

F.B. Hole

**Comments on
the Epistle to the Romans**

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By F.B. Hole

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Introduction

THE GREAT THEME of the Epistle to the Romans is the Gospel of God, as is indicated in its opening words. It seems to fall quite naturally into three main sections, as follows.-

1. The Gospel fully unfolded, and expounded in orderly fashion, for the instruction of believers. (Rom. 1 - 8).
2. God's dealings with men, in sending forth the Gospel to Gentiles, reconciled with His previous dealings, which were exclusively with Israel. (Rom. 9 - 11).
3. Instructions and exhortations as to the conduct that befits the Gospel on the part of those who have received it. (Rom. 12 - 16).

It is one thing to carry the Gospel as a herald to sinful men, and quite another to set it forth in detail for the establishment of saints. The former is the work of the evangelist, the latter that of the teacher. If we wish to hear Paul preaching the Gospel, whether to Jews or to the heathen, we turn to the Acts. If we wish him to instruct us in its fulness and glorious power, we read the Epistle to the Romans.

Chapter 1

IT IS VERY fitting therefore that the opening words of the epistle should give us a brief summary of the Gospel. Jesus the Christ, who is God's Son, and our Lord, is the great theme of it, and it particularly concerns Him as the One who is risen from the dead. He truly came here as a real Man, so that He was David's seed on that side; yet He was not merely that, for there was another side, not what He was "according to the flesh," but "according to the Spirit of holiness." He was the Son of God in power, and the resurrection of the dead declared it; whether it was His own resurrection, or His wielding the power of resurrection while still on earth.

From that same powerful Son of God Paul derived his apostleship and the grace to fulfil it, for he was set apart to herald forth the glad tidings. The scope of that message was not limited as the law had been. It was for all nations; and those who received the message, by obeying it, were revealed as the called ones of Jesus Christ. Such were the Romans to whom he wrote.

The Apostle evidently knew many of the saints living in Rome, who had doubtless migrated there from the lands further to the

east, but as yet he had not personally visited the great metropolis; hence what he says in verses 8 to 15. They had a good report and Paul longed and prayed that he might see them, but had hitherto been hindered. His desire was their thorough establishment in the faith by his imparting to them things of a spiritual nature. He explains what he means in verse 12; the gifts were to be in the nature of mutual upbuilding in the faith, rather than the bestowing of great abilities, miraculous powers, and the like. It is better to be godly than gifted.

From verse 15 it would appear that not all the believers in Rome had as yet heard the Gospel unfolded in all its fulness, as Paul was commissioned to set it forth. Hence, since the Lord had specially committed the Gospel to him as regards the Gentiles, he felt he was in their debt. He was ready to discharge that obligation, and since he had been hindered as to bodily presence, he would do it by letter.

Now the Gospel was in reproach. It has always been so from the earliest days, yet the Apostle had not an atom of shame in regard to it because of its power. Only let a man believe it, no matter whether he be Jew or Gentile, and it proves itself to be God's mighty force or energy to his salvation. It is exactly so

today. Men may ridicule it in theory but only the wilfully blind can deny its power, which is most manifest when those who believe it have been living in the depths of degradation.

And observe, it is the power of God because there is revealed in it the righteousness of God. Here we are face to face with a truth of first-rate importance — there is no salvation apart from righteousness; nor would any right-minded person wish there to be.

But let us make sure that we catch the drift of verse 17. "Righteousness of God revealed" is in contrast with the law, the leading feature of which was righteousness from man required. The Gospel's righteousness is "from faith." The preposition from is a little unfortunate. It is rather by. The righteousness which the law demanded from men was to be by (or, on the principle of) works. The righteousness of God which the Gospel reveals is to be reached by faith. Then again the Gospel reveals God's righteousness to faith whereas all that the law brought it revealed to sight. The first occurrence of the word, faith, stands in contrast to works, the second to sight. In the book of Habakkuk there is a prophecy which is fulfilled in the Gospel, "The just shall live by faith." The preposition here translated "by" is just the one

translated "from" immediately before. Not by works but by faith.

The Gospel, then, reveals the righteousness of God, and proves itself to be the power of God to salvation, but it has behind it as a dark background, the wrath of God, of which verse 18 speaks. Righteousness and power unite today for the salvation of the believer. In the coming day they will unite in adding terror to His wrath. The wrath is not yet executed, but it is revealed as coming from heaven without distinction upon all man's evil, whether it be open evil or the more subtle evil of "holding the truth in unrighteousness," as was done, for instance, by the Jew.

From this point the Apostle proceeds to show that all men are hopelessly lost and subject to the judgment and wrath of God. First of all — verse 19 to the end of chapter 1 — he deals with the Barbarians, of whom he had spoken in verse 14. They at least had the witness of creation, which testified to the eternal power and Godhead of the Creator and makes them to be without excuse.

Here we have the passage that deals with the vexed question of the responsibility of the heathen. What about the heathen? — how often is that question asked! Certain facts stand out very distinctly.

1. Those peoples that are now heathen once knew God. Man's course has not been from polytheism to monotheism, as some dreamers would have us imagine, but the other way round. They have sunk out of light into the darkness. Once "they knew God", (v. 21) but the fact is, "they did not like to retain God in their knowledge." (v. 28.).
2. The root cause of their fall was that they did not wish to yield to God the glory that was his due, for they wished to pose as wise themselves — as we see in verses 21 and 22. In short, pride was the root and God has allowed them to make fools of themselves.
3. Their descent has been gradual. First vain thinkings: then, darkened understandings, gross idolatry, to be followed by outrageous sins in which they fell below the level of the beasts. Each generation went beyond the

follies of their predecessors, thus ratifying for themselves the previous departure.

4. Their plight has been reached under the government of God. Three times over do we get the phrase (with slight variations) "God gave them up to ..." If men object to thinking of God and give Him up, they have no ground of complaint when He gives them up. And if they give up God, and consequently good, they naturally find themselves given up to everything that is evil and degrading. There is an ironic justice about God's government.
5. The final item in this dreadful tragedy is that they know their practices are wrong and worthy of death, and yet they not only go on with them but are utterly fascinated by them. They delight in them to such an extent that they find pleasure in others sinning even as they do themselves.

If we really allow this fearful picture of human depravity to imprint itself on our minds we shall have no difficulty in acquies-

cing in the Divine verdict that all such are "without excuse." (v.20).

