicable to "all them that believe."

## CHAPTER 9

### Romans 9

What of God's Promises to Israel?

Now, such being the case - that God had purposed in eternal counsel the blessing of Gentiles on an equal basis with Jews, as it is this day - what is to become of the special promises to Israel? Did the apostle utterly ignore these in his zeal for the conversion of Gentiles? Far be the thought! Such accusations which were bound to be hurled against him, are utterly denied and proven false in his most admirable discussion, in chapters 9, 10 and 11, of Israel's present state and the counsel of God concerning that favored though bloodguilty nation. These chapters are of utmost importance to a right understanding of prophecy and all God's dispensational ways. They form a parenthesis in the epistle, which is written to Christian saints, of course. Romans 12 could quite easily follow Rom. 8, and the truth concerning Christians be not impaired at all. But as God would not hide from Abraham that which he did, so He delights that His saints should be concerned in all that concerns Him, that they might be the more earnest intercessors, and have their souls unselfishly occupied. We have learned His counsel concerning us: let us also learn them concerning Israel, and we shall the more learn to adore His wisdom.

What heart is not touched by the ardent longing of the apostle for his own nation Israel, expressed in these first words of Rom. 9? Who can doubt its reality? To do so would be to challenge the Word of God, which places its seal upon the truth of it. Doubtless because liable to be disbelieved, he insists, "I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost - that I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart. For I have wished that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh." The love of his heart is a blessed example for us, who ought also to have our souls unfeignedly exercised in yearning for these ancient people of God. It is true he had wished what was impossible - that he might be accursed from Christ for their sakes - but we must remember

that burning love does not stop to reason first. Still, godly intelligence corrected this desire afterwards, but did not lessen his love toward them: his sorrow was continual. O that our love should burn as warmly and brightly as his, in all wisdom and spiritual understanding! Do we not have as much occasion for it now as did the beloved apostle then? Is the state of "the Jew, the Gentile, or the Church of God" so vastly improved in our day? Nay, has not the pride of man rather outdone all his former efforts in his ambition to establish his security independently of God? "Oh that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people." Such was the lament of Jeremiah (Jer. 9: 1), and can it not find echo in the hearts of the people of God today? Surely Romans 9: 1-3 is a becoming result of the glorious assurance of Rom. 8. Do our souls not long for others when we know ourselves eternally accepted of God?

Now the apostle lists some of the peculiar privileges and dignities of Israel with which God had endowed them as the nation of His choice on earth. These are not at all individual blessings, but national, and consequently not at all in that sense having the slightest connection with the blessings of Christianity, which are applied to individual souls. "The adoption" here is the adoption of a nation - "When Israel was a child - I called My son out of Egypt" (Hosea 11: 1). We have already noticed the adoption in connection with present-day saints of God - (Romans 8: 14-16) spoken of in the plural, not in the singular, as in Hosea: "Israel, My son."

"The glory" is the presence of God manifested as it could not be in connection with any other nation. To the Church, of course, as to all individual believers today, the glory is known in the indwelling of the Spirit of God. In Israel we see the glory first in the cloud following them. Then coming into the tabernacle, later into the temple, from which it is removed later - Ezekiel describing both the removal and the eventual future restoration of the glory, to be accomplished when all Israel shall be saved.



"The covenants" are two, in particular - in fact, three, when the distinction is drawn between the covenant of law first given - the tables being broken - and that of Exodus 34 - the former of absolute law, demanding undeviating obedience, the latter of law tempered by mercy in provisions for "the errors of the people." "The New covenant," awaiting the millennium is fully of grace manifested in Christ Jesus and God's writing His law upon the hearts of His people. These are exclusively Israel's, of course, although we who have believed today do enter into the blessings of the new covenant - not because it was made for us, but because grace goes out beyond the bounds of the covenant. Compare Hebrews 8.

"And the giving of the law" was exclusively to Israel, who were thus made the depository of the full Old Testament. "The service" is the only ritual God ever instituted for a nation - the only carnal worship sanctioned of God, with its priesthood, sacrifices, and temple. "The promises" too, are connected with Israel, and if blessing is prophesied toward the nations, yet the promise is given to Israel that she would be the channel of blessing. The Messiah was promised to Israel, although through Him indeed blessing would come to the Gentiles.

Theirs also are the fathers - Abraham Isaac, and Jacob - men so honored of God that He would call Himself "the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob." Their names come before us almost immediately - not to flatter men because of a fleshly relationship, but to demonstrate that the election of God is far above it. Nevertheless, the fleshly relationship is a privilege that carries a dignity and responsibility that is peculiar.

But above all, it is from Israel that "as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed forever." What greater dignity could ever be accorded a nation; what more significant nearness to the source of all the blessings of God! On this account, surely the rejection of His mercy is all the more enormous guilt. But the fact remains that Israel is the nation favored of God above all others. "You only have I known of all the families of the earth" are His words to this people of His choice (Amos 3: 2). But the greatness of this last mentioned favor is infinite: the Messiah is no less than God over all,

blessed forever. Who then will dare despise or belittle the glory of God's people Israel? Did Paul do so in the slightest measure? Assuredly not. Indeed perhaps beyond all others he realized and valued what the gracious favor of God had bestowed upon his beloved nation.

But the nation Israel has refused the gospel of God's grace in Christ Jesus: has God's Word and purpose then failed of its object in having so blessed the nation? Faith replies, certainly not. It may appear so, but this is for the sake of the testing of faith. "For they are not all Israel which are of Israel." God's reckoning is a spiritual one: natural generation cannot presumptuously lay hold of blessings that are given for spiritual reasons. Jacob was called Israel only when the flesh was touched and shriveled. How then can fleshly Israel claim to be "Israelites indeed" when flesh is not only far from shriveled, but the very occasion of their boasting? That is Jacob, not Israel.

"Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham are they all children: but, in Isaac shall thy seed be called." Here is a testimony among Abraham's children at the very beginning. Ishmael was Abraham's seed according to flesh: but God's decree was, "In Isaac shall thy seed be called." Ishmael then is allowed no place. This was the sovereign decree of God at the time. The word of promise was: that Sarai should have a son: no promise had been given in connection with Hagar and Ishmael.

Will some object that since Hagar was a bondwoman the case is not applicable? Very well, there is more than this. Rebecca had two children by Isaac - twins in fact. Therefore the one certainly had as much *natural* claim as the other - the precedent, if any, being with the firstborn, Esau. But before the children were born, and consequently having done no works, either good or evil, God's purpose according to election was both settled, and declared to Rebecca - "The older shall serve the younger." What then are the works of the flesh as a basis for blessing from God? Or what the prestige of godly parentage?

Indeed, after the two had lived and died, and their characters thus fully manifested, the one self-judged, the other self-righteous, God wrote by Malachi, "Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated." It is a solemn declaration. Esau is plainly the man after the flesh - whether it be well-trained, amiable, kind, or whatever else. Flesh is nothing to God: it profiteth nothing (John 6: 63), and its proud self-confidence God hates. Jacob on the other hand, as we have before said, was one whose flesh God touched and shriveled.

"What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? Far be the thought" (JND). Do we suppose it is unrighteous on God's part to have no respect for man's proud fleshly accomplishments? What? Are we so arrogant as to expect our works to be put on the same level as the work of the Creator of heaven and earth? Can we be surprised that God regards such presumption as mere hateful abomination? Indeed, He is fully righteous to regard it so, and we ourselves utterly unrighteous if we dare to question Him.

In reference to showing mercy, as in reference to everything else, God will make plain His sovereign title to act as He pleases. What will it avail a sinful man to say Him nay? No Israelite at least could deny that God had said to Moses, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion." Is this arbitrary? Very well: who can deny God His full arbitrary rights? Does He say, four times in the space of a short sentence, "I will," and mean nothing by it? Does a wise parent consult the opinions or whims of his little child as a guide to his child's training? Does he encourage or even tolerate the child's mocking of his authority? God's "I wills" stand, and only folly dares to quarrel.

But to whom is God pleased to show mercy? Certainly not to the self-righteous mockers, who by their very attitude deny their need of mercy. It is to the repentant- those who confess themselves sinners, who in their extremity call upon the Name of the Lord. Facing the truth of their guilt and ruin, they cry to Him, and He has compassion. Shall we quarrel with a God who

chooses to show mercy to such souls? Is this not greatness and goodness that is worthy of the Creator of heaven and earth?

What then? "It is not of him that willeth or of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy." Neither man's will nor man's energy have any place. God has sovereign title to shew mercy, and man is called upon to bow to this Divine sovereignty. Can anything be more right or proper? Indeed, can anything do more good for man than his subjection to his Creator? Plainly, God seeks man's best interests, and man rebelliously sins against his own soul. What more tragic folly can we imagine?

But God will maintain His own glory, whatever man's attitude may be - in fact will display His own power by the very means of those who harden their hearts against Him. Scripture had testified to this before the law was given, and Jews were well acquainted with God's using the stubborn opposition of Egypt's monarch for the purpose of showing His absolute power over the strongest force man could muster. We ought to tremble at the greatness of His glory when we hear His word to Pharaoh - "Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might shew My power in thee, and that My name might be declared throughout all the earth." God Himself had allowed Pharaoh to become great, though to Pharaoh it was a matter of personal pride and the occasion of displaying his will in independence of God. What then? In the face of this independence God would show His own power. Indeed, Pharaoh had been allowed to be raised to this very height, in order that the higher power of God might be shown. Not that God is to be blamed for the stubbornness of Pharaoh. For while verse 18 insists "Therefore hath He mercy on whom He will have mercy, and whom He will He hardeneth" - yet we must take care to inquire, whom does He will to harden? Does Scripture say that God hardened Pharaoh's heart before Pharaoh had any sense of responsibility? Far from it. Pharaoh had first boldly disdained and insulted God when faced with the responsibility of letting Israel go - "Who is the Lord that I should obey His voice to let Israel go? I know not the Lord, neither will I let Israel go" (Ex. 5: 2). So we see that Pharaoh's wilful hardening of his own heart preceded God's judicial hardening, which is first seen in

Ex. 7: 13. Dare we then quarrel with God's will to harden such a character?

But objectors can be stubbornly persistent. "Why," they ask, "doth He yet find fault? For who hath resisted His purpose?" If God's sovereign power is so great that His purpose is actually carried out by means of the opposition of men, why is He not then favorable to those who are rebellious? For if this is the case, then *no one* really resists His purpose.

Now what does such an objection involve? First, let us see clearly that these who deny God the right of finding fault with man, at the same time are bold in finding fault with God!

Do we wonder that God's answer is firm and peremptory? Man may think his question is quite reasonable, little realizing the actual deceit in it. But it is utterly dishonorable, and God closes the discussion with a strong declaration of His sovereign title to do as He pleases. If man, like a perverse child, will not learn by instruction, then he is summarily told who is in authority, and who has the right of doing His will. When God says "Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God?" we might notice that man's voice is silenced: there are no more objections. God has the final word.

"Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honor, and another unto dishonor?" It is a humbling rebuke to the pride of man, but how needful! If this is arbitrary, yet it is far from any suggestion that God could take delight in the evil condition or just judgment of the wicked.

Nevertheless, in connection with "them that perish," there are three definite attributes of God plainly made known - His wrath, His power, His longsuffering. Each of these certainly has its important lesson for man. And if God chooses thus to make *Himself* known, it is our wisdom to learn rather than criticize.

His wrath against sin can never be appeased: it is wrath to the uttermost. Can man's arguments alter His mind in this? Or will it help man to persuade himself that God will be sparing in His

judgment of sin? No! God will prove that His very nature is the opposite of sin and no quarter can be given.

Is He able to carry this wrath to its conclusion in the judgment of sin and of those who array themselves on the side of sin, against Him? Let Pharaoh be our teacher. God's power has been made known in measure at any rate in the eventual dreadful judgment of Egypt after much long suffering and many preliminaries, during which Pharaoh evidently assured himself that he was impervious. And though God bears long today, sending warning upon warning to a stubborn world, yet will His power be made known, suddenly, terribly, to a startled, though still hardened world.

But what of His long suffering? Is it not marvelous beyond expression? Six thousand years of patient forbearing with a world full of violence and corruption, history bearing witness to almost unthinkable evil again and again breaking out on every hand! But we must lower our six thousand years to an approximate 4300; for God forbid that we should forget the flood God brought upon the world of the ungodly, after long patience, and warning by the preaching of Noah and his building of the ark.

But God's warnings are despised, and His long suffering regarded only as a sign that either He is indifferent or else not of sufficient importance to take into account! And "because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily: therefore the hearts of the children of men are fully set in them to do evil." Still God bears long! Will there be then the least excuse for the defiant unbelief of men? Certainly none. What shame of face will be theirs when they are reminded that they have despised God's goodness and long suffering, by which He sought to bring men to repentance. But theirs is a terrible designation - "the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction." Moreover, they will all be brought to acknowledge that they have fully earned such a title, and the accompanying judgment.

On the other hand, in connection with His redeemed saints, called "vessels of mercy," God will make known "the riches of His glory." This is not simply a single attribute of God, but a

term exceedingly broad and inclusive, for time and space would forbid the enumeration of such riches - riches in which vessels of mercy are given an eternal inheritance, the marvel and joy of which will never be diminished. All this is worthy of God, and who shall say Him nay? nor must we miss the deeply blessed truth that these vessels of mercy God had before prepared unto glory. What unspeakable comfort and peace for our souls in this knowledge of His supreme majesty exercised in counsels so glorious - counsels in which we - poor redeemed sinners - have such a part.

"Even us, whom He hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles." It is a call according to mercy, surely, and yet mercy that is not shown with partiality: it can include both Jews and Gentiles - yea, souls from every nation under heaven - mercy available for all who will have it. But His call here is that which, sinking into the soul, works repentance, the confession of our need of mercy, and our thankful reception of it, in Christ Jesus.

Now this is all quite consistent with the two prophecies quoted from Hosea in verses 25 and 26. For while the prophecies clearly apply only to Israel - yet it is Israel in the same distance from God as though they had been Gentiles - "not My people." If God could have mercy upon Israel after declaring them to be "not My people," it plainly follows that He could be merciful also to Gentiles, for they were in precisely the same class. What admirable wisdom! What blessed grace! Could Israel escape the plain, though humbling, force of this? But there is not merely restoration to the estate of being God's "people"; there is also the sweet term "beloved" - and more than this, "the children of the Living God." This had never been the language applied to Israel even in her best days, but it will be in the Millennium, and so it is now to both Jew and Gentile believers - members of the body of Christ, the Church.

On the other hand, however, Isaiah had prophesied salvation only for a remnant of the children of Israel, in contrast to the mass. This is in fact the uniform testimony of all the prophets, so plain that no Jew could deny it unless infidel and unbelieving. There can be no mistaking of the meaning of

Isaiah - for he recognizes that Israel's children may be as the sand of the sea, yet insists "a remnant shall return" to the Lord. The chapter quoted (Isa. 10) is plain as to the remnant.

God would finish the work, and cut it short in righteousness. His patience reaches its limit, though the majority of Israel are still unrepentant: He will make short work of their proud independence. Righteousness must be carried out, and will not be infringed upon even by patience. Solemn lesson for men who think of patience as a complete passing over of sin!

Verse 29 quotes a previous prophecy of Isaiah - from Isa. 1: 9, confirming the truth of mercy for a remnant only. Here "a seed" is spoken of - a small part. The verse quoted uses the term "a very small remnant." If the Lord had not preserved this feeble seed, the destruction of Israel would have been as complete as of Sodom and Gomorrah. Let us notice too that these quotations come from the "gospel prophet" - the one who more than all others tells of grace and mercy available for the poor, the thirsting, the blind - describing too the state of wondrous blessing in store for Israel in the latter days. But he is plain that "not all" "who are of Israel" will have part in this. His gospel is for those who receive it, not for the proudly independent.

And Gentiles have received it, though they had not followed after righteousness. By grace they have nevertheless attained to righteousness - having received it in the gospel. For the gospel does not ask for righteousness: it brings it, and faith appropriates it. Simple, yet profound truth!

But Israel had followed after the law of righteousness - only in fact to exemplify the mournful fact that pursuing is not attaining. They still seek to follow, but it is a pathetic spectacle, for they, hobbling on their lame legs, have dropped so far behind that righteousness is merely a dim vision in the immeasurable distance. Refusing it as a gift, they still vainly pursue it as an object.

And the reason simply that "they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law. For they stumbled at the stumbling-stone." The stumbling-stone is Christ, of course, and righteousness is manifested and provided in Him, but this did



not suit the pride of Israel: they would, they imagined, attain it by works of law, and "they were offended in Him." What tragic refusal of their own mercies! How can man be so blinded as to think of attaining righteousness in the flesh, when the Son of God has been here to fully express what righteousness is? Does man think to attain the same perfection as the Lord Jesus Christ in the world? It is the poor deformed cripple thinking to overtake the strong, virile racer, and refusing therefore to be carried in the strong man's arms!

It is instructive to notice Isaiah 28: 16, from which verse 33 is quoted. There "the stone" is spoken of as "a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation." The chapter has reference to the latter days of Israel, when the rulers will make lies and falsehood their refuge. Christ is presented as the sharp contrast to men's thoughts. But Romans 9 gives the added thought that such a stone must be "a stumbling-stone and rock of offense." It is Christ come so low in humiliation that those inclined to their own honor and self-righteousness are offended - but it works only their own ruin. They will be brought to a humiliating shame in the end. But "whosoever believeth on Him shall not be ashamed."

## CHAPTER 10

### Romans 10

#### Contrast Between Israel's Law and Their Need of Grace

In Romans 9 we have seen God's sovereign title maintained in having an elect people according to grace. Now in Romans 10 the contrast between law and grace is dwelt upon - law with its cold, formal demands, grace with its warm yearning for the blessing of man, exemplified in Paul's desire for his brethren according to flesh, and in the beautiful feet of those who bring glad tidings of good things - a message law could never send, let alone bring.

Nothing less than salvation is the heart's desire and prayer of Paul for Israel. Can he be accused of despising his nation? Or can God - who put such longings in the apostle's heart - be blamed for Israel's neglecting such salvation? Is God's desire not just as deep and real as was Paul's for Israel's salvation? - yea, and for that of "all men"? First Timothy 2: 4 bears its clear witness. The fault is utterly in man's pride, certainly not in God's goodness.

Yet Israel's zeal for God was unquestionable, as Paul bears record. Did he not know it well in his unconverted days? Persecuting Christians, he thought he was doing God service. How many ways seem right to men, though the end is the way of death! Zeal in such a case is only to be the more pitied. Zeal for God is of greatest danger, when not stemming from the knowledge of God.

For their occupation with their own righteousness only declares their utter ignorance of God's righteousness, and this is ignorance of God personally. After years of shameful failure, they are still determined to establish their own righteousness - a sight that becomes more tragically ludicrous as history unfolds itself. All they need is submission to the righteousness of God, for it is the only righteousness possible of being established.

Verse 4 is then a strong declaration that the coming of Christ marked a decided change in the dispensational ways of God. "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth." Can language be more plain? Jews at least knew that if they received Christ they were giving up their confidence in attaining righteousness by works of law - a lesson which many professed Christians have not themselves learned, be it sadly observed. The matter then was a choice between law and Christ. It was one or the other, with no mixture of the two. The righteousness which the law demanded is perfectly seen in Christ, but in none other. The law only *demand*ed righteousness: Christ *brought* righteousness. How proper then that He should be "the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth."

Men may have their different conceptions of what righteousness by the law is, but the question is simply settled by the lawgiver himself. Moses bore testimony when giving the law, "That the man which doeth those things shall live by them." It is doing absolutely all that the law requires, in which his living on earth is assured: if not "doing" those things then he has no promise from the law at all - indeed on the contrary he falls under its unrelenting curse. If man does not realize his inability to keep the law fully, yet he must surely admit that he has not *done* it - and when this is so, it is utter vanity to hope for blessing by means of law - or to hope to transform unrighteousness into righteousness. The law then brings condemnation not righteousness to all men, for *none* has kept it.

But there is a "righteousness which is of faith," contrasted in every way to law - faith which is not stumbled or hindered by hard questions, but surmounts them all by looking at the perfectly accomplished work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

In verses 6 to 8 we have thus a most illuminating comment on Deuteronomy 30: 11-14. For in Deuteronomy Moses is plainly speaking of the law he had given them, and makes no mention of gospel either to add to law or to supersede it. But if we consider verse 14 - "But the word is very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart, that thou mayest do it," we cannot but

see that a great deal more is implied in the passage than is stated. For law in itself had no power to implant itself in the heart. If some individuals did love the law of God and thirst after His commandments, this was not the *result* of the law (else *all* under law would be such), but the proof of a superior work of God. It is this greater work that is implied, and only explained in Romans 10: 6-8 - a work which in fact so transcends law as to be a contrast to it.

Faith now speaks thus: "Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above)." Skepticism will object that there is no hope of establishing direct communication between heaven and earth: and it is plain that if the project was left in man's hands, it is hopeless that he should ever know God. But faith knows that the Son of God *has* come - grace having moved His heart to bring Him, though *far* more than man's desires could ever have conceived. For who would have imagined that the Creator Himself would be manifested in flesh? First of all then, faith stands upon the fact that Christ has come down from above.

However, unbelief again objects that Christ has died, and what use is spiritual testimony from One who has shared the fate of mankind, and lies silent in the grave? This is the thought in verse 7 - "Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead)." Thus we hear the bold plea of infidelity that no one has ever come back from the dead to tell us of what is beyond. But it is false. Faith knows that Christ is risen from the dead, and not by means of man's ability to bring Him back. It has been God's work, accomplished fully once and for all.

So that verse 8, in quoting from Deuteronomy - "The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart" - explains it as "the word of faith, which we preach." Nor is it credulity, or blind faith as people speak, but faith founded upon clearly established facts. It is therefore not a matter of a work to be done, but a word to believe concerning a completed work.

Who then can mistake the blessed simplicity of verse 9? It is a clear statement of "the word faith" - "That if thou shalt confess

with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." It is the mouth and the heart that have the important place here - not the hands and the feet. The mouth is the index of the heart, and there will be no personal confession of Jesus as Lord unless there is belief in the heart. There may be something that appears like such a confession, but there is no simple, forth-right confession of Him as personal Lord, without faith. But the two go together. If I believe, I therefore speak.

But faith is in a God of resurrection, who has raised His Son from the dead. Faith therefore rests upon a perfectly finished work of redemption, to which nothing can be added and from which nothing can be taken away. It is a work fully divine, done that men might fear before God, and believe.

Thus the soul's salvation is based, not upon man's doings, such as obedience to the law, nor even upon God's unconditional promise, such as Abraham was given, but upon fully established facts: the Son of God has come: He has died, and risen again. This is sound, settled truth, appropriated and clearly understood by honest faith. What more can be desired to prove the perfect settlement of the sin question? What more sure and perfect ground for the eternal salvation of every soul who trusts Him?

"For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." Inwardly there is faith counted for righteousness: outwardly the confession of Christ, which is salvation indeed from a world-system that opposes Him - a system with which we were all once identified. The confession of Christ is the clear breaking from that "untoward generation." This is consistent with Old Testament prophecy: none who believed Him would be ashamed: confession would accompany faith.

Now this grace is plainly not limited to a certain class, as the Old Testament bears clear witness. The "whosoever" of verse 11 leads to the fresh declaration that in this matter there is no difference between Jews and Gentiles. If so in reference to their guilt (Rom. 3: 22, 23), it is so also as regards salvation: "the

same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon Him." Another Old Testament quotation (from Joel 2: 32) seals this unmistakably - "Whosoever shall call upon the Name of the Lord shall be saved."

Now if this gospel is thus for both Jews and Gentiles - that is "whosoever" - then why should the Jews so strenuously oppose Paul or others in the publishing of it throughout the world? The verse quoted from Joel can surely only be made good to those who believe. "And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?" Does this not justify the fact of preaching? Moreover, what man can truly preach Christ unless he is sent by Christ? This is another serious consideration for those who would hush the glorious message of God. Isaiah himself had written long before of such messengers, and with glowing fervor - "How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!"

But no matter how complete the publishing, this does not guarantee that all men will receive the blessed news, so that the rejection of multitudes of Gentiles does not in the least prove the message valueless. For even of Israel Scripture had foretold the same general unbelief of this glad tidings - "Lord, who hath believed our report?" The messengers are given no such hope that the world itself will believe their report; but that is no discouragement: the report is true and full of blessedness, and the gospel works by what it brings, not by the conditions it finds.

The report awakens faith in those who will hear it, and however small the number, the publishing is more than worth the while. For, let us remember, the report comes by the Word of God; and this Word will triumph gloriously over all that may oppose or refuse it today.

But the law provided no such report - no such call to the world; hence, though their own Scriptures bore witness of such a call, the Jews who made their boast in the law, would only vigorously oppose the call of the gospel. So that verses 18-21 give the striking proof that in doing so they are flying in the

face of their own Scriptures, while at the same time fulfilling them.

Verse 18 is quoted from Psalm 19: 4, which doubtless speaks primarily of the witness of the created heavens to the glory of God. But Paul applies a symbolic meaning which is really so clear that Israelites should have discerned it. For the testimony of the heavens was such that only unbelief could claim that earth was everything; but Israel's boast in her earthly inheritance mounted so high as to shut Gentiles out altogether. Yet their own Scriptures declared what their eyes saw every day - that a heavenly testimony went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world. This heavenly message is but a symbol of the blessed world-wide gospel message sent from the Son of Man in the heavens. It is not God speaking on earth, but from heaven (Heb. 12: 25), and hence it is a voice addressed to all men everywhere - Jews and Gentiles.

Had they not heard? Did not Israel know? It seems incredible in view of Scripture testimony. First Moses saith "I will provoke you to jealousy by them that are no people, and by a foolish nation will I anger you." The Gentiles' folly of idol worship, Israel in the days of Roman bondage, scorned; but God had said He would use such a people for the rebuke of Israel - favor them to provoke Israel to jealousy. So Gentiles turned to God from idols, but Israel clung to her desolate state - bitter to think of Gentiles finding blessing from God independently of her authority.

Was Paul then more bold than Isaiah, who had long before prophesied "I was found of them that sought Me not: I was made manifest unto them that asked not after Me"? To criticize the gospel preacher is to criticize the witness of the Old Testament as well as the New.

But this bold gospel prophet had also given God's words of stirring pathos to that wayward nation Israel, "All day long I have stretched out my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people." So the nation is only repeating its sad history and fulfilling its own Scriptures by this rejection of the

gospel. What more melancholy comment can we have on the vanity of man's self-will?



## **CHAPTER 11**

### **Romans 11**

#### Israel Yet to be Restored

We have seen in Romans 9 that there is an election according to the grace of God in Israel: in Romans 10 this is shown to be on the basis of faith in contrast to law: now in Romans 11 this masterly treatise concludes with the consideration of how Israel will eventually enter into their promised portion. This is plainly by a mostly humbling process but it is nonetheless certain. Was this not always in the mind of God? Could we allow the thought that He must change His counsel on account of a history so unworthy as that of Israel? Has their complete breakdown taken Him by surprise? Rather, may we not say, the sin and unbelief of the nation is but the occasion for the fulfillment of the counsel of holy omniscience - and this the end of our chapter blessedly affirms.