Chapter 2

THE HEATHEN WORLD of nineteen centuries ago had however in its midst a number of peoples who were highly civilized. The apostle Paul knew that he was as regards the Gospel as much a debtor to the Greek who was wise, as to the Barbarian who was unwise. As we open chapter 2, we find him turning from the one to the other. His style becomes very graphic. It is almost as if at this point he saw a highly refined and polished Greek standing by, and quite approving of his denunciation of the enormities of the poor Barbarians. So he wheeled round and boldly charged him with doing in a refined way the very same things as in their grosser forms he condemned in the Barbarian. Thereby he too stands before God without excuse, for in judging others he condemned himself.

Under the term, Greek, the Apostle included all those peoples who at that time had been educated and refined under the influence of Grecian culture. The Roman himself would come under the term. They were fine fellows externally, brainy, intelligent

and fond of reasoning. In the first eleven verses of this chapter Paul reasons with them as to righteousness and judgment to come, and where can you match these verses for pungency and brevity and power?

The Greeks had a certain code of outward morality. They loved beauty and strength and cultivated their bodies to these ends. This alone preserved them from the deadly excesses of the barbarians. Yet they knew how to indulge themselves discreetly, how to sin scientifically. The same feature marks our age. A present day slogan in the world might be, "Don't sin coarsely and clumsily, sin scientifically." Under such circumstances it is very easy for men to deceive themselves; very easy to imagine that, if only one approves good things in theory, and avoids the grosser manifestations of evil, one is secure oneself from the judgment of God.

Take note of three steps in Paul's argument: —

1. "The judgment of God is according to truth." (v. 2).
Truth means reality. No unreality will stand in the presence of God, but everything be manifested as it is. A poor prospect for the Greek, whose virtues were only skin deep.

2. There is too the "revelation of the righteous judgment of God." (v. 5). A wretched criminal may have the truth of his crime dragged into the light, yet if the presiding judge be incompetent or unrighteous he may escape. The Divine judgments are righteous as well as according to truth.
3. "There is no respect of persons with God." (v. 11). In some countries today respect of persons provides the undoubted criminal with an avenue of escape. Favouritism does its work, or other influences behind the scenes, or even bribery is set in motion, and the offender escapes the penalty he deserves. It will never be thus with God.

There is, then, no avenue of escape for the refined sinner or mere moralist. Indeed, it would appear that he will come in for severer condemnation. His very knowledge heightens his guilt, for repentance is the goal to which the goodness of God would lead him, but he despises God's goodness in the hardness of his heart and so treasures up wrath to himself.

The statements of verses 6 to 11 present a difficulty to some minds inasmuch as in them no mention is made of faith in

Christ. Some read verse 7, for instance, and say, "There! So after all you have only got to keep on doing good and seeking good, and eternal life will be yours at the end." We have only to read on a little further however, and we discover that no one does good or seeks good, except he believes in Christ.

The ground of judgment before God is our works. If anyone does truly believe in the Saviour he experiences salvation, and hence has power to do what is good and to continue in it. Moreover the whole object of his life is changed, and he begins to seek glory and honour and that state of incorruptibility which is to be ours at the coming of the Lord. On the other hand there are all too many who, instead of obeying the truth by believing the Gospel, remain slaves of sin. The works of these will receive well-merited condemnation in the day of judgment.

At this point in the argument someone might wish to say, "Well, but all these people had never had the advantage of knowing God's holy law, as the Jew had. Is it right to condemn them like this?" Paul felt this, and so added verses 12 to 16. He stated that those who have sinned under the law will be judged by the law in the day when God judges by Jesus Christ.

Whereas those who have sinned without having the light of the law will not be held responsible for that light: — nevertheless they will perish. Verses 13 to 15 are a parenthesis, you notice. To get the sense you read on from verse 12 to verse 16.

The parenthesis shows us that many things which the law demanded were of such a nature that men knew they were wrong in their hearts without any law being given. And further men had the warning voice of conscience as to these things even when they had no knowledge of the law of Moses. Go where you will you find that men, even the most degraded, have a certain amount of natural light or instinct as to things that are right or wrong. Also they have conscience, and thoughts which either accuse or excuse. Hence there is a ground of judgment against them apart from the law.

When God judges men by Jesus Christ there will be a third ground of judgment. Not only natural conscience, and the law, but also "according to my Gospel." Judgment will not be set until the fulness of gospel testimony has gone forth. Those who are judged and condemned as having been in the light of the Gospel will fare far worse than those condemned as in the light of the law or of conscience. And in that day the secrets of men

are to be judged, though their condemnation will be on the ground of works.

Oh, what a day will the day of judgment be! May we have a deep sense of its impending terrors. May we earnestly labour to save at least some from ever having to face it.

Having dealt with the Barbarian and the Greek, proving that both alike are without excuse and subject to the judgment of God, the Apostle turns to consider the case of the Jew. The graphic style with which he started chapter 2 continues to the end of the chapter. He seems to see a Jew standing by as well as a Greek, and in verse 17 he turns from the one to address the other.

The Jew not only possessed the witness of creation, and of natural conscience, but also of the law. The law brought him a knowledge of God and of His will, which placed him far above all others in religious matters.

He made, however, one great mistake. He treated the law as something in which he could boast, and therefore it ministered to his pride. Says the Apostle, "thou ... retest in the law, and makest thy boast of God." He did not realize that the law was

not given to him as something in which to rest, but as something to act as a test.

The test is applied to him from verse 21 to the end of the chapter. He comes out of it with his reputation utterly shattered. True he had the form of knowledge and truth in the law, but it all acted as a two-edged sword. He had been so busy turning its keen edge against other people that he entirely overlooked its application to himself. He viewed it for others as a standard — as a plumb-line or spirit level — but for himself he thought it a personal adornment, a feather to be stuck in his cap.

Do not let us be at all surprised at his doing this, for it is just what we all do naturally. We pride ourselves upon our privileges and forget their corresponding responsibilities.

Each question in verses 21, 22 and 23 is like a sword-thrust. To each implied accusation the Jew had to plead guilty. He had the law truly, but by breaking it he dishonoured God, whose law it was. Indeed, their guilt was so flagrant that the Gentiles looked at the Jews and blasphemed God, whose representatives they were.

This being the state of affairs it was useless their falling back upon the fact that they were God's circumcised people. The argument of verses 25 to 29 is very important. It is not official position, which is an outward thing, that counts before God and puts right what is wrong. It is the inward thing that God values. God would have respect to the one who obeys, even were he an uncircumcised Gentile. He would reject the disobedient, even were he the circumcised Jew.

Chapter 3

PAUL KNEW WELL that all this would be very objectionable in Jewish ears, and that they would indignantly charge him with belittling and setting aside all that God had done in calling Israel out of Egypt to be His people. Hence the questions that he raises in the first verse of chapter 3. His answer is that it was indeed profitable to be a Jew, and chiefly in this, that he had the Word of God.

Let us at this point make a present-day application. The position of privilege held in the former day by the Jew is now held by Christendom. There is an undoubted advantage in being born and bred in a "Christian" land, yet at the same time tre-

mendous responsibilities. Also, it is sadly true that the awful sins of Christendom only provoke the heathen to blaspheme. The unconverted professor of the Christian religion will be judged according to the high standard he has professed, and hence merit severer judgment.

The oracles of God today cover not only the Old but also the New Testament — not only the word of His law but also the word of His grace. But let us specially underline that word, committed. Of old the oracles of God were committed to the Jews; today they are to the Church. That is the true position. The Church is not the producer of the oracles, nor is she, as so many falsely assert, the only authorized teacher of them; she is simply the custodian of them. They are committed to her that by them the Spirit may be her Teacher.

In the beginning of our third chapter only the Jew and the law are in question. The Apostle knew well the quibbles raised by Jewish minds. He was aware too of slanderous reports that they circulated as concerning his teaching. Hence what he says in verses 3 to 8. He makes it perfectly plain that no amount of human unbelief can nullify or alter what God has said. "The faith

of God" is, of course, all that which God has revealed, in order that men may receive it in faith.

Again, God is so supremely above man's evil and unbelief that He knows how to turn it ultimately into a kind of dark background whereon to display the brightness of His righteousness and truth. Does this in any way compromise Him, or make it wrong for Him to judge the sinner? It does not: nor does it furnish any kind of excuse for those who would like to seize upon it as a reason for further wrong-doing, saying, "If my evil can thus be made to serve God's glory, I will proceed to accomplish more evil." The judgment of such will be certain and just.

What then is the position? Let us be sure that we understand it. Verse 9 raises this question. The position is, that though the Jew had certain great advantages as compared with the Gentile, he was no better than the Gentile. The Apostle had proved this before, especially in chapter 2. Both Jew and Gentile are "under sin." He was not however, in the case of the Jew, going to rest content with proving it by reasoning. He proceeds to quote directly against him his own Scriptures.

Verse 10 begins, "As it is written." And there follows down to the end of verse 18 a series of quotations from the Psalms and one from Isaiah, six in all. They describe in full the real state into which mankind is sunk.

The first quotation (vv. 10-12) is a passage found twice in the Psalms (Ps. 14 and Ps. 53). Its repetition would seem to indicate that its statements are most important and on no account to be missed by us; though they are of such a nature that we should be very glad to miss them, if we had our way. This quotation contains six statements of a general and comprehensive and sweeping nature. Four are negative statements and two positive. Four times we find "none," and twice "all," though the second time it is implied and not expressed. Let us face the sweeping indictment.

The first count is this: None righteous — not even one. This embraces us all. The statement is like a net, so capricious that it takes all in, so sound that not the smallest fish can find a rent that permits it to escape. No one of us is right in our relations with God.

Someone who is contentious might reply, "That seems exaggerated. But even if true, man is an intelligent creature. He only has to be told, for him to put things right." But the second count is to the effect that nobody does understand their state of unrighteousness. They are incapable of fathoming their plight, or even a fraction of it. This considerably aggravates the position.

"Oh, well," says the contentious one, "if man's understanding is astray, there are his instincts and feelings. These are all right, and if followed will surely lead him after God." But count No. 3 confronts us — there is no one who seeks after God. Is that really so? It is indeed. Then what does man seek after? We all know, do we not? He seeks after self-pleasing, self-advancement, self-glory. Consequently he seeks money, pleasure, sin. What he seeks when the power of God has touched his heart is another matter. The point here is what he seeks according to his fallen nature, and apart from the grace of God.

Man's state is wrong. His mind is wrong. His heart is wrong. This third count clinches the matter and seals his condemnation. It shows there is no point of recovery in himself.

Out of this flow the three counts of verse 12. All are astray. All, even if massed together, are unprofitable; just as you may add noughts to noughts in massed thousands, and it all amounts to nothing. And lastly, all man's works, as well as his ways are wrong. He may do a thousand things which upon the surface look very fair. Yet are they all wrong because done from a totally wrong motive. No work is right but that which springs from the seeking of God and his interests. And that is precisely what man never seeks, but rather his own interests, as we have just seen.

It is very striking how the words, "No, not one," occur at the end of the first and last of the counts. They have been translated, "Not even one ... not so much as one," which is perhaps even more striking. Well then, may they strike home to all our hearts. We are not going to suppose that the Christian reader wishes to quarrel with the indictment — we should at once doubt his Christianity if he did — but we are sure that many of us have accepted and read these words without at all fully realizing the state of the ruin, irremediable apart from the grace of God, which they reveal. It is most important that we should

realize it, for except we correctly diagnose the disease we shall never properly appreciate the remedy.

The objector however may still have something to say. He may complain that all these six statements are of a general nature, and he may remind us that when lawyers have a weak case they indulge in much talk of a general sort so as to avoid being compelled to descend to particulars. If he speaks thus, he is immediately confronted by verses 13 to 18, in which particulars are given. These particulars relate to six members of man's body: his throat, tongue, lips, mouth, feet and eyes. It is in the body that man sins, and deeds done in the body are to be judged in the day that is before us all. Notice that of the members mentioned no less than four have to do with what we say. One refers to what we do, and one to what we think; for the eye is the window of the mind.

What an awful story it is! And what language! Take time that it may soak in. An "open sepulchre" for instance! How terribly expressive! Is man's throat like the entrance to a cave filled with dead men's bones and all uncleanness and stench? It is. And not only is there uncleanness and stench but deceit and poison, cursing and bitterness. His ways are violence, destruc-

tion, misery. No peace is there, whilst God and His fear have no place in his mind.

Now all this was specially and pointedly said to the Jew. Paul reminds them of this in verse 19. They were the people under the law to whom the law primarily addressed itself. They might wish to brush it all aside, and make believe that it only applied to the Gentile. This was inadmissible. The laws of England address themselves to the English; the laws of China to the Chinese; the law of Moses to the Jew. Their own Scriptures condemn them, shutting their mouths and bringing in against them the sentence — Guilty before God.

This completes the story. Barbarian and Greek had before been proved guilty and without excuse. All the world is guilty before God. Moreover there is nothing in the law to extricate us from our guilt and judgment. Its part the rather is to bring home to us the knowledge of our sin. It has done this most effectually in the verses we have just considered.