But it is good to mark the orderly argument of the apostle. The first six verses show that even during the present Christian times God maintains a clear testimony to the fact that He has not utterly cast Israel away. Jews may bitterly accuse Paul of inferring this because of his carrying the gospel to Gentiles; or Gentiles may proudly assume this - considering themselves more worthy than Israelites: but there is an answer to it within the very ranks of Christians. Indeed, this answer is seen in Paul personally, as he observes in verse 1. He himself was an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin; and he was not cast away, nor any other Israelite who had believed in Jesus.

Is this so small a percentage of Israel as to be treated with contempt, as of no consequence at all? No doubt the pride of man would so argue. But what about God's thoughts? Elijah had witnessed circumstances that bore striking resemblance to those of the present day. Indeed, he had supposed there was no faithful remnant in Israel other than himself alone. The nation had madly turned to idols, and in spite of the clear demonstration of God's glory the condition of things showed

no improvement. It may not be surprising, but yet sad to say, Elijah makes intercession against Israel - putting the whole nation in contrast to his faithfulness. But God had not given up His people - nor had He suffered them all to lapse into idolatry, as the faulty reasoning of Elijah had judged. He had reserved to Himself seven thousand who had not bowed the knee to Baal. Perhaps indeed they were not organized as a powerful opposition to the mass of the people, but they were God's election of grace, and His own eye was upon them for good. So indeed now: the small number of converted Israelites is God's seed to keep alive the hope of Israel - a remnant according to the election of grace.

It is not according to their obedience to law. God's sovereign power and will must come in, for under law there was complete breakdown, and God is not now dealing upon such a principle. "And if by grace, then it is no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then it is no more grace: otherwise work is no more work." The two cannot be mixed. If I work for wages it is no grace on the part of my employer to pay me my wages. Or if I insist on working to merit a gift that has been graciously offered me, I make it no longer a gracious gift: I insult the gift and turn it into a mere wage: I show no appreciation of grace.

From verse 7 to 10 we see the present blinded condition of the remaining mass of Israel. The elect remnant had obtained the object Israel sought, but the rest had sought it not by faith, but by works of law. But this was no surprise to God. He had long before declared it in prophetic scriptures.

The blinding here is plainly judicial - God Himself having given them sightless eyes and unhearing ears. But why is this? It is no arbitrary judgment. Matthew 13: 13-15 shows clearly that Israel's *willful* blindness preceded their judicial blindness. The willful blindness of the nation rose to its full head following the resurrection of Christ and in the martyrdom of Stephen. Now God, in His absolute justice has confirmed this blindness for all the length of the present period of grace to the Gentiles - "until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in." It is the same with their ears: when mercy was offered them, even following the

resurrection of Christ, they *would not* hear - "stopped their ears" to the preaching of Stephen, and ratified their rejection of Christ by stoning His witness to death. Consequently God has put His judicial mark upon them: He has confirmed their deafness to this very day - a solemn warning to all who dare trifle with Him.

Psalm 69 is quoted also in verses 9 & 10 - the words written by David, but issuing actually from the lips of the Lord Jesus - "Let their table be made a snare, and a trap, and a stumblingblock, and a recompense unto them. Let their eyes be darkened, that they may not see, and bow down their back alway." These are solemn words of retribution - a marked contrast to the lowly words from the cross - "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." But the forgiveness could only apply to the remnant who would receive it - as many did, even following the crucifixion. The rest cannot remain a matter of indifference to Him: He pleads against them for present governmental judgment.

But it is discipline with a view to restoration: the treatment is stern, but no other method could meet so aggravated a case. Do they choose a willful course? Very well, let them learn the awful consequences of it, in the earnest desire that they may learn their deep need of a suffering, redeeming Saviour. Their present state then, as verses 11 to 15 show, is the means used by the wisdom of God to bring them to eventual repentance. But this is not all. The very stumbling of the Jews is used as an occasion for the present blessing of the Gentiles - and not only for the *sake* of Gentiles, but as a means of provoking Israel to jealously.

Little indeed do the nations realize their indebtedness to the Gospel. Yet everywhere that Christianity has spread its blessed influences, civilization has been lifted to a higher, more honorable and sensible level. Only blindness can ignore this. The fall of the Jews has been the riches of the world: the nations themselves have profited on this very account. Gentiles have become rich through the diminishing of Israel. Then "how much more their fullness?" When God restores His ancient people, and uses them as the very means of blessing to the

nations in the millennium, how much more blessedness will earth behold than ever it has before! Israel then will be the fit representative of God - not, as under law, the selfish arrogators of all blessing to themselves, but the wholehearted dispensers of blessing to the nations. Blessed prospect for this now so selfish world!

It is to Gentiles he speaks - not to the body of Christ as such, but to what may be called "Christendom" - the sphere that has been privileged with the knowledge and benefits of Christianity. For God has plainly transferred His sphere of blessing from Israel to Gentile nations today - that is, of manifest public blessing. Of course, Gentile abuse of it has been as shameful as was that of Israel, and the writing is on the wall: they themselves will be spared no less than Israel.

But let Jews see today that *God* has sent this stern discipline to them, for those who do so may be provoked to emulate Paul: they may be personally saved, though this reverses the judgment of their own nation. And this Paul was seeking - the salvation of "some of them."

"For if the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead?" Above all this shameful fall and restoration of Israel is the sovereign wisdom of God, bringing forth present blessing for the nations, (not indeed that this implies the full response of all the nations, but they have been blessed with a testimony that has borne rich fruit), and manifesting His power in a figurative resurrection of Israel, in the future, which will fill the earth with fruit.

Now from verses 16 to 21 we see that the natural successors to blessing (Israel) being set aside, and the blessing given to Gentiles, who are no successional line at all, this becomes necessarily a test to them, as to whether there will be the lowliness of appreciation and dependence, or the highminded pride that regards the blessing as a matter of title, and despises the natural successors.

There seems no doubt that "the firstfruit" and "the root" of verse 16 have reference to Abraham, the father of all Israel, the

first man publicly selected to be blessed of God and made a blessing to others (Gen. 12: 2). Israel then are the natural branches, and on this account are "holy" - not intrinsically, of course, but as to outward position, just as are children of believers. Cf. 1 Cor. 7: 14. God remembers this, though at present some of the branches are broken off, and branches from the wild olive tree grafted in. It is the public sphere of blessing, manifestly, which today is predominantly Gentile. Now Gentiles partake of the blessing of Abraham. This was given on the principle of faith, and Abraham received it by faith. Thus all who are of faith - Jews or Gentiles - are children of Abraham (Gal. 3: 7).

What then? Does this give Gentiles occasion for highminded contempt of Israel? Will they boast against the natural branches - forgetting that mercy has given them their own place of blessing? The thought is a moral outrage. Yet today the fact of this is palpably fulfilled before our eyes. Gentiles take advantage of their now superior position, to pour contempt upon the ancient chosen people of God.

If they proudly say, "The branches were broken off that I might be grafted in" - assuming by this that Jews had proven themselves a lower class of people than Gentiles - they have a solemn answer from God - "Well, because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. Be not highminded, but fear; for if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest He also spare not thee." Presumptuous claims and a pharisaical spirit are no evidence of faith, and where faith is lacking the cutting off is to be expected. Faith gives the spirit of godly fear - a healthy reverential regard for the just government of God. But who today cannot see that Gentile Christendom, with all its proud boast of prosperity and prominence, has practically thrown to the winds all real, vital faith in the living God? This haughty spirit is the sure precursor of a humiliating fall.

For God's government is not arbitrary, nor has He respect of persons: there is perfect equality in His treatment of men. When it becomes necessary for Him to make a change in dispensational dealings, it is because of distinctly moral reasons. These reasons were abundantly plain in Israel when

they were broken off. Have Gentiles the least cause for expecting different treatment? This question is entered into from verse 22 to verse 29.

Well are we bidden to "Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God." Those who have fallen are a solemn lesson to us as to the latter. Have we taken to heart this poignant lesson from Israel's history? Toward Gentiles on the other hand has been the plain exercise of goodness. But an appreciation of His goodness - a continuing in it - is to be expected. But indeed today, how many even acknowledge that it is God's goodness that has given Gentiles this privileged place of blessing? God's goodness has become to them no matter of goodness at all. And when this is so, the word is plain - "Thou shalt be cut off."

And Jews - is there not hope that they will learn their lesson? Will they always abide in unbelief? Other Scriptures affirm clearly that they will in fact be restored. Let us remark the pleading of God in Hosea 14: 1, 2 - "O Israel, return unto the Lord thy God - say unto Him, Take away all iniquity." Then the strong promise of God, "I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely" (v. 4). And again, "They that dwell under His shadow shall return; they shall revive as the corn, and grow as the vine" (v. 7).

The olive tree wild by nature is the natural course of Gentiles in ungodliness and rebellion. Grafted now into the place of divine privilege and blessing, they ought to partake of the character of the root: if not, the natural branches, which have the greater propensity for this, are "much more" to be expected to displace the wild branches again, and be grafted into their own olive tree.

Now from verse 25 to 29 we have the clear declaration that this will indeed be so. It is the plain, unmistakable word of prophecy, affirming a certainty that brooks no doubt or question. Humbling truth this for Gentile Christendom. Yet we know that none but true saints of God will be humbled by it, and learn the lesson not to be wise in their own conceits. Let all saints however, take serious heed to this, for ignorance of this

mystery (a mystery at least until Paul revealed it) is certainly neither virtue nor bliss.

"Blindness in part is happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in." If the wilful blindness of Israel has brought down God's present governmental blindness for nearly 2000 years, what shall we say of the Gentile Church in her closing her eyes more and more against the truth of God? Shall this wilful blindness be spared? No; when the full number of Gentiles is saved, God will open Israel's eyes. "And so all Israel shall be saved."

But how is this to come about? By the instrumentality of the Gentile Church preaching the gospel to Jews? Not at all. It is not to be by faith in an absent Christ, but in One whom they shall see visibly, coming out of Sion, to turn away ungodliness from Jacob. When they see they will believe.

But what does this imply? Revelation 19 tells us that when He appears it will be to "smite the nations." Hence salvation to Israel will mean judgment to Gentiles. Zech. 12: 10-14 gives to us the magnificent result as to Israel - Judah at least - in the deep repentance of soul that affects every individual. Zech. 14: 3 brings before us Gentiles, whom the Lord fights against. Gentiles will have so hardened themselves in proud arrogance that not even the Lord's personal appearance will bring them to repentance. They will be cut off; while Jews, repentant, will be grafted in again. This is no doubtful issue: God's covenant with them was to send His Son to them in glory and majesty. True, He came once in lowliness, and was refused, but this cannot annul God's promise as to His coming in glory. It is at this time He will take away their sins - the basis for it having been laid at Calvary, of course.

Yet now they are enemies of the gospel, for the sake of Gentiles - that is in order that Gentiles might receive blessing. But they are elect of God, and beloved for the fathers' sakes. For God does not repent of His gifts and calling. Blessed truth! whether in reference to His beloved people of old, Israel, or to those who today have been redeemed by the blood of His Son, and

therefore have a heavenly inheritance in contrast to Israel's which is earthly.

From verse 30 to the end of the chapter we are invited to mark the infinite wisdom by which God accomplishes His complete victory whether over Gentiles or Jews, -the victory of Divine mercy,-the putting down of the proud claims and self-righteousness of men, to make them all merely "objects of mercy."

First, Gentiles,-outsiders,-without God, without hope in the world, are wondrously made to enter into this mercy by means of the very unbelief of Israel. Let Gentiles learn well by this that they are but a second choice, having never been the chosen people of God. This surely dismisses all high thinking. God has conquered them by mercy.

But Israel, unbelieving, refusing the fulfillment of God's promise when He sent them His beloved Son - what claim can they dare to make now? The promises truly were theirs, but if they have so arrogantly refused them, then to receive them now it is plain they also must become mere "objects of mercy." This is the true reading of v. 31 (JND). The mercy given to Gentiles is therefore a lesson of humbling to Israel: they are reduced to the same level.

So verse 32 summarizes that God has shut up all together in unbelief, that He might have the sovereign title of showing mercy to all. Human wisdom would never have conceived such a conclusion, wondrously simple though it is, and which rightly leads out the apostle's heart in his following, beautiful ascription of honor and glory to the God of such pure and matchless wisdom.

Do our inmost souls not share the blessed sentiment that the apostle here expresses? Are we not left amazed at the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God? Does all this glory not affect us in greater, deeper measure than did the wisdom of Solomon the Queen of Sheba? "There was no more spirit in her." This is truly the effect of quiet meditation upon God Himself - as the psalmist, in considering God's knowledge of him personally, exclaims "Such knowledge is too wonderful



for me: it is high, I cannot attain unto it" (Ps. 139: 6). Nor does the thought of this discourage him, the rather it fills him with joy - "How precious also are thy thoughts unto me, O my God! how great is the sum of them!" (v. 17). Need we add the testimony of Cleopas and his companion, after the Lord Jesus in resurrection had appeared to them? - "Did not our heart burn within us, while He talked with us by the way, and while He opened to us the Scriptures?"

His judgments are unsearchable, His ways past finding out: they are impossible to be discovered by all man's ingenuity and searching: He must Himself reveal them if they are to be known at all - nor does this mean that on account of revelation we therefore know *everything* about His ways. Indeed, how much still we are ignorant of. But He reveals to us what He knows is good for us, and this is sufficient to subdue our hearts with awe when we listen to it aright.

We have neither known His mind, nor had anything to do with His counsel, much less have been original givers to Him in order that He should thus be indebted to repay us. This has been Israel's folly, and that of how many more who would feign make themselves creditors of God, as though their good works and assumed righteousness were a claim upon Him! Well did Elihu demand of Job, "If thou be righteous, what givest thou Him? or what receiveth He of thine hand?" (Job. 35: 7).

"For of Him, and through Him, and for Him, are all things; to whom be glory forever. Amen." He is the *Originator, Executor,* and eternal *Master* of all things. Who will proudly dare the attempt to usurp these grand prerogatives of His? Ah no! He stands alone - perfect in wise counsels, perfect in work, perfect in mastery of all things. "To Him be glory forever." "And let all the people say, Amen."

## CHAPTER 12

### Romans 12

#### Practical Response in Believers

Now Paul has completed his treatment of the subject of God's counsel in reference to salvation - counsel accomplished by a hand of mercy. What then is to be the proper effect of these upon His saints? The last five chapters give us the conduct that mercy, rightly valued, produces. Thus it is in its true place - coming after salvation, not before.

It is unspeakably blessed to mark how this is introduced. The peremptory demand of law - "Thou shalt" - has no place here. Instead, the tenderly solicitous heart of the apostle goes out toward his brethren in humble entreaty. "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God." It is not, "I demand you therefore, brethren, by the law of God." Ah no! the heart that has learned the grace of God has learned also the language of grace - and how much more effective is this upon other hearts than the stern exactions of law! All is mercy at the end of Romans 11, and nothing is to becloud this blessed reality in the stirring up of the hearts of saints to a proper sense of responsibility. Indeed, mercy is to be the very basis for this. Appreciation of the mercies of God is to be the very motive spring of all our conduct. This makes the path wondrously simple. Let us freshly keep in memory "the beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ" - the great, pure mercy that has saved us from the dreadful guilt and ruin in which we were bound, exposed to eternal judgment, and in bitter misery. Is this much to ask? - nay rather, is it not the wholehearted desire of every saved soul, to think much and deeply upon this blessed mercy? - to think of Him who gave Himself a suffering, bleeding sacrifice for our eternal redemption?

If this is so with us, shall we for a moment shrink from His gentle request that we present our bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God? Is it not rather a service that appeals as fully to the intelligence as to the heart? None but He could be the dying sacrifice, presented in all the pure fragrance

of His Person to God, in full, unqualified devotion. But it is the wondrous privilege and proper service of all saints to present their bodies a living sacrifice to God. Who can conceive the unutterable joy of this who has not done so? Who can find pure, quiet rest of soul, who has not bowed his shoulder to the yoke of the Lord Jesus? All other striving after a tranquil, rejoicing spirit will end in disappointment, however fair appearances may be - for nothing can substitute for this unreserved submission to Him who is Lord of all.

But, be it remembered that it is not unsaved souls who are asked to present their bodies to God: it is those who are saved - the "brethren," as Paul calls them. No unsaved soul is asked to present anything to God, but rather to receive the salvation that God presents to him. This is a vast difference indeed. For John 3: 16 is the message to the poor, lost sinner - "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." There is no thought here of the sinner making a sacrifice, but he is just asked to believe in the blessed sacrifice God has made for him - the sacrifice of His own Son. This alone assures him of not perishing, but having everlasting life. Wondrous grace - pure and free, simple and plain! And it is grace for "whosoever will." If you have not, dear reader, received the Lord Jesus by faith, let no more precious time go by in neglecting your needy soul and neglecting this gracious Savior of sinners. How can you afford such serious procrastination? How can you think of having to answer to a holy God for all your sins? And above all for the sin of ignoring His own Son and His great salvation? Only receive Him, only believe Him: He will gladly save you right now.

But if already saved through faith in the Lord Jesus, and thus delivered from all fear of judgment, what can be more becoming, more intelligent than presenting our bodies as living sacrifices to God? This indeed shows the effect that grace has upon us. For though assuredly it adds nothing to God's grace, yet is it a bright and sweet reflection thereof. Who would not approve such a result? Indeed how could we think of any lower response to such mercy as has saved us from eternal ruin, and

has heaped upon us spiritual blessings and riches beyond the heart's conception?

How far from servile bondage is this! It is willing, rejoicing service in liberty. For the Master to whom we present our bodies is One whom we know to have our own very best interests at heart. What peace to the soul this is. For weak, ignorant, erring and unstable as we are in ourselves, we need One just such as He to take us fully in hand, to care for, guide, preserve, train, and teach us. What rest thus to be done with ourselves, and to be just clay in the Potter's hand, willing and thankful to be fashioned in His way.

Will this not have results far beyond all that our own energy, determination, or will power could even hope to attain? Indeed yes; for the resulting work will be God's work, not ours. Our hands, our feet, our lips will respond gladly to His sovereign work within us. Activity, diligence, labor for His sake will not be lacking, nor will it be mere fleshly activity. For the heart will be found delighting in the sublimely glorious truth, "It is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure" (Phil. 2: 13).

Nor do we well to avoid the significance of that pregnant word, "sacrifice." It is the way of blessedness for our own souls - for "it is more blessed to give than to receive." But what is a little earthly loss to one who has known the riches of heavenly joys? What heart touched by the grace of God does not respond to those serious, searching words of the Lord Jesus - "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me"? (Luke 9: 23). The cross here is no unwelcome trouble or sorrow (as people would feign apply it), but willing self-denial for the sake of Christ. It is the heart truly entering into the meaning of the cross of Christ, which speaks of a willing relinquishing of every natural possession or advantage, for the sake of the glory of God. O that we had more heart for gladly taking up our cross - whether as a beginning of service to our adorable Lord, or whether "daily," in the details of experience. How small a sacrifice it is after all - indeed nothing, for those who truly value the sacrifice of Himself!

Verse 2 gives us a definite application of this principle. For it is the natural deceit of our hearts to suppose ourselves obedient to God's claims, while not exercised concerning those things that are in reality contrary to Him. "This world" has its own standards, methods, and objectives. While unsaved, we doubtless partook of its character in these things. But the knowledge of Christ calls for a complete transformation. Shall we now think of conforming ourselves to a world guilty of the rejection of Christ? - a world lax in its standards, unholy in its methods, and selfish in its objectives? God is not in all its thought: the comfort and ease and indulgence of the flesh is its exclusive occupation. To be conformed to it is but weakly submitting to its fleeting vanities and folly. "But be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God."

Verse 1 has spoken of "your bodies"; verse 2, "your minds." Let the mind be renewed by engaging itself with God's standards, ways, and objects: this is transformation. "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he." Thoughts are clearly the spring of all conduct. While we were "of the world" our thoughts could only centre in the world: but now that we "are of God," shall we turn our thoughts back to the world again?

But this transformation is real, and accomplishes results. When thus the mind is renewed, there is the vital, experimental proving "what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God." It is not merely "knowing" His will, but "proving" it. Shall we not then challenge ourselves when sometimes anxious to know God's will in a certain matter? Let us go deeper, and inquire. Do we want to prove God's will in experience? Indeed, we may often be denied the absolute knowledge of His will in many cases; but at the same time be blessed in the experiencing of it. But this is only possible by means of a mind firmly set upon Him, accustomed to His presence and confident of His supreme wisdom and love. This is a complete contrast to occupation with the world.

Now from verse 3 this transformation of the mind is applied to practical service, which is the subject to the end of verse 8. The apostle speaks, not peremptorily, but "through the grace given"

to him - a most gracious expression - to each individual saint, to ask that his thoughts be not haughty and self-exalting, but sober, according to the measure of faith given by God. For our thoughts mold our actions, of course, and these must ever be guarded and guided by the vital principle of faith. For if the mind acts apart from faith, all is pride and vanity - a sweeping wind that leaves no rain. And there is danger in going beyond the measure of our faith. What another may do by faith, I may not have faith for doing at all. If so, let me not attempt to imitate his action. Better to go quietly and act according to our own measure. Ephesians 4: 7 speaks of "the measure of the gift of Christ." This is different, but holds the same principle for us. I shall badly fail if I try to imitate another's gift. My gift is measured out by Christ in glory, and God has given me a certain measure of faith. Let me then remember the source of all gift and power, and act as personally subject to Him. One may be decidedly limited in a certain line, another in a different line, but our limitations ought to be heeded: they are a reminder of our dependence, and should certainly keep us humble.

For it is the wisdom of God that causes this diversity. What sort of a body should we have if the functions of every member were perfectly identical? Each member must be just what it is, keep its own place, and do its own work: if so there is normality and health. "So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another." This is the sphere of service closest to us, of course. It is insisted that we are members one of another. This is plainly for practical purposes; the doctrine of the Church does not engage us here. But the Church is nevertheless the first field for the service of saints.

To mark the clear difference in gifts ought rather by far to encourage than discourage us - for it is proof of divine working. For God is not so limited as to have to duplicate. To thankfully use what we have is the way of faith - and to delight in the proper working of other gifts also. But grace is always given for the use of gifts, and it is only proper for us to use fully the grace given, while not surely forcing ourselves beyond our measure.

If we prophesy then, let it be according to the proportion of faith. This requires some grounding in the Word of God, for we must speak only what is pure, sober truth, and what is appropriate for the need. Faith goes together with the Word here: the soul should be simply guided of God, in simplicity, and make no pretense of more than its own capacity, for this is one of the gravest of dangers in Christian service. I cannot expect to make profitable to the soul of another what I have not myself learned personally from God.

After prophecy, we find ministry. From the context it is evident that this is not ministering in temporal things, such as is the deacon's place: it is spiritual service. It differs from prophecy, however, in this, that prophecy is the word of power from God to exercise souls, while ministry is the lowly service of meeting needs of those who are exercised. It is blessed work. Teaching is different again, in that it is primarily addressed to the intelligence, and cannot fill the place of prophecy or ministry. Exhortation is simply the stirring up of souls to act upon the truth. These four are then gifts that are occupied with the Word, and the spiritual welfare of souls.

Following this we have three gifts which certainly require no less spirituality, but are concerned more particularly with the proper temporal welfare of the saints, first, in *provision*, (for giving is counted a gift); secondly, in *rule* (and how needful the exercise of careful guidance - a firm yet gentle restraining hand - among the saints); and thirdly in *protection*, (for this showing mercy implies succor in time of need, when cares, trials, infirmities come in as an oppressing enemy, and defeat is threatened. It may be compared to the mercy of Hebrews 4: 16 - "Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need."

Each of these then is in its place, and the manner of its exercise clearly given us. Giving is to be "with simplicity" - not in a hesitating, grudging, or patronizing manner, none of which savors of the grace of Christ. Ruling, or leading, must be with diligence: carelessness or half-heartedness here will have sad consequences. It must be considered a very real and solemn responsibility. And showing mercy is to be "with cheerfulness,"

for we are in danger of becoming weary and impatient of having to protect saints against the weakening tendencies of their cares, trials, and infirmities. How good to see a cheerful spirit engaged in such a work!

From verse 9 to the end of our chapter the prominent thought is not service, but fruitfulness, not work, but the virtues proper to everyday living. It is Christ lived in every detail of life. Let us then meditate well on these simple exhortations, for they hold the secret of much blessing for our souls.

First, love is to be unfeigned: it is a root principle of all true fruit for God. Pretense of any sort has no place. This connects necessarily with abhorring evil, for love is energetic and sensitive: evil is thoroughly revolting to it. And just so, on the other side, there is to be a cleaving to what is good. Well for us to often test our souls by these two things: do we positively abhor evil, and cleave earnestly to good? This is the real activity of love, for love cannot but feel strongly against what is harmful to its object, and favorably toward what is beneficial.

Then there is the circle of "brotherly love" - the Christian circle: in this we are to be "kindly affectioned one to another." This is tender consideration as in a closely attached family. As regard honor, rather than seeking it for ourselves, let us delight in paying it to other saints - drawing attention to their virtues and work rather than our own.

Nor must this decrease our own diligent zeal, leaving us slothful, as is often a tendency when we see others honored and not ourselves. But let us rather maintain a true inward fervency of spirit that preserves from every discouragement and makes us not dependent upon the approval of men. Thus, "serving the Lord" will be a very real thing to us - no mere formal phrase or idealistic sentiment.

"Rejoicing in hope" is a practical continuance of that same joy in hope of the glory of God which filled the heart at conversion (cf. Rom. 5: 2). For the hope itself has not changed - in fact is nearer than when we believed: why then should our joy wane? Is tribulation sometimes the answer? "If thou faint in the day of adversity, thy strength is small." Let us consider Him who



endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself. This will give us patient endurance and will not decrease our joy: but intimately connected with this is persevering in prayer, for joy and endurance are dependent things really - dependent upon communion with the Lord. Good for us not to let this lag, for a little carelessness here can have direful results.

But communion with God will not leave us indifferent to the temporal necessities of saints - rather the reverse, for in His presence the heart learns to care for all His interests. Nor thus will hospitality ever become a burden to us. Not that hospitality is the indiscriminate welcome of everyone: 2 John 10 & 11 prove the need of discrimination, as do such passages as Romans 16: 17; 2 Thess. 3: 14, 15; Titus 3: 10, 11; 1 Tim. 5: 22. These are plain exceptions to the general rule of a cordial welcome; and some in entertaining strangers have entertained angels unawares.

But on the other hand there may be persecution: this should be no surprise to us, but in fact an occasion of rejoicing - "for great is your reward in heaven" (Matt. 5: 11, 12). Then why ought we to curse those who are guilty of the offense? It is not God's time of cursing, but of blessing in mercy to sinners who will receive His Son. Let us bless them - speak in compassion toward them - desirous of their eternal blessing. This is to be so whether the persecution comes from unbelievers or from believers. What blessed fruit of the grace of Christ in the heart is this blessing for persecution!