Where then is hope to be found? Only in the Gospel. The unfolding of the Gospel starts with verse 21, the opening words of which are, "But now ..." In contrast with this story of unre-

lieved darkness there has now come to light another story. Blessed be God, ten thousand times ten thousand, that there is another story to tell. And here we have it told in an order that is divine, and in words that are divinely chosen. That word NOW is emphatic. We shall meet with it again several times in reference to various details of the Gospel message. Anticipate what is to come to the extent of reading the following verses, and observing its use: — Rom. 5:9; Rom. 5:11 (marginal reading); Rom. 6:22; Rom. 7:6; Rom. 8:1.

The first word in connection with the Gospel is, "the righteousness of God," and not as we might have expected, the love of God. The fact is that man's sin is a direct challenge to God's righteousness, and hence that righteousness must in the first place be established. The whole Gospel scheme is founded in divine righteousness. What news can be better than that? It guarantees the stability and endurance of all that follows.

The Gospel then is, in the first place, the manifestation of the righteousness of God, altogether apart from the law, though both law and prophets had borne witness to it. That righteousness has been manifested, not in rightful legislation, nor in the execution of perfectly just retribution upon the transgressors,

but in Christ and in the redemption that is in Him. In the death of Christ there was a complete and final settlement, upon a righteous basis, of every question which man's sin had raised. This is stated in verse 25. Propitiation has been made. That is, full satisfaction has been rendered to the righteousness of God; and that not only in regard to the sins of those who are believers in this Gospel age, but also in regard to those of all previous ages. The "sins that are past," are the sins of those who lived before Christ came — past, that is, from the standpoint of the cross of Christ, and not from the standpoint of your conversion, or my conversion, or anybody's conversion.

That righteousness of God, which has been manifested and established in the death of Christ, is "to all," but is only "upon all them that believe." Its bearing is to or towards everybody. As far as God's intention in it is concerned, it is for all. On the other hand only those who actually believe receive the benefit. Then the righteousness of God is upon them in its realized effect, and they stand right with God. God Himself is the Justifier of the one who believes in Jesus, however great his guilt has been, and He is just in justifying him. This is stated in verse 26.

This glorious justification, this complete clearance, is the portion of all who believe in Jesus, whether Jew or Gentile. All have sinned, so that there is no difference as to guilt. In the same way there is no difference in the way of justification. Faith in Christ, and that alone, puts a man right with God. This is stated in verse 30.

This way of blessing, as is evident, shuts out all boasting on the part of men. It is wholly excluded. Here is the reason why proud men hate the idea of the grace of God. We are justified freely by His grace. Grace gave Jesus to die. Grace is the way of God's acting in justification, and faith is the response upon our part. We are justified by faith apart from the works of the law. This is the conclusion to which we are led by the truth we have been considering.

The last verse of our chapter meets the objection, which might be raised by a zealous Jew, that this Gospel message cannot be true because it falsifies the law, indubitably given of God at an earlier time. "No," says Paul, "far from making the law null and void, we establish it by putting it in the place God always intended it to occupy."

Never was the law so honoured and established as in the death of Christ. The Gospel honours it by allowing it to do its proper work of bringing in the knowledge of sin. Then the Gospel steps in and does what the law was never intended to do. It brings complete justification to the believer in Jesus.

Chapter 4

THE FOURTH CHAPTER is practically a parenthesis. In verse 28 of chapter 4 the conclusion is reached that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law. To exactly the same point are we brought back in Rom. 5:1, and then — but not till then — does the Apostle carry us on further into the blessings of the Gospel. In chapter 4 he develops at considerable length certain Old Testament scriptures which support his thesis, that before God a man is justified by faith alone.

When, in Rom. 3, the Apostle aimed at convincing the Jew of his sinfulness, that he equally with the Gentile was subject to the judgment of God, he clinched his argument by quoting what the law had said. Now the point is to prove that justification is by faith, with the deeds of the law excluded, and again the Old Testament is appealed to. In days of long ago the faith

of the Gospel was anticipated; and this was the case, whether before the law was given, as in the case of Abraham, or after it was given, as in the case of David.

The first question asked is, What about Abraham? He is spoken of as "the father of circumcision," in verse 12, and as such the Jew boasted very greatly in him. He was also "the father of all that believe," as verse 11 states. Had he been justified by works he would have had something in which to glory, but not before God. Note the two words italicized, for they plainly indicate that the point of this passage is, what is valid before God and not what is valid before men. Herein lies an essential difference between this chapter and James 2, where the word is, "Shew me thy faith" (verse 18). We may also point out that whereas Paul shows that the works of the law must be excluded, James insists that the works of faith must be brought in.

We may put the matter in a nutshell thus: — Before God a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law; whereas, to be accepted as justified before men, the faith that is professed must evidence its vitality by producing the works of faith.

The case is very clear as to both Abraham and David. We have but to turn to Genesis 15 on the one hand, and to Psalm 32 on the other, in order to see that faith was the way of their justification and that works were excluded. The wonder of the Gospel is that God is presented as, "Him that justifies the ungodly." The law contemplated nothing more than this, that the judges, "shall justify the righteous, and condemn the wicked" (Deut. 25:1). That the ungodly should be justified was not contemplated. But this is what God does in the Gospel, on the basis of the work of Christ, since "Christ died for the ungodly." This opens the door into blessing for sinners such as ourselves.

We get the expression, "this blessedness," in verse 9. It refers to faith being "counted for righteousness," or "reckoned for righteousness," or righteousness being "imputed." These, and similar expressions, occur a number of times in the chapter. What do they mean? Whether referring to Abraham or David or to ourselves who believe today, they mean that God accounts us as righteous before Him in view of our faith. We must not imagine that all virtue resides in our faith. It does not. But faith establishes contact with the work of Christ, in which all the virtue does reside. In that sense faith justifies. Once that contact is es-

tablished and we stand before God in all the justifying virtue of the work of Christ, we are of necessity justified. It could not righteously be otherwise. God holds us as righteous in view of our faith.

The question raised in verse 9 is this: — Is this blessedness for the Jew only or is it also for the Gentile who believes? The Apostle knew right well the determined way in which the bigoted Jew sought to place all the condemnation upon the Gentile while reserving all the blessing for himself. The answer is that the case of Abraham, in whom they so much boasted, proves that it is for ALL. Abraham was justified before he was circumcised. Had the order been reversed, the Jew might have had some ground for such a contention. As things were, he had none. Circumcision was only a sign, a seal of the faith which justified Abraham.