Do others have cause for rejoicing? Let us rejoice with them! This may not be easy if there are thorns or sorrows in our own path, but it is true, unselfish Christian character. Or do others weep? Let us weep with them. We may not be so ready to do so if our own circumstances are pleasant, but it is a pointed test of our selfishness or unselfishness. Philippians 2: 4 is a needful reminder to us: "Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others." Yet in this we are to have no favorites; but to have the same mind one toward another: partiality is foreign to godliness. Nor ought "high things" to engage the mind, as though our intelligence were on a higher level than average. The following phrase here is nicely

expressed in the New Translation - "going along with the lowly." This is true greatness and genuine Christian grace. "Be not wise in your own eyes" is an important accompaniment of this; for seeking to impress others - perhaps specially the lowly - is a rather real danger.

From verse 17 to the end of our chapter we see what is the godly attitude toward those who wrong us. We are not to reward them in their own coin: "eye for eye, tooth for tooth" has no place here. If we do as they do to us, we are thus far making ourselves like them - and how can we dare to so lower Christian character? If others do wrong to gain their own ends, let this only make us the more purposed in heart to "provide things honest in the sight of all men." Do we fear we shall suffer if we do not resort to the same questionable methods that others do? Let God answer it: "Them that honor Me I will honor; and they that despise Me shall be lightly esteemed."

Nor, on the other hand, are we to be contentious even concerning the dishonesty of others? If at all possible we are to live peaceably with all men - that is as much as lies in ourselves. This does not mean sacrificing righteousness or what belongs to God, but as regards our personal ways and character giving no occasion for the enmity of others. They may of course even then be full of enmity, but it is well that we do not let the fault lie at our door - nor indeed are we to feed their enmity, no matter how determined it is.

This may mean the sacrifice of personal rights, but if walking by faith we shall steadfastly refuse to avenge ourselves. Let the enemy rage if he will, but let us never rush to our own defense. "For it is written, Vengeance is Mine: I will repay, saith the Lord." Good for us to remember that only our God knows both the time and the measure of recompense that is perfectly suited. "Faith can firmly trust Him, come what may."

More than this, however, we are to show positive goodness in return for evil. This is not easy for pride. If an enemy is in need, we ought to be ready at hand for his help. This will act as coals of fire on his head, burning into the conscience. Not indeed that this supposes any kind of cringing to him; but we are to act in

the same lowly dignity of faith and kindness as we would to a friend in need.

Thus we are led on to verse 21. Evil is a subtle influence always, and it has gained a victory if it finds in us a spirit of exasperation or discouragement. Let us give it no such satisfaction, but by maintaining unswerving habits of good, be ourselves the overcomers. How many victories we miss through neglect of our abundant resources of good!

## CHAPTER 13

### Romans 13

#### Subjection to Proper Authority

This chapter is as clear as can be in its teaching: nothing but a spirit of rebellion could find difficulty with it - except possibly in the matter of how far this subjection to government is to extend. Plainly, if matters are simply governmental, even though their requirements are in our estimation unjust and discriminatory, detrimental to our personal comfort or welfare, the honorable Christian attitude is submission. Anything else is resistance of God's established order, and we may expect to suffer for it. Everyone knows that the governments of the day, whatever form they may take, are not guided by pure truth, honesty, and fairness, but this is in no way to affect the Christian attitude of subjection. God has set up the authority - not the particular form of it, nor the abuses of it. The only alternative, if authority were removed, is an indescribable state of anarchy, every man free to indulge his evil will to the full. Which of us would choose this?

"For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil." This is certainly the normal state. There is a point surely beyond which we must render no obedience either to rulers or anyone else except God. If they were to demand of us what is due only to God - worship, for instance, as in the case of Daniel with Darius, or his three friends with Nebuchadnezzar - we must firmly refuse. If they require us to definitely sin against God, it is for us to boldly use the language of Peter - "We ought to obey God rather than men." But this is far different even than unjust statutes or practices that are hard and oppressive. So long as a good conscience toward God is not compromised, it is better that we suffer in subjection, and commit the keeping of our souls to God, as unto a faithful Creator. We must remember that "the heart of the king is in the hand of the Lord: He turneth it whithersoever He will."

In general, however, if we do good, we find the authority God's minister to us for good. He is but one of God's means of

recompensing on earth what we practice - good for good, evil for evil. 1 Peter 3: 13, 14 brings together the two points - first, "who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good?" This is a normal condition of things contemplated. But verse 14 allows for the possibility of an abnormal state - "But and if ye suffer for righteousness' sake, happy are ye: and be not afraid of their terror, neither be ye troubled." Blessed to know that no circumstance, normal or abnormal, is beyond the power of the grace of God for maintaining a calm, steadfast testimony.

Subjection of the ungodly to authority is purchased only by fear of punishment. But fear of consequences is certainly not the only principle that should restrain the Christian from disobedience - "not only for wrath, but also for conscience' sake." To maintain a good conscience toward God subjection to authority is a plain necessity. We may ourselves judge, that a certain act is not intrinsically evil, but if it controverts authority, it is indirect, but nonetheless definite disobedience to God.

The payment of taxes is directly connected with this. It is by this means that government is supported, and it is the plain responsibility of the believer to pay all that is required of him, in simple honesty. We partake of many advantages of government: why should we not be thankful to pay for them? If authorities are guilty of abusing their power, by wrong use of money, etc. for this *they* will have to answer to God; but it gives us no liberty to withhold what is due from us. If we would so excuse ourselves, this is but the subtle working of selfishness taking advantage of wrong to justify wrong. Whether then tribute, custom, fear, or honor - what is due we must render without regard to our thoughts of the *person* or *persons* who are in authority. It is the authority - not the person - to which we owe subjection.

Verses 8, 9, 10 give us, not simply authorities, but what is due to all men. "Owe no man anything, but to love one another." This is a debt that can never be fully paid up. Paul's knowledge of the gospel and his love for men made him "debtor both to the Greeks, and to the barbarians, both to the wise, and to the

unwise," and this is the case, in whatever measure, of all saints. But it is very clear that debts in temporal things are to be avoided. "The borrower is servant to the lender" is a truth to be well considered.

"Love is the fulfilling of the law." It is the root principle from which all real obedience must stem. Law itself, however, while demanding obedience, did not supply the love to produce obedience: hence those who were under law were in a far less likely place for fulfilling the law than those who are not under law but under grace. For it is under grace that "the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost who is given unto us." This simple yet blessed principle is clearly expressed in Romans 8: 4 - "That the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit."

We have seen in verses 1 to 7 subjection to government; in verses 8 to 10 love to all men: now the chapter closes (vv. 11 to 14) with the armor of light. All of these things have a plain reference to testimony, and all are a decided protection for the saint. But subjection to authority or love to all men does not mean by any means the giving up of truth. The light of truth and honesty is to shine with undimmed brightness in all of this. If we are men who have any knowledge of the times, we know that it is high time to awake out of sleep. The world is in darkness, and utterly dead toward God. The believer is in the light, and is alive to God; but he may be sleeping - not using the light, yea hardly sensible of the infinite difference God has made between him and the world. But our salvation - that is, our deliverance out of the world, from the very sphere and presence of sin - is nearer than when we believed. If we were impressed with the realities of eternity when we first believed, how much more so ought we to be now, when we are nearer to the Lord's coming than ever before!

We who believe have salvation of our souls now: but the salvation of our bodies is a different subject, and will be accomplished perfectly at the coming of the Lord. Are we sensible of what a tremendous change this will involve? It will be a transfer from the circumstances of "the night" to those of

"the day." For while we ourselves are not "of the night," but "of the day," yet we live in the world in its time of night and are surrounded by men of the world who are "of the night," and whose delight is in "the works of darkness." But these circumstances are most certainly not to govern us. "The night is far spent, the day is at hand. "Do we therefore want anything to do with "the works of darkness"? Let us rather cast them off as a filthy garment, and put on the protective armor of light.

For the light is a decided protection against the subtle workings of evil. The brighter the light the more it will repel the predatory beasts of this world. Hence, let our lights shine brightly amid the darkness. Not that the Christian's light is merely a protection: it is more than that: it is a testimony to the truth and righteousness of God as revealed in the Lord Jesus Christ. O that we might let the confession of Christ be constantly a shining light on all our path!

Verse 13 reminds us that this light means honest transparency of life and walk - no deceit or covering up - an affliction that we all too easily acquire and too proficiently dare to practice. But that is the very essence of the darkness, as are those vices immediately warned against in this verse - rioting and drunkenness, clambering (licentiousness) and wantonness, strife and envying.

"But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ." The context here clearly decides the meaning for us. There is another line of thought altogether in Galatians 3: 27, which tells us. "As many of us as have been baptized unto Christ have put on Christ." Baptism thus is the putting on of Christ as an outward profession - the external assuming of His Name publicly. But here in Romans 13: 14, it is no initial ordinance, but the putting on of Christ in the practical daily conduct of life. We have been told to cast off the works of darkness, then to put on the armor of light, and now to put on Christ. Is it not clear that this implies that to actually put on the armor of light we must put on Christ? Thus moral uprightness, honesty, kindness do not in themselves constitute the armor of light, for the vital centre of the whole matter is the confession of Christ. If the Lord Jesus is not seen to be the regulating power of the life, all apparent goodness

and morality very soon find their level as mere *self-righteousness*, and are not the armor of light at all.

Putting on the Lord Jesus Christ then is the positive practical power for good. On the negative side we are told to "make not provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts." How important a matter this is! It is not warfare or contending against the flesh. This would soil me as effectively as indulging the flesh. But I am not to feed it: make no provision for it whatever. It is there, and all my energy or zeal will never eradicate it. But let me turn away from it simply. If I do not feed it, it will not thrive; while the spiritual nature, being fed with the milk or meat of the Word, will be that which grows and thrives. Solemn for us to think that in *whatever measure* I make provision for the flesh, in the same measure will it cause me trouble. If we deliberately put temptation in the way of thieves and robbers, will they not take advantage of it? And there is no thief more despicable than the flesh.



## **CHAPTER 14**

### **Romans 14**

#### Personal Conscience Toward God

In Romans 12 we have seen instruction in many details of moral conduct. In such cases conscience has no liberty to take any stand but that of truth and honor. Just so in Romans 13, where questions of government are involved. For conscience sake I must be subject. If conscience requires my disobedience to authorities in order that I might obey God, it is a different matter; but I cannot plead that conscience allows me to disobey authorities simply because I see no evil in disobeying. I have no right to have so careless a conscience. Conscience is not to be the judge in such cases, but is rather to be subject to the Word of God.

Romans 14 however, shows fully the need of exercise of every individual's conscience before the Lord, and for the consideration of the consciences of others. Various indeed are the conditions of conscience in various saints of God - much no doubt depending upon understanding and growth in grace. If one were to claim that conscience allows him to do what he knows the Word of God condemns, that is not conscience at all, but gross self-will. It is of utmost importance that we have consciences exercised and formed by the Word of God.

But there are many matters in the affairs of life that have in themselves no serious moral or spiritual significance. Examples of these are the eating of meat, drinking of wine, or abstaining from it, and the observance of days. Doubtless this was most pronounced at the beginning of Christianity - Jewish believers particularly being loathe to forget their special religious days and formal ordinances. Yet there is doubtless much that answers to these things in our own day - consciences somewhat in bondage to conceptions of early training, and not easily laying such things aside even after conversion.

If a soul were thus weak in the faith, this is not the slightest reason for disputing with him. Let us rather discern where a man's heart is as regards the Person of the Lord: the other is of no real consequence. By experience and learning more of the blessed Word of God, much that is unnecessary will drop off. The subject in Romans is not reception to the breaking of bread, though the truth here does without doubt have bearing upon this. "Receiving" is showing fellowship as a Christian to a Christian. Nothing is more unseemly than argument on points of no importance when Christians meet face to face.

If one then eats freely with a good conscience, let him not dare to despise one who feels bound to a vegetarian diet - nor indeed let not the latter judge the former. It would be shameless to make a show before the other, or to seek to put one another in a wrong light. Certainly one must not be allowed to impose his conscience on the other.

"Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth. Yea, he shall be holden up: for God is able to make him stand." To make one or another of these points a regulation as regards fellowship would be the most miserable sectarianism. Thank God He cares perfectly for all His saints, and has tenderest concern for the proper exercise of their consciences. He is the Master, and the upholder of His own.

"One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind." The reason for regarding special days can easily be seen in Judaism. God had established them in that system of things - certainly only as typical of better things to come, and not in themselves of any spiritual value. Yet if souls still clung in measure to the observance of those days as something that conscience requires of them, let no issue be raised on this account. Nor on the other hand are they to be allowed to require it of others.

The observance of the Lord's Day is a far different matter. This was never imposed upon man, never in the least degree regarded as a commandment in Scripture, but rather indicated

as a privilege graciously given by God in intimate connection with the free grace that the Gospel brings. Consequently it is a matter for the discernment of the heart as in the presence of God - a matter to be understood and appreciated only by those who understand and appreciate Divine grace. The disciples gathered together to break bread on the first day of the week. Their hearts overflowed with thanksgiving. The exacting demands of the sabbath day had nothing to do with this. It was a willing-hearted people who took advantage of this day of the Lord's resurrection to seek in some special measure to please and honor Him.

What Christian could dare to say that he had a conscience against such service as this? Indeed, a thankful Christian heart rejoices to think of being able to have one day a week specially set aside in which he can refrain from all secular employments and pursuits in order to wholeheartedly devote the day to the Lord's pleasure. Will any Christian claim that he has a right to use this time for his own selfish objects and interests? Sad, shameful exposure of where the man's heart is!

Certainly no law requires him to give this time to the Lord: this is plain; but let us remember that no law required our blessed Lord to give Himself for us. Pure love was the motive of His heart. Can it be that there is no response of love in our own hearts? Not so much that we would even seek one day out of seven to quietly sit down to learn seriously of Himself? "I was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day" is a word of blessed example for us, - not impelled by law, but "in the Spirit."

If, on the other hand, a man feels that the Lord's authority is in the scrupulous observance of other days, let him not ignore his conscience. Let every man be fully assured in his own mind as the Lord's authority over him, and gladly seek to own that authority in practice. Whether he eats or refrains from eating, let it be with a heart that can freely give God thanks.

For in living or in dying, man is no independent creature, answerable only to himself. This principle of course has strongest application to the believer, for he acknowledges the Lordship of Christ. "We live unto the Lord," - "we die unto the

Lord" - "we are the Lord's." Yet this Lordship is not only over believers. He is Lord of all. To this end He both died and now lives, that He might be Lord both of the dead and living.

Thus we are plainly not to judge or belittle our brother in regard to these personal matters of conscience. For we shall stand before the judgment seat of Christ as well as he. In spite of the fact that he may have been mistaken in his thoughts, and we correct, yet he may receive more approval than we because he sought honestly to obey the Lord - sought to maintain a good conscience - while we in effect trampled upon his conscience. Solemn consideration for our souls!

The Word had long before recorded that every knee would bow to the Lord, and every tongue confess to God. Let us not then think that our brother must bow to us. The more pre-eminence any man seeks here, the more keenly will he feel his humbling then: he will bow and confess. "Everyone of us shall give account of himself to God." None then can answer for his brother: all will be solemnly personal. How necessary then that we learn now to stand upon our own feet, our consciences individually exercised to discern both good and evil.

Thus we see that the soul must first of all be governed by the authority of the Lord. From verse 13 to the end of the chapter a further motive is set before us - that is, the love toward a brother that cares for his welfare. It is possible for one to boast that he is subject to the Lord, when he shows no proper concern for the blessing of the saints of God. This is hollow sham. If anyone says he loves God, let him love his brother also.

Knowledge is not given to us for the purpose of judging one who has not the same knowledge. A proper knowledge of God would "judge this rather, that no man put a stumblingblock or an occasion to fall in his brother's way."

Knowledge then is spoken of in verse 13, and Paul shows clearly that in his own mind there is no shadow of doubt as to it - "I know, and am persuaded by the Lord Jesus, that there is nothing unclean of itself." As regards the creation of God, a soul taught of God can discern that these things do not in themselves have any moral character of evil. The evil is of

course in the heart of man who corrupts these things. But if a Christian does not have this discernment such as Paul had, then whatever he regards as unclean is unclean to him. If he indulges in it, his conscience cannot but be defiled.

Hence, I must not make a show of my liberty before such an one. It would be no Christian courtesy to invite him to a meal that included meat or anything else that he considered unclean - nor to eat it coolly before him. Such measures to seek to break down his resistance are a shameful disregard for his soul's prosperity: love is not in it.

"Destroy not him with thy meat, for whom Christ died." The attitude of disregard for a brother's conscience is the very principle of destroying him. But Christ died for him! - how great a contrast. *He* sacrificed His life to save him from destruction. Shall we sacrifice nothing for the sake of the blessing of saints of God? Let not our callous actions bring disrepute on that which in itself we know to be good - for men are quick to attribute to our doctrine any wrong ways we may be guilty of.

"For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." How many minor points men will occupy themselves with! And how unwilling it seems we are to forego our own privileges for the sake of "righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." Are these things not precious and real to us when we willingly deny ourselves for the sake of other saints?

This is truly serving Christ. It is a poor thing to be mere slaves of our convictions. True convictions should make us bondservants of Christ. If in these things it is really Him we are serving, we shall be acceptable to God and approved of men - not of course all men, but all right-minded men.

This is certainly no matter of giving up truth. Truth is not ours to dare to sell at any price: it is a trust given us of our Master, and we must be faithful to Him in it. But mere personal privileges I may and indeed ought to give up for the sake of others. It is an essential principle if we are going to "follow after the things which make for peace, and the things

wherewith one may edify another." There is no real service without the willing spirit of self-sacrifice. If the saints of God insist on their own rights, will they be at peace? will they edify one another?

"For meat destroy not the work of God." Let us act on this, that God's work is far more important than our own selfish appetites. "All things indeed are pure; but it is evil for that man who eateth with offense."

Since this is so, then "it is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor anything whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak." While such "creatures of God" are "good" in themselves, as 1 Timothy 4: 4 teaches us, yet it is also good to quietly leave them alone rather than to embolden a brother to partake against his conscience. This consideration is but the normal grace of Christianity.

"Hast *thou* faith? have it to thyself before God." Faith must be an intensely personal thing. To press my faith on another would be virtually to do away with his exercise of faith. If I am before God, then let each individual saint be also before God. I cannot expect to be happy if I am judged in the thing that I allow. He that doubts is judged if he eats because it is not with the full liberty of personal faith that he eats. If we have any real concern for our brother we shall wholeheartedly seek to have him act only in faith. "For whatsoever is not of faith is sin." It is a solemn, sweeping statement. Sin is not merely in the outward acts of men, but in everything in which faith does not have part. Shall we dare thus to virtually make our brother sin?

## CHAPTER 15

### Romans 15

The subject of Romans 14 continues through verse 7 of Romans 15. We have seen first the Lord's authority in regard to men's consciences, then love toward our brethren a reason for considering their consciences. Now a third reason completes the treatment of the subject - a reason of greatest importance. This care and consideration is for the sake of the glory of God (vv. 5 & 6). When we think of our brethren, do we think seriously and honestly of God's glory? This is the highest, most blessed object that can be set before our souls. Do we have hearts fully set on glorifying the One whose counsel of grace has destined us to be glorified together with His blessed Son? How searching, solemn a question for every child of God! Shall we in practice honor or dishonor the God of glory? It is one or the other. Let the Christian heart soberly reflect on this most serious of all issues as regards responsibility.

"We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves." Does one Christian have the privilege of clear enlightenment whereby spiritual strength is given him? If so, he "ought to bear the infirmities of the weak." It is a moral responsibility (he "ought to"), that he might properly represent "the God of patience and consolation." For our God has seen fit in infinite grace that His glory should be intimately connected with the welfare and blessing of all His people. Blessed truth to contemplate! With such thoughts before us, can we dare to callously proceed to please only ourselves? If we are blessed, it is not in order that we might proudly display ourselves, but in order that we might be a blessing to others.

"Let every one of us please his neighbor for his good to edification." This is not the character of the mere "man-pleaser." The object here is not simply to please our neighbor, but to serve his best interests in edification. I must think of the welfare of others more than of my own.

"For even Christ pleased not Himself; but, as it is written, The reproaches of them that reproached Thee fell on Me." How touching, how sobering a word! Do we take time to think much of the lowly Son of Man - He who left the bright glory and majesty of Heaven and came to minister in tenderest compassion and goodness to the need of His creatures? Do we remember that He sought here the Father's glory and the blessing of man - not insisting upon the rights that were by nature His own? Glory, honor, dominion, and power were His, yet rather than asserting these, He would bear the reproaches of them who reproached God. For His love man returned hatred, yet He went on serving man's need. It was not pleasing Himself: it was bearing pain, shame, and sorrow for their sakes - because the glory of God was His object. He fully identified Himself, though in humiliation, with the God whom men reproached. How blessed a testimony to the glory of the living God! Does it not attract the fervent adoration of the Christian heart?

But this wondrous character of His is not only for our admiration. "For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope." The Old Testament Scriptures unite in directing our gaze toward the Lord Jesus, that there may be some real effect in our own lives. These things are written for our learning, not for our entertainment. If we marvel at the gracious character of our Lord, do we seek to so learn of Him as to follow Him in the practice of our own lives?

For our learning of Him has this special end in view - "that we through endurance and encouragement of the Scriptures might have hope." This is endurance in following His steps - not fainting in the day of adversity - but enduring all things in view of the glory to be revealed. This endurance stimulates and makes deeply real in the soul that "hope that maketh not ashamed."

Along with this is "encouragement of the Scriptures." Do we find encouragement in such a quotation from the Old Testament as in verse 3? It refers directly to Christ, - "The



reproaches of them that reproached Thee are fallen upon Me." Yet, if a child of God is bearing patiently and willingly any sort of reproach or trial for Christ's sake, is this verse not of the sweetest encouragement to him? Ought it not to encourage us to bear much for the glory of God and the blessing of souls?

It is this that verses 5 and 6 apply so tenderly and appealingly. "Now the God of endurance and of encouragement give to you to be likeminded one toward another, according to Christ Jesus; that ye may with one accord with one mouth, glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." If we would have endurance and encouragement we must look to God who is the source of such virtue, and He can enable us to have the mind that was in Christ Jesus, toward one another. This produces, even where there is diversity of opinion and various degrees of progress in the truth, a godly, fervent unity that glorifies the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. How unspeakably blessed when this is the case! To be of one accord, of one mouth, is to have hearts unfeignedly united in honoring and following the Lord Jesus, and not sidetracked by lesser considerations. This is not by any means relinquishing the truth of God, but holding it firmly, while making no issue of small matters that are the affair of the individual conscience.

"Wherefore receive ye one another, as Christ also received us to the glory of God." This sums up the entire subject that begins with Romans 14: 1. Nothing less than the glory of God must be our object: it was to His glory that Christ received us, and we must receive saints in the same spirit and on the same principle. In His receiving us we see grace and truth perfectly blended. We cannot ignore either if we would act for the glory of God. Receiving promiscuously without godly care and watchfulness would dishonor the God of glory no less than would our refusing souls because their consciences would not conform to ours on minor points. May He give us unwavering fidelity to Him and more tender, real care for His own.

#### The Propriety of the Gospel to Jews and Gentiles

Another subject occupies us from verse 8 to the end of the chapter. The apostle appeals tenderly both to understanding

and to conscience in establishing the scriptural propriety of the gospel of grace going freely out to both Jews and Gentiles - showing too the consideration of one another that this would normally produce by the power of the Spirit of God.

First he speaks of Jesus Christ as "minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers." This was truly the prime ministry of the Lord Jesus. Promises had been made to the patriarchs, and the nation Israel was in line to receive them. These promises could be fulfilled only in Christ, and He came as Himself the fulfillment of all the promises of God. How many received Him is, alas, a different matter, but His ministry has been fully presented to that favored yet rebellious nation.

But this was not the limit of the ministry of Christ. There was also the object "that the Gentiles might glorify God for His mercy." The Syrophenician woman was not refused when she took the ground of mercy. This was fully according to Old Testament prophecy, however little the Jews would care to notice it. Psalm 18 is clearly the voice of the Messiah, who says, "For this cause I will confess to Thee among the Gentiles, and sing unto Thy name." It is Christ rejoicing in being a blessing to Gentiles, and glory given to God.

Then the word of Jehovah is quoted from Deuteronomy 32: 43, "Rejoice ye Gentiles, with His people." This is a prophecy too, of millennial blessing. Gentiles themselves are bidden to rejoice, along with Israel.

Another quotation - again from the Psalms - is a general call to *all* Gentiles, and *all* races to praise the Lord. This shortest of all Psalms (117) is most striking in that it speaks only of Gentiles, Israel's salvation being the occasion of the call. It is "merciful kindness" indeed.

From Isaiah 11: 10 is taken the fourth and final, - "There shall be a root of Jesse, and He that shall reign over the Gentiles; in Him shall the Gentiles trust." This adds greatly to the previous quotations, for it establishes the deity of Him who was to bring the blessing. He was to be "a root" of Jesse, not simply a branch. In the Branch we easily discern the Son of David, He who came

of Israel. But in the Root how different a matter. He is both indeed, but as the Root He is the Source of all, and hence His reign extends over the Gentiles, and they find shelter under His wings.

The blessedness of these prophetic scriptures leads Paul to speak of "the God of Hope." Had these prophecies not a voice to fill with hope the souls of Gentiles once "without hope, without God in the world"? "Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost." Doubtless there is as much voice here for the stricken remnant of Israel as for the stranger - Gentile. Was all hope gone now that the Messiah had been rejected by Israel? Did the godly feel the pathos of it all in hearts that adopted Jeremiah's language - "My strength and my hope is perished from the Lord"? Let them then rejoice in this, that our God is "the God of hope" - able to "fill" us "with all joy and peace in believing." His blessed counsel of divine power and grace give us no excuse for the slightest discouragement, but the title rather to "abound in hope through the power of the Holy Ghost." Why, alas, do we not respond more fittingly?

Now as we draw near the close of the epistle, the truth having been declared in fullness concerning the counsel and ways of God in grace, the Spirit of God leads Paul to speak of himself and of his own connection with all of this ministry.

Personally he was persuaded that the Roman saints were full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, and able to admonish one another. It is not as though he wrote with any suggestion of superiority over them, as though he were the only one able to instruct or admonish them. Nevertheless he had written with God-given boldness and the more so because he was confident of them. It was only "in part," for the Word of God has an infinite fullness, and Paul made no boast of communicating everything to them.

God had given him special grace for a special ministry; and by grace he sought to fulfill this ministry. He had been made "minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering the Gospel of God." This ministering of the Gospel was the means by which

Paul acted as a sort of priest to offer up the Gentiles to God. They had previously had no place of acceptability to God, but now by grace they had; and Paul was the special minister of that grace. Under law the Levites took the place of all the firstborn of Israel, and were sanctified by natural birth for the outward place of nearness to God. Aaron offered them to the Lord for this purpose (Numbers 8: 11). But this offering up of the Gentiles had a far higher kind of acceptability, "being sanctified by the Holy Ghost." It was an acceptability for heavenly position and blessing. So it is through Paul's ministry that God publicly accomplished this.