Abraham then in his justification stood clean outside the law. The law indeed only works wrath, as verse 15 says. There was plenty of sin before the law came in, but there was not transgression. To transgress is to offend by stepping over a clearly defined and forbidden boundary. When the law was given the boundary was definitely raised, and sin became transgression.

Now "sin is not imputed when there is no law" (v. 13). That is, so long as the evil had not been definitely forbidden God did not put the evil down to man's account, as He does when the prohibition has been issued. This then was the work of the law. But long before the law was given Abraham had been justified by faith. Does not this display how God delights in mercy? Justification was clearly indicated four hundred years before the urgent need of it was manifested by the law being given.

"Therefore it is of faith that it might be by grace." Had it been by works it would have been a matter of debt and not grace, as verse 4 told us. On the principle of faith and grace the blessing is made "sure to all the seed;" that is, the true spiritual seed of Abraham or in other words, true believers. For Abraham is, "the father of us all." "US all" be it noted — ALL true believers.

This fact being established, the last nine verses of chapter 4 apply the principles of Abraham's justification to the believer of today.

Abraham's faith had this peculiarity, that it was centred in God as the One who was able to raise the dead. If we turn to Gen-

esis 15 we discover that he believed God when the promise was made as to the birth of Isaac. He believed that God would raise up a living child from parents who, as regards the process of reproduction, were dead. He believed in hope when it was against all natural hope that such a thing should be.

Had Abraham been weak in faith he would have considered all the circumstances, which were against it. He would have felt that the promise was too great and consequently have staggered at it. He did neither. He took God at His word with the simplicity of a little child. He believed that God would do what He had said He would do. And this, be it noted, is what here is called strong faith. Strong faith then is not so much the faith that performs miracles as that faith which implicitly trusts God to do what He has said, even though all appearances and reason and precedent should be against it.

Now these things have not been written for Abraham's sake alone but also for us. The same principles apply exactly. There is however one important difference. In Abraham's case he believed that God would raise up life out of death. We are not asked to believe that God will do it, but that He has done it, by raising up Jesus our Lord from the dead. How much simpler to

believe that He has done it, when He has done it, than to believe that He will do it, when as yet He has not done it. Bearing this in mind it is easy to see that as regards the texture or quality of faith we cannot hope to produce as fine an article as Abraham did.

Where however the case of Abraham is far surpassed is in the glorious facts that are presented to our faith, the glorious light in which God had made Himself known. Not now the God who will raise up an Isaac, but the God who has raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead. Christ, who was delivered for our offences and was raised again for our justification, is presented as the Object of our faith. And by Him we believe in God.

It is possible of course to believe on Him that raised up the Lord Jesus, without at all realizing what is involved in this wonderful fact. The last verse of the chapter states what is involved in it. Let us pay great attention to it, and so make sure that we take it in. Twice in the verse does the word "our" occur. That word signifies believers, and believers only.

Jesus our Lord has died. But He did not die for Himself, but for us. Our offences were in view. He was the Substitute, and as-

suming all the liabilities incurred, He was delivered up to judgment and death on their account.

He has been raised again by the act of God. But it is equally true that His resurrection was not simply a personal matter, and on His own account. We still view Him as standing on our behalf, as our Representative. He was raised representatively for us. God raised Him with our justification in view. His resurrection was most certainly His own personal vindication in the face of the hostile verdict of the world. Equally certainly it was our justification in the face of all the offences, which apart from His death were lying to our account.

His death was the complete discharge of all our dread account. His resurrection is the receipt that all is paid, the God-given declaration and proof that we are completely cleared. Now justification is just that — a complete clearance from all that which once lay against us. Being then justified by faith we have peace with God. We must read on from the end of chapter 4 into chapter 5 without any break whatever.

Chapter 5

WE MAY USE the words, "justified by faith," in two senses. By simple faith in Christ. and in God who raised Him from the dead, we are justified, and this whether we have the happy assurance of it in our hearts or not. But then, in the second place, it is by faith that we know that we are justified. Not by feelings nor by visions or other subjective impressions, but by faith in God and in His Word.

As the result of our justification we have peace with God. Observe the distinction between this and what is stated in Colossians 1:20. Christ has made peace by the blood of His cross. Thereby He removed every disturbing element. This He did once for all, and because that work is done peace becomes the enjoyed portion of each who is justified by faith. We enter into it one by one. When Paul knew by faith that he was justified, peace with God was his. When I knew that I was justified peace was mine. When you knew, peace was yours. And until we did know peace was not ours. Instead of having peace with God we had doubts and fears, and probably plenty of them.

Peace stands first amongst the blessings of the Gospel. It heads the list but does not exhaust the list. Faith not only conducts us

into peace but also gives us access into the grace or favour of God. We are in the favour of God. We know it and enter upon the enjoyment of it by faith. It is not stated here what the character of this favour is. We know, from Ephesians 1:6, that it is the favour of the Beloved. No favour could be higher and more intimate than that.

This favour is a present reality. We shall never be more in favour than we are now, though our enjoyment of it will be greatly increased in the day when our hope materializes. Our hope is not merely glory but the glory of God. Who would not rejoice with such a hope as that!

As to all the guilt of our past we are justified and at peace with God. As to the present we stand in divine favour. As to the future we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. But what about the difficulties and tribulations which bestrew our way to glory?

In these too we rejoice, wonderful to say: for the word translated "glory" in verse 3 is the same as that translated "rejoice" in the preceding verse. Paul is still setting before us the proper and normal effects of the Gospel in the hearts of those who receive it. The secret of our ability to rejoice in that, which natur-

ally is so distasteful to us, is that we know what it is designed to work.

Tribulations are not in themselves pleasant but grievous, yet they help to set in motion a whole sequence of things which are most excellent and blessed — patience, experience, hope, the love of God shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit. Tribulations, to the believer, have become a set of spiritual gymnastics which greatly promote the development of his spiritual constitution. Instead of being against us they are turned into a source of profit. What a triumph of the grace of God this is!

Did you ever meet some dear old Christian who at once struck you as being full of calm endurance, very experienced, filled with hope in God, and irradiating love of a divine sort? Then you would find pretty surely that such an one had gone through many a tribulation with God. Paul recognized this and hence he rejoiced in tribulation. If we see things in this light — which is the true light — we shall rejoice in them too.

You will notice that here, for the first time in this unfolding of the Gospel, the Holy Spirit is mentioned. The Apostle does not

pause to tell us exactly how He is received. He only refers to the fact that He is given to believers, and that His happy work is the shedding abroad in our hearts of the love of God. Ephesians 1:13 shows us plainly that He is given when we have believed the Gospel of our salvation; and that of course is just the point to which we have been conducted at the beginning of Romans 5. Very appropriately therefore the first mention of the Spirit comes in here.