Consequently he had something in which he could glory or boast in Christ Jesus, in those things that pertained to God. This was no boasting in the flesh, but a boldness begotten by the assurance of God's having chosen him for this special work, and it the more moved his heart to glory in the Lord, not to exalt himself as the vessel.

He speaks not of other men's work in which he was privileged to have a share, but of work that Christ had wrought distinctly by him in his going out to Gentiles - words and deeds that had power to bring Gentiles into subjection.

Thus he insists it was the manifest work of the Spirit of God, borne witness to by mighty signs and wonders. This was consistent with God's ways; such signs marked the beginning of every change in God's dispensational dealings. It does not follow that we are to expect the miracle to continue the same throughout the dispensation: this would not be consistent with His ways.

But Paul had traveled from Jerusalem and in a circuit to Illyricum (in the north of Greece), traversing all the intermediate territory, fully preaching the gospel of Christ. It was no half-performed work, for he had been laid hold of by the Spirit of God for this very purpose. His great evangelist's heart had responded with fervent energy to the Old Testament prophecies of the Gospel being declared to those who were afar off and had known no revelation from God. He sought new fields, not generally preaching where Christ had already been

introduced by another. It was blessed work, the instrument being equipped, called, and guided by God. This energy of faith is not seen in the other apostles in the same way. Told as they were to preach the Gospel to all nations, they did not leave Jerusalem even when persecution scattered the many believers from the city. Verse 21 is a quotation from Isaiah 52: 15, where the prime application is to the glory of Christ being manifested to the nations when He comes in power and majesty. But the gospel brings home to the souls of men an anticipation of that glory, a sight of it by faith before it is revealed. This is what mightily moved the apostle's heart - the Word of God apprehended by faith - a faith that longed to see such faith awakened in souls who had heard nothing of Christ before.

Therefore, he had not yet been to Rome. The gospel had already been established there: there were a goodly number of saints in the city. And though he longed to go there, he considered it of first importance to fulfill his mission in all the parts from Jerusalem to Illyricum. But now his work there was finished, and he anticipated the fulfillment of his great desire of many years to see Rome also.

Yet even now his visit to them he intended to make on his way to Spain, another new field entirely. So he had not become weary of his great pioneer work. But there is no record left us of his ever having seen Spain. The Lord may not have allowed him this fresh field. For we know he was kept long in Rome as a prisoner. And eventually he was martyred there (2 Tim. 4).

It is touching to note how the heart of the apostle sought the comfort of the fellowship of the saints. He counted on their company being a stimulant and encouragement to his soul for the work he looked forward to in Spain.

But first he was going to Jerusalem - and the reason he gives is "to minister unto the saints." He was to be the bearer of a contribution from the Gentile assemblies in Macedonia and Achaia, for the poor saints of Jerusalem - a famine having occasioned want there. No doubt it was a sweet testimony of affection and unity - so valuable at the time. Yet we may be sure that this was not all that moved Paul's heart. He has

already told us (Rom. 10: 1) of his deep longing for Israel's salvation, and this desire doubtless had much to do with his determination to "keep this feast that cometh at Jerusalem." Why does he not then speak of it here? Can it be that he mentions no spiritual reason for going because he had the presentiment that it would bear no spiritual fruit? Indeed, we know from elsewhere that he did not have the direct leading of the Spirit of God to go to Jerusalem - in fact was warned by the Spirit not to go. The temporal ministry for the poor saints could as well have been carried by another brother.

In all of this however, we may well admire the fervency and zeal of the apostle, while taking warning to our souls that it does not do to so follow our spiritual desires as to leave no ear for the guidance of the Spirit of God. The first is a poor substitute for the latter. And if we determine to act upon our desires, it is one of the deceits of the flesh to use to advantage any circumstance that might seem to justify it. Can it be that this is seen even in the apostle? "Lord, what is man?"

Yet, nevertheless, this temporal fruit of the Gentiles' affection toward the poor saints at Jerusalem, is precious to contemplate: "It hath pleased them verily." This was no mere sense of duty, though duty it surely is for brethren to minister to the need of brethren.

The Gentiles were in some sense debtors to Jerusalem. "Salvation is of the Jews"; and the gospel had originated in this favored though guilty city. So if spiritual blessing had come from there to Gentiles, it is only proper, as well as an opportunity to express thankfulness, that if the Jews are in need, the Gentiles gladly minister to them in carnal things.

But following the performance of this ministry, to the Jews, Paul's heart was set on going to Spain, by way of Rome, where he would stop by the way. He did indeed get to Rome: whether to Spain or not we are not told. But how much intervened that he had not counted upon! After Jerusalem, two years in prison at Caesarea, the hazardous voyage over the Mediterranean with three months at Melita, then a full two years in a Roman prison before release. His intention had been only to stop

briefly there, but God had work for him, and he was forcibly detained.

Nor was he disappointed in his confidence that when he came he would come in the fullness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ. Indeed the fruit of his sojourn in Rome is far beyond our ability to measure - not only in the souls blessed there, but through the many inspired epistles he wrote while a prisoner there. If indeed since that time the gospel has been a prisoner in Rome, yet in spite of this it has gone on and prospered in the blessing of multitudes. Blessed testimony of divine power greater than every determination to silence it! "The fullness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ" does not depend on men's favorable attitude.

Now in his desire for their earnest prayers, Paul appeals to their allegiance to the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and to their love in the Spirit - the first objective, the second subjective. How could the Roman saints resist this tender entreaty? It is their striving together with him in prayer that he seeks: it is a battlefield, and he would press them into active service, that they might be fully united with him in the conflict. If we know anything about prayer, we know it means serious conflict with spiritual enemies. Would we rather cease from praying, and allow the enemy to gain the field? Indeed the results of this would be far more dreadful than any conflict! If we would avoid dire consequences, we cannot excuse ourselves from service on this battleground. Nor, if we have any honest devotedness to Christ, would we want to be excused.

But the apostle anticipated strong opposition in Jerusalem, and well he might, for not only was he well aware of the hatred of the unbelieving Jews against him, but the Spirit of God warned him of bonds and suffering awaiting him if he went there. So he asks prayers for his preservation - and as we know, God answered these in His own wise way.

More than this, however, he asks prayers in connection with his ministry to the saints, that this might be acceptable to them. For we must remember that even the believing Jews at

Jerusalem were inclined to be somewhat doubtful of Paul (Acts 21: 21), and he evidently desired to use this opportunity to encourage their confidence in him. This temporal gift of the Gentiles was a sweet testimony of Christian affection and unity, and the apostle was most desirous to have it received as such in a gracious spirit of thanksgiving to God.

Then he closes the epistle proper with a word similar to his avowal at the first (Rom. 1: 10-21) of his desire and intention to come to Rome. He wanted it to be "with joy by the will of God," and so it was, despite his bonds. And he commends them all to the presence of the God of peace.



## CHAPTER 16

### Romans 16

Communications, Greetings and Closing

This chapter has a character peculiar to itself; and being a fifth subdivision of the last division (chapters 12 to 16) of the book, we may expect in some sense a resume of the practical results of the truth in the lives of saints. Indeed it is manifestly a sort of Deuteronomy - God with man, as it were, rehearsing the ways of the wilderness. Thus, can we not discern in it a little picture of the judgement seat of Christ - ending with its ascription of glory to the God of supreme wisdom, through Jesus Christ?

It is a much longer list of salutations and commendations than we find anywhere else. This should lead us to expect some fruitful teaching of special truth connected with the Lord's commendation of His saints. May His Spirit guide us in discovering something of it for our own souls.

But first we see the careful order observed in connection with the visit of Phebe at Rome. She evidently was the bearer of this epistle, her home assembly being at Cenchræa. Thus Paul commends her to the saints at Rome, and her title to fellowship with them is clear. Such an example is manifestly intended to be followed today, that there should be no reception without clear knowledge of the person. This is simply proper care, and we owe no less than this to the Lord, whose Name deserves every reverential honor. It is lovely also to notice that this is no mere formal letter of introduction, but a warm commendation of one whose service to the saints and to Paul himself merited special mention. He solicits the willing assistance of the Roman saints on behalf of whatever needs this sister might have.

Phebe's name means "radiant"; how clearly thus does she illustrate the bright reflection of Christ in practical life (cf. 2 Cor. 3: 18) - a prime reason surely for His commendation "in that day."

Then we have greetings to, and warm approval of Priscilla and Aquila, whose lives meant less to them than identification with a persecuted apostle and a rejected Lord. This stand of theirs was a well-considered one, we may be assured. For Priscilla means "venerable," and gives us the thought of well-proven stability, honor, truth, that commands respect. And Aquila means "eagle," - a picture of the faith that soars into the very heavens.

Thus, if we find in Phebe the sweet radiance of occupation with Christ, Priscilla on the other hand shows us that the knowledge of Christ is no mere idealistic fancy that carries souls away, but is according to clear, sober, established truth. But although perfectly rational, it is no mere rationalism; as Aquila would teach us. For the true knowledge of Christ draws the heart away from the world and all its things, and gives the character of the soaring eagle - heaven its proper element.

Here then are three outstanding characteristics from whence true service flows, and for which there will be warmest commendation from the Lord: first, the radiant reflection of Christ; second, the lowly, sober, steadfast witness to the truth of God; and third, the character of heavenly-mindedness, with its detachment of heart from present scenes. How well this summarizes the proper subjective character of the church on earth.

Here we see also that there was an assembly in the house of Priscilla and Aquila - not the only one in Rome, for we see indication of four others also (vv. 10, 11, 14, 15).

Next is the salutation to "my well beloved Epaphroditus, who is the firstfruits of Achaia unto Christ." We have already seen the characteristics that are commended. Now is it not rather shown us what will be the issue of the judgment seat - the rewards of godliness? Thus, "well beloved" and "worthy of praise" are in a most becoming place. He is "the firstfruits of Achaia" - a little picture - shall we not say? - of the Church brought to glory - "a kind of firstfruits of His creatures" (James 1: 18) - just a beginning of the harvest yet to be reaped. "Then

shall each have praise of God," is a fitting commentary here (1 Cor. 4: 5).

"Greet Mary, who bestowed much labor on us." Here we have the blessed truth of exaltation following self-humbling (cf. Luke 14: 11). For she had made herself a humble laborer, by the love that delights to serve; but her name means "exalted." Shall we not follow her example, - with such an end in view?

Andronicus and Junia are linked together as kinsmen and fellow-prisoners of Paul, and of note among the apostles. On earth they were in bondage, suffering apparent defeat; but the name Andronicus means "victory of men." Such will be the triumph realized in glory. "Thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. 15: 57). Junia ("youthful") on the other hand, gives to us the contrast to the gradual decay and enfeebling of the long time prisoner on earth. Time here may soon rob us of the fresh vigor and energy of life; but in glory we shall have in this sense "perpetual youth." "Behold, I make all things new" (Rev. 21: 5) - and this is a newness that will never wear off. For a brief season they had been "the offscouring of all things"; now there is eternal victory and freshness.

Amplias next means "enlarged," and he is called "my beloved in the Lord." It is doubtless a contrast to "the day of small things," and in glory we shall know as also we are known (1 Cor. 13: 12). Brought into a large place, our vision and service will be enlarged.

Urbane follows - "our helper in Christ Jesus," whose name signifies "man of the city." Here is the thought of the pure fellowship of the heavenly city - each inhabitant helping in his place for the joy and blessing of all. "God is not ashamed to be called their God; for He hath prepared for them a city" (Heb. 11: 16 JND).

Stachys is connected with Urbane - his name defined as "plant," and called "my beloved." This implies permanency in the very sphere of eternal life, with resulting fruitfulness. "Those that be planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God" (Ps. 92: 13).

"Salute Apelles approved in Christ." This name means "plain," and surely teaches us that the blessed light of the glory will dispel every dark and doubtful thing, and all will be clear as the day to our souls. "For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face" (1 Cor. 13: 12). Blessed anticipation!

Next we have an entire company saluted, and it would seem that this marks some change in the line of teaching. As an individual Aristobulus is not saluted, but those who are of his household. His name - "best counselor" seems to point us to the Lord Jesus Himself, who delights to make known His counsel to His friends (John 15: 15). If in verse 5 the gathering mentioned as the church is typical of the entire church, then how easily we might recognize in this company of verse 10 a little picture of Old Testament saints brought to the household of our Lord - "friends of the Bridegroom." "I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of My Father I have made known unto you" (John 15: 15). This will be as true for the company of Old Testament saints as for the Church, though both will be distinct companies in the Glory.

Next we have Herodion, a kinsman of Paul, whose name means "heroic." This may well tell us of the valiant character of the saints in being fully identified with the Lord Jesus in view of His judging the world. Whether or not we are today valiant soldiers, in "striving against sin" we shall be then. "The armies in heaven" will follow Him (Rev. 19: 14). Does this not too have a striking kinship to Paul's heroism for the truth of God in his earthly path?

If all this be true, then we might expect "the household of Narcissus" to represent another company thoroughly distinct. The name in this case means "stupifying," and it seems evident that we have reached the point where the world has become as it were drugged and insensible to impending judgment. "They received not the love of the truth that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie" (2 Thess. 2: 10, 11). Do we not then see in the household of Narcissus a picture of that godly company who will suffer persecution and martyrdom at the hands of these insensate earth-dwellers? They are as it were the

gleanings of the first resurrection - raised after the main part of it has taken place (Rev. 20: 4).