Our hearts would be dark indeed were not the bright beams of the love of God shed abroad in them by the Holy Spirit. As it is they are bright indeed. Yet the light that shines into them has its source outside them. If we start searching our own hearts for the love, we make a great mistake; as great a mistake as if we tried searching the bright face of the moon to find the sun. True, moonlight is reflected sunlight — second-hand sunlight. Still the sun is not there. Just so all the light of the love of God which shines in the heart of a believer shines from the great sun which is outside himself. And that sun is the death of Christ.

In verses 6-8 therefore His death is again set before us; and this time as the final and never to be repeated expression of the love of God — a love which rises far above anything of which man

is capable God loved us when there was nothing about us to love, when we were without strength, ungodly and sinners, and even enemies, as verse 10 reminds us.

That death has brought us not only justification but reconciliation also. The guilt of our sins has been removed, and also the alienation which had existed between us and God. That being so a twofold salvation is bound to be ours.

A day of wrath is coming. Twice before in the epistle has this been intimated (Rom. 1:18; Rom. 2:5). We shall be saved from that day through Christ. From other Scriptures we know that He will save us from it by taking us from the scene of wrath before the wrath bursts.

Again, being reconciled we shall be saved by His life. This is a salvation which we need continually, and shall need as long as we are in the world. He lives on high for us His people. When Moses went up the hill and interceded for Israel they were saved from their foes (See Ex. 17). Just so are we saved by our Lord, who lives in the presence of God for us.

The Epistle opened by telling us that the Gospel is the power of God to salvation to every one who believes. We now discover

that when we speak of being saved we are using a word of very large meaning. It is not only true that we have been saved by belief of the Gospel, but also that we shall be saved from the spiritual dangers and conflicts of this present age, and from the wrath of the age to come.

In verses 9-11 we get not only salvation but also justification and reconciliation. These are words of greater definiteness and more limited meaning. There is no future aspect in connection with them. They are entirely present realities for the believer. "Now justified by His blood" (verse 9). "We have now received the reconciliation" (verse 11). We shall never be more justified than we are today. We shall never be more reconciled than we are today, though we shall presently have a keener enjoyment of the reconciliation which has been effected. But we shall be more fully saved than we are today, when in the age to come we are in glorified bodies like Christ.

Believing the Gospel, we receive the reconciliation today, and consequently are able to find our joy in God. Once we feared Him and shrank from His presence, as did Adam when he hid behind the trees of the Garden. Now we make our boast in Him

and rejoice. And this is all God's own doing through our Lord Jesus Christ. What a triumph of grace it is!

Thus far the Gospel has been set before us in relation to our sins. Our actual offences have been in view, and we have discovered the way God has of justifying us from them and bringing us into His favour. There was more than this involved in our fallen condition however. There was what we may call the racial question.

For our racial head we have to go back to Adam, and to Adam in his fallen condition, for only when fallen did he beget sons and daughters. His fall came about by an act of sin, but that act induced a state or condition of sin which permeated his very being. Thereby his whole spiritual constitution was altered so fundamentally as to affect all his descendants. He could only beget children "in his own likeness, after his image" (Gen. 5:3) — the likeness and image of a fallen man. Heredity of this sort is a terrible fact, borne witness to by Scripture. Does God in the Gospel propose any remedy for this awful blight which lies upon the human race? Can He deal with the nature from which the acts of sin spring; with the root which produces the hideous fruits, as well as with the fruits themselves?

He can. Indeed, He has done so, and chapter 5 from verse 12 onwards, unfolds to us the effects of what He has done. Just what He has done is not stated in so many words, though it is plainly inferred. The passage is admittedly a difficult one, and this is one element of its difficulty. Another element in its difficulty is that in several verses the translation is obscure, and even slightly defective. A third difficulty is that this side of matters is one that all too often is overlooked; and, where that has been the case, we plunge into unfamiliar waters and easily get out of our depth.

To begin with, notice that verses 13 to 17 are a parenthesis, and are printed as such, being enclosed in brackets. To get the sense we read on from verse 12 to verse 18, when at once we can see that the main drift of the passage is the contrast between one man who sinned, involving others in the results of his transgression, and Another who accomplished a righteousness, into the blessed effects of which others are brought. The whole passage emphasizes a tremendous contrast, a contrast which centres in Adam on the one hand and Christ on the other. If Adam stands at the head of a fallen race lying under death and

condemnation, Christ is the Head of a new race standing in righteousness and life.

We may say then that what God has done is to raise up a new Head for men in the Lord Jesus Christ. Before He formally took the place of Head He accomplished perfect righteousness by obedience to death. By virtue of His death and resurrection believers stand no longer connected with Adam but with Christ. They have been, so to speak, grafted into Christ. They are no longer in Adam but "in Christ." This is the underlying fact which the passage infers, whilst it elaborates the glorious consequences flowing therefrom.

Look again at verses 12, 18 and 19. Particularly scrutinize verse 18. If you have Darby's New Translation read it in that. You will see that the words inserted in italics in the Authorized Version can come out, and that the marginal reading is the better: also that the twice repeated word, "upon" should be rather, "towards." The contrast is between the one offence of Adam, the bearing of which was condemnation towards all men, and the one righteousness of Christ, completed in His death, the bearing of which is justification of life towards all men.

We ponder this quietly for a few moments, and then probably observe to ourselves that though all men have come under the condemnation not all by any means have come under the justification. Exactly, for this verse only states the general bearing of the respective acts, and it is true that, as far as God's intention in the death of Christ is concerned, His death is for all. The next verse goes on to the realized effects of the respective acts, and only many — or more accurately, "the many" — are in view.

By "the many" we understand those, and only those, who are under the respective headships. In Adam's case "the many" does of course cover all men, for by nature we are all of his race. In the case of Christ not all men are of His race, but only all believers. All men were constituted sinners by Adam's disobedience. All believers are constituted righteous by Christ's obedience, even to death.

So in the three verses we are considering we have this sequence. On the one hand, one man Adam, one offence, all men constituted sinners, all sinning, consequently death and condemnation upon all. On the other hand, one Man Christ, one

righteousness in obedience to death, those under His headship constituted righteous in justification of life.

Now observe the five verses included in the parenthesis. The first two of these meet a difficulty that might arise in the minds of those very familiar with the law. Adam sinned against a definite commandment, hence his sin was a transgression. After that some 2,500 years had to roll away before the law of Moses was given, when once more transgression became possible. Between those points there was no transgression, for there was no law to transgress. Yet there was sin universally, as proved by the universal reign of death. The practical difference lay here, that sin is not "imputed" when there is no law: that is it is not put to our account in the same way. Only those who have known the law will be judged by the law, as we saw when reading chapter 2.

This being admitted, it is still true that sin and death have reigned universally. All Adam's posterity are involved in his fall. This being so, the contrast between Adam and Christ is worked out in verses 15 to 17. Each verse takes up a different detail, but the general point is stated at the beginning of verse

15; viz., the free gift through Christ in no sense falls short of the offence through Adam, indeed it goes beyond it.

In verse 15 the word many occurs twice just as we noticed it does in verse 19. In this verse too it is more accurately, "the many," that is, those who come under the respective headships. Adam brought in death upon all those under his headship, which as a matter of fact means all men without exception. Jesus Christ has brought in the grace of God and the free gift of grace to the many who are under Him; that is, to all believers.

Verse 16 brings in the contrast between condemnation and justification. In this connection the gift surpasses the sin. The condemnation was brought in by one sin. The justification has been triumphantly wrought out by grace in the teeth of many offences.

A further contrast confronts us in verse 17. The condemnation and justification of the previous verse are what we may call the immediate effects. Immediately anyone comes under Adam he comes under condemnation. Immediately anyone comes under Christ he comes into justification. But what are the ultimate effects? The ultimate effect of Adam's sin was to establish a uni-

versal reign of death over his posterity. The ultimate effect of Christ's work of righteousness is to bring in for all who are His abundance of grace, and righteousness as a free gift, so that they may reign in life. Not only is life going to reign but we are going to reign in life. A most astounding thing surely! No wonder that the free gift is stated to go beyond the offence.

Verses 20 and 21 recapitulate and sum up what we have just seen. The law was brought in to make man's sin fully manifest. Sin was there all the time but when the law was given sin became very visible as positive transgression, and offence, definitely put down to man's account, abounded. The law was followed, after a due interval, by the grace which reached us in Christ. We can discern therefore three stages. First, the age before the law when there was sin though no transgression. Second, the age of law when sin abounded, rising to Himalayan heights. Third, the incoming of grace through Christ — grace which has risen up like a mighty flood overtopping the mountains of man's sins.

In the Gospel grace not only super-abounds, but it reigns. We who have believed have come under the benign sway of grace, a grace which reigns through righteousness, inasmuch as the

cross was pre-eminently a work of righteousness. And the glorious end and consummation of the story is eternal life. Here the boundless vista of eternity begins to open out before us. We see the river of grace. We see the channel of righteousness, cut by the work of the cross, in which it flows. We see finally the boundless ocean of eternal life, into which it flows.

And all is "by Jesus Christ our Lord." All has been wrought by Him. He is the Head under whom, as believers, we stand, and consequently the Fountain-head from whom all these things flow to us. It is because we are in His life that all these things are ours. Our justification is a justification of life, for in Christ we have a life which is beyond all possibility of condemnation — a life in which we are cleared not only from all our offences, but also from the state of sin in which we formerly lay as connected with Adam.

Chapter 6

THAT WHICH WE have thus far learned of the Gospel from this epistle has been a question of what God has declared Himself to be on our behalf, that which He has wrought for us by the death and resurrection of Christ, and which we receive in

simple faith. In it all God has been having, if we may so say, His say toward us in blessing. Chapter 6 opens with the pertinent question, "What shall we say then?"

This signalizes the fact that another line of thought is now about to open before us. Nothing can exceed the wonder of what God has wrought on our behalf, but what are we in consequence thereof going to be for Him? What is to be the believer's response to the amazing grace that has been shown? Is there through the Gospel the bringing in of a power which will enable the believer's response to be one worthy of God? As we open chapter 6 we begin to investigate these questions and to discover the way in which the Gospel sets us free to spend lives of practical righteousness and holiness.

If men attain a merely head knowledge of the grace of God, their hearts remaining unaffected, they may easily turn grace into licence and say, "Well, if God's grace can abound over our sin, let us go on sinning that grace may go on abounding." Does the Gospel in any way countenance such sentiments? Not for one moment. The very reverse. It tells us plainly that we are dead to sin. How then can we still live in it? Once we were terribly alive to sin. Everything that had to do with our own law-

less wills — with pleasing ourselves, in other words — we were keenly set on, whilst remaining absolutely dead to God and His things. Now an absolute reversal has taken place and we are dead to the sin to which formerly we were alive, and alive to the things to which formerly we were dead.

Have we been ignorant as to this, or only dimly conscious of it? It should not have been so, for the fact is plainly set forth in Christian baptism, a rite which lies at the threshold of things. Do we know, or do we not know, what our baptism means?

There is perhaps a previous question which ought to be raised. It is this, Have you been baptised? We ask it because there seems to be in some quarters distinct carelessness as to this matter, engendered we suspect by the over-emphasis placed on it in former days. If we neglect it we do so to our very distinct loss. In baptism we are buried with Christ, as verse 4 states, and not to have been buried with Him is a calamity. Moreover, if not amongst "so many of us as were baptised" the Apostle's argument in verses 4 and 5 loses its force as far as we are concerned.

What then is the significance of baptism? It means identification with Christ in His death. It means that we are buried with Him, and that the obligation is placed upon us to walk in newness of life, even as He was raised up into a new order of things. This is its meaning and this the obligation it imposes, and our loss is great if we know it not. We greatly fear that the tremendous controversies which have raged over the manner and the mode and the subjects of baptism have led many to overlook entirely its meaning. Argumentations about baptism have been carried on in a very unbaptised way, so that no one would have thought the contestants "dead to sin."

Baptism is however a rite, an outward sign. It accomplishes nothing vital, and alas, millions of baptised persons will find themselves in a lost eternity. It points however to that which is vital in the fullest sense, even the Cross, as we shall see.

Let us notice the closing words of verse 4, "newness of life," for they give a concise answer to the question with which the chapter opened. Instead of continuing in sin, which is in effect continuing to live the old life, we are to walk in a life which is new. As we go through the chapter we discover what the character of that new life is.

Our baptism was our burial with Christ — in figure. It was "the likeness of His death," and in it we were identified with Him, for that is what the rather obscure expression, "planted together" means. We submitted to it in the confidence that we are to be identified with Him in His risen life. The newness of life in which we are to walk is in fact connected with the life of resurrection in which Christ is today.