Next, "Tryphena and Tryphosa" are coupled together as those "who labor in the Lord." The first means "delicate," the second, "broken off." In the former can we not discern that delicate adjustment of the balances of the sanctuary, the penetrating discernment of the Lord of glory in separating the precious from the vile, just as judgment is about to fall? "He stood and measured the earth" (Hab. 3: 6).

Tryphosa ("broken off") must accompany this, for our Lord will complete the work He begins. The unfruitful branches will be broken off (John 15: 6; Rom. 11: 22). These saints were laborers in the Lord; and the solemn work of discerning and breaking off the vile will be fully for the glory of the Lord.

The same principle applies in the case of "the beloved Persis, which labored much in the Lord." Her name, meaning "destruction" brings us to the awesome vengeance of God upon the world of the ungodly "Who shall be punished from everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power" (2 Thess. 1: 9). But she "labored much in the Lord." Is there not here a reminder of that long, patient, love-begotten labor that is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance? But patience with the rebellious must come to an end, and then the saints will be fully acquiescent in the solemn resulting judgment.

In his becoming place we find next "Rufus chosen in the Lord." "Red" is the meaning of his name, and brings to mind the vivid description of the Lord Jesus in Isa. 63, when He returns from the judgment of the nations with garments of world-wide glory - the Conqueror - His garment stained with blood. For, as purple speaks of His royal title over Israel, red on the other hand tells us of the splendor of world-wide greatness. Babylon the great has assumed this scarlet glory now, but she will be humiliated to the dust, and He whose right it is shall be alone glorious in all the earth.

Most salutary in this place is the added word - "and his mother and mine." Doubtless the mother of Rufus had shown a

mother's love and care for Paul. But what is the fruitful principle that will produce the world-wide glory and blessing that Rufus illustrates? The legal covenant will not do it, for this is the bondwoman; both she and her children are slaves. Nor indeed will the corrupt woman Babylon: she is "the mother of harlots and abominations." "But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all" (Gal. 4: 26). This is the heavenly principle of divine grace, of which the birth of the Lord Jesus is the blessed fruit - His death also, and resurrection. And all who are of faith have the same blessed liberty of being sons of the freewoman - identified in grace with the Lord of glory.

Thus, if Rufus here represents Christ in future splendor and glory, Paul would remind us that the Church also has the same mother. "Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise" (Gal. 4: 28). Isaac is clearly a type of Christ, and as he was son of the freewoman, so are we. Blessed relationship to the One who will have all the world under His feet! As the grace of God has given His Son, so also has His grace linked us up with Him in such relationship.

Verse 14 now gives us a group of five names "and the brethren which are with them." This would seem perfectly to fall into its place as another distinct company, this time a picture of Israel coming into possession of the great blessing procured for them by the mighty conquest of the Lord Jesus. Let us see how closely the names will agree with this.

Asyncritus stands first, as well he might, for his name means "incomparable." Psalms 113 refers to this very time, when the Lord will make "the barren woman" (Israel) to be a joyful mother of children," (v. 9) and the language of Israel will be, "Who is like unto the Lord our God, Who dwelleth on High, Who humbleth Himself to behold the things that are in Heaven and in the earth!" (v. 5, 6) Then indeed will their eyes behold with rapture the incomparable glory of the Lord Jesus Christ. He will have His true place in their eyes, and fullness of blessing cannot but flow from this.

Phlegon however means "burning," and teaches just at this point a solemnly necessary truth; for the blessing comes only "when the Lord shall have washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion, and shall have purged the blood of Jerusalem from the midst thereof by the spirit of judgment, and by the spirit of burning" (Isa. 4: 4). "And He shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver: and He shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness" (Mal. 3: 3).

Do we not see the results of this immediately following? For Hermas, meaning "sand-bank" reminds us at once of the promise of God to Abraham, that his seed would be not only "as the stars of the heaven" - type of the heavenly company - but "as the sand which is upon the sea shore," referring plainly to the earthly seed (Gen. 22: 17). Blessed fulfillment of the counsel of our God!

Patrobas ("a father's step") follows, for being Abraham's seed, they "also walk in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham" (Romans 4: 12). The fresh vitality and sweetness of faith in the Living God will have its influence in their walk.

The meaning of Hermes is "teacher for gain"; for at long last Israel will have learned to bow the shoulder to the easy yoke of Christ, to find that in learning of Him is true profit. "Thus saith the Lord, thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel: I am the Lord thy God which teacheth thee to profit, which leadeth thee by the way that thou shouldest go" (Isa. 48: 17). This will be blessed rest at last, after weary years of greedily seeking gain only to lose it - "because they sought it not by faith."

Thus far at least all seems to fall into its fitting place without the least straining. Now verse 15 gives us the last company referred to, and in fact the last of the individuals saluted. We might naturally expect this to be some representation of the Gentile nations who will inherit blessing when Israel has come into hers. And again the meanings of the names bear striking witness that such is the case.

Philologus then means "fond of learning." This character will not of course be confined to Gentiles, but it will be such a

contrast to a former indifference to the ways of God, that the Spirit of God marks it particularly. Thus Isaiah, speaking of the mountain of the Lord's house established at Jerusalem, says, "All nations shall flow into it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and He will teach us of His way, and we will walk in His paths" (Isa. 2: 2, 3). To press home this marvelous truth, Micah uses almost identical words (Micah 4: 1-3). A change indeed from the willing ignorance of God that so marks the Gentile nations today!

Julia is next in line, and "of the wheatsheaf" is a meaning that seems to fit the case perfectly. For this speaks of the fruit of the field (type of the world), rather than of the vineyard, which is Israel. Thus Joel speaks of the Lord's judgment of the heathen - the Gentiles - saying, "Put ye in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe" (Joel 3: 12, 13). The true fruit of the harvest will be gathered, but not without the sharp sickle of judgment doing its solemn work. Our God knows where the fruit is, and how to gather it.

Nereus next, meaning "water nymph" - an ancient seagod - points us again to the Gentile nations, of which the surging, restless sea is ever a picture. Isaiah 60: 5 is a most appropriate comment here, as Israel is told, "Then thou shalt see, and flow together, and thine heart shall fear, and be enlarged; because the abundance of the sea shall be converted unto thee, the forces of the Gentiles shall come unto thee." The world's wealth and possessions are thus seen brought into subjection to the Lord of Glory. It will be a wondrous turning to God from idols.

Now Olympas completes the list, and the meaning of his name has not been ascertained with any certainty. However, this was the name of the Greek god of games, which cannot but arouse interest when it so follows Nereus, a sea-god. Thus if we see in Nereus the conversion of the world's treasures, does Olympas perhaps teach us that there will also be a change in its pleasures? "O let the nations be glad and sing for joy; for Thou shalt judge the people righteously, and govern the nations upon earth" (Ps. 67: 4). At any event, the triumph of the Lord Jesus over the gods of the heathen is surely indicated here, and



it is difficult to see how these names could fit into any other place in the list.

If, as is evident on the surface, the book of Romans develops the counsel of God in grace to ruined mankind, on the ground of pure righteousness then is it not quite consistent that in this last chapter we have some summing up of the results of divine grace exercised in righteousness? Thus it seems no mere fancy that these five companies illustrate the various families that are subjects of grace. What but divine wisdom could have so ordered these things?

In coming to verse 16 we find there not only salutations from the apostle, but instructions to "salute one another with an holy kiss," and also "The churches of Christ salute you." Here is warm personal fellowship with becoming holiness, on the one hand, and on the other hand, full corporate fellowship. How important that both of these be maintained according to truth and holiness. The former we must not neglect as though it were automatically included in the latter; nor must we dare to sacrifice the latter under the plea of maintaining the former. This would be advocating independency of gatherings for the sake of unity of individuals - a thing utterly incongruous, and yet alas! not uncommon. How zealous is the Spirit of God to draw out in hearts the true regard of the work of God in other saints and companies of saints.

An almost startling contrast to all of this faces us in the second section of the chapter - verse 17 to 20. But all that offends against the true unity of the spirit of God must be solemnly judged. Let us remember too that the judgment-seat of Christ will deal with this serious question of those "which cause divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned," - and no separating element will be allowed to remain.

Evidently at this early time men of such character had already begun their damaging work - and Paul presses upon the saints their responsibility to "mark" such men, and "turn away from them." If it is clear that a man is using his ability to make or to widen breaches between saints, then his claims or so-called

convictions are not to be listened to. If he is clever in argument - as such men commonly are - then it is the more dangerous to allow discussion with him, for he will deceive and sway the hearts of the unsuspecting. This is merely the selfish serving of his own pride that delights to persuade men to his point of view: It is not serving the Lord Jesus Christ, though there may be abundance of "good words and fair speeches." Plausible in argument, even to reasoning minds, but faulty as to holy judgment, mercy, and faith, are the most subtle forms that evil assumes.

"For," says the apostle, "your obedience is come abroad unto all men." Theirs was a testimony that he was jealous should be maintained without the blight of selfish contention. "I am glad therefore on your behalf: but yet I would have you wise unto that which is good, and simple concerning evil."

Is it necessary that we should be informed of all the history of evils or of all the details of the workings of evil in order to be preserved from it? This word answers decisively. To have our souls filled with the good Word of God is our serious need - not occupied with discerning evil, but so occupied with good that any evil that may present itself may immediately be discerned and judged. "Wise unto that which is good" is a blessed word for our souls. Just as a bank teller is trained diligently in handling only good currency, in order that a spurious coin or bill would be immediately detected, so should our souls be well-trained in that which is good. Then the evil, whatever form it takes, would be discerned through its dissimilarity to the good.

Let us take good heed to this, for it is a common practice of division-makers to educate souls to be mere controversialists against evil as they see it; and their perception of evil is often very largely distorted because of their having handled it too much. In fact, evil will very often turn and contaminate the very man who is seeking to expose its workings. Thus it sets most subtle snares, and if a man must, through faithfulness to God, contend against it in any given case - as indeed, sometimes this is essential - yet it must ever be with a real sense of dependence upon God, recognizing that power for this

is found only in Him. In this most particularly must the soul be guarded by the warning that it is easily possible that a thing begun in the spirit may end in the flesh.

But the conflict against evil is not committed to our hands, as though the outcome depended upon our prowess. The end is a settled matter: "The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly." How much wiser for us then to occupy ourselves with the God of peace. Not that we should be ignorant of Satan's devices, but this is far different than occupying ourselves with them. "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you" - contrast indeed to the disgrace of division-makers!

Verses 21 to 24 now give the salutations of various saints to the Romans. If the first section of the chapter teaches the Lord's recognition or commendation of individual saints, it seems consistent that this section should intimate the saints' recognition of one another in glory. This too is a sweet anticipation. All causes of division and discord will have been solemnly judged, as we have seen, and hearts will be fully free to flow out in salutation of one another. The significance of the names and their order here seems rather difficult to perceive, but the first, (Timotheus meaning "honoring God") doubtless tells us that the true recognition of God's honor is the basis of all recognition one of another.

It will be noticed that Tertius was Paul's penman in the writing of the epistle (v. 22). Galatians is the only apparent exception to Paul's practice of employing an amanuensis (Gal. 6: 11). Verse 24 gives us a second benediction, similar to the first (v. 20), with the exception that the word "all" is added. Consistent surely with this section, it is the heart that expands to embrace all the children of God.

The final three verses of our chapter give us a fourth section. Here we find a brief summing up of the purpose for which the epistle was written - that is at least the immediate purpose. Four is the number of testing on earth, - the number of our own weakness which requires mercy from God. All that has gone before is to have effect upon our lives here. It is to give us the strength of firm establishment in the grace of Christianity - for

as we have seen, "Romans" means "strong ones." But this power is only of God, and is revealed in a distinctive way in Paul's Gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ.

Paul was God's particular instrument in revealing "the mystery which was kept secret since the world began." His gospel necessarily introduces this most momentous subject, though the full extent of the mystery is not at all discussed in the book of Romans. Certain features of it are plainly seen of course, such as Israel's present setting aside (chs. 9-11) to make way for the present blessing of the church - a unity of Gentile and Jewish believers. Ephesians 3 will open the subject far more fully. But it is clear that Paul desires for the saints an establishing upon those truths of Christianity that are so distinctively in contrast to God's dealings in former ages. The blessed cross of Christ, His resurrection, and the coming of the Spirit of God at Pentecost introduce this great change in the dealings of God with man. Thus the time has come for Him, through Paul, to reveal the mystery of this present dispensation, which had from past ages been "hid in God."

This was made manifest both in the oral ministry of Paul and those to whom he communicated this fresh ministry, and also "by prophetic scriptures" - scriptures that have the distinct character of revealing the mind of God for the new dispensation being introduced. These scriptures of course remain as the clear and final authority as to the character and extent of the revelation.

The revelation and the means of it are "according to the commandment of the eternal God." The sacred title here - "the eternal God" - presses upon us the truth that, far from this dispensation being an after-thought conceived because of circumstances, it had been from the past eternity in the mind of God, a settled purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His own will. Blessed to know the glory of, and to trust in One who is the absolute Master of eternity!

In contrast to the law, which was given by Moses and addressed only to Israel, this New Testament revelation is for the sake of "all nations," and calls for their "obedience of faith."

It insists upon faith as the living principle which links the soul with the eternal God and the revelation of His pure and blessed grace in Christ Jesus. Nothing else can appropriate or apprehend the realities of this new and glorious manifestation.

These glimpses of God's wisdom can surely only stagger the mind, and call forth the wondering admiration of the heart. Shall we not then heartily join in this final simple ascription of glory to Him - "To God only wise, be glory through Jesus Christ forever. Amen." It recalls to us the closing verse of Romans 11, and is a fitting close to this fundamental book of divine counsel.

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