In verse 3 we were to know the meaning of our baptism; now in verse 6 we are called upon to know the meaning of the cross in relation to "our old man," and "the body of sin." The cross is that which lies behind baptism, and without which baptism would lose its meaning.

We have already had before us the death of Christ in its bearing upon our sins and their forgiveness. Here we have its bearing upon our sinful nature, whence have sprung all the sins that ever we committed.

It is not perhaps easy to seize the thought conveyed by "our old man." We may explain it by saying that the Apostle is here personifying all that we are as the natural children of Adam. If you could imagine a person whose character embraced all the ugly

features that have ever been displayed in all the members of Adam's race, that person might be described as, "our old man."

All that we were as children of fallen Adam has been crucified with Christ, and we are to know this. It is not a mere notion but an actual fact. It was an act of God, accomplished in the cross of Christ: as much an act of God, and as real, as the putting away of our sins, accomplished at the same time. We are to know it by faith, just as we know that our sins are forgiven. When we do know it by faith certain other results follow. But we begin by knowing it in simple faith.

What God had in view in the crucifixion of our old man was that "the body of sin" might be "destroyed," or rather, "annulled," so that henceforth we might not serve sin. This again is a statement not easy to understand. We must recall that sin formerly dominated us in our bodies, which in consequence were in a very terrible sense bodies of sin. Now it is not that our literal bodies have been annulled, but that sin, which in its fulness dominated our bodies, has been, and thus we are freed from its power. It has been annulled by the crucifixion of our old man, the result of our identification with Christ in His death, so that His death was ours also.

Take note of the closing words of verse 6. They give us quite clearly the light in which sin is viewed in this chapter. Sin is a master, a slave-owner and we had fallen under its power. The point discussed in the chapter is not the presence of sin in us but the power of sin over us. We have got our discharge from sin. We are justified from it, as verse 7 states.

Our discharge has been effected by the death of Christ. But it is very important to maintain the connection between His death and His resurrection. We saw this when considering the last verse of chapter 4, and we see it again here. Our death with Christ is in view of our living with Him in the life of the resurrection world.

We get the word know for the third time in verse 9. We should know the meaning of baptism. We should know the bearing of the death of Christ as relating to our old man. Thirdly we should know the bearing of the resurrection of Christ. His resurrection was not a mere resuscitation. It was not like the raising of Lazarus — a coming back to life in this world for a certain number of years, after which death again supervenes. When He arose He left death behind Him for ever, entering another order of things, which for convenience sake we call the

resurrection world. For a brief moment death had dominion over Him, and that only by His own act in subjecting Himself to it. Now He is beyond it for ever.

His death was a death to sin once and for ever. It is sin here, you notice, and not sins; the root principle which had permeated our nature and assumed the mastery of us, and not the actual offences which were its product. Moreover, it is not death for sins but to sin. Sin never had to say to Him in His nature as it had with us. But He had to say to it, when in His sacrifice He took up the whole question of sin as it affected the glory of God in His ruined creation, and as it affected us, standing as a mighty barrier against our blessing. Having had to say to it, bearing its judgment, He has died to it, and now He lives to God.

Let us pause and test ourselves as to these things. Do we really know this? Do we really understand the death and resurrection of Christ in this light? Do we realize how completely our Lord has died out of that old order of things dominated by sin, into which once He came in grace to accomplish redemption; and how fully He lives to God in that new world into which He has entered? It is important that we should realize all this, because

verse 11 proceeds to instruct us that we should reckon according to what we know.

If we do not know rightly, we cannot reckon correctly. No tradesman will rightly reckon up his books if he does not know the multiplication tables. No skipper can rightly reckon the position of his vessel if he does not know the principles of navigation. Just so no believer is going to rightly reckon out his position and attitude either in regard to sin or to God, if he does not know the bearing of the death and resurrection of Christ upon his case.

When once we do know, the reckoning enjoined in verse 11 becomes perfectly plain to us. Our case is governed by Christ's, for we are identified with Him. Did He die to sin? Then we are dead to sin, and so we reckon it. Does He now live to God? Then we now live to God, and so we reckon it. Our reckoning is not mere make-believe. It is not that we try to reckon ourselves to be what in point of fact we are not. The very reverse. We are dead to sin and alive to God by His own acts, accomplished in the death and resurrection of Christ (to be made effectual in us by His Spirit, as we shall see later on) and that

being so, we are to accept it and adjust our thoughts to it. As things are, so we are to reckon.

Before we were converted we were dead to God and alive to sin. We had no interest in anything that had to do with God. We did not understand His things; they left us cold and dead. When however it was a question of anything that appealed to our natural desires, of anything that fed our vanity and self-love, then we were all alive with interest. Now by the grace of God the situation is exactly reversed as the fruit of our being in Christ Jesus.

Having adjusted our reckoning, in accordance with the facts concerning the death and resurrection of Christ which we know, there yet remains a further step. We are to yield ourselves to God in order that His will may be practically worked out in detail in our lives. The word yield, occurs, you will notice, five times in the latter part of the chapter.

Being dead to sin it is quite obvious that the obligation rests upon us to refuse sin any rights over us. Formerly it did reign in our mortal bodies and we were continually obeying it in its various lusts. This is to be so no longer, as verse 12 tells us. We

have died to sin, the old master, and its claim upon us has ceased. Being alive from the dead, we belong to God, and we gladly acknowledge His claims over us. We yield ourselves to Him.

This yielding is a very practical thing, as verse 13 makes plain. It affects all the members of our bodies. Formerly every member was in some way enlisted in the service of sin and so became an instrument of unrighteousness. Is it not a wonderful thing that every member may now be enlisted in the service of God? Our feet may run His errands. Our hands may do His work. Our tongues may speak forth His praise. In order that this may be so we are to yield ourselves to God.

The word, yield, occurs twice in this verse, but the verb is in two different tenses. A Greek scholar has commented upon them to this effect: — that in the first case the verb is in the present in its continuous sense. "Neither yield your members." It is at no time to be done. In the second case the tense is different. "Yield yourselves to God." Let it have been done, as a once accomplished act.

Let us each solemnly ask ourselves if indeed we have done it as a once accomplished act. Have we thus definitely yielded ourselves and our members to God, for His will? If so, let us see to it that at no time do we forget our allegiance and fall into the snare of yielding our members even for a moment to unrighteousness, for the outcome of that is sin.

Sin, then, is not to have dominion over us, for the very reason that we are not under the law but under grace. Here is the divine answer to those who tell us that if we tell people that they are no longer under the regime of law, they are sure to plunge into sin. The fact is that nothing so subdues the heart and promotes holiness as the grace of God.

Verse 15 bears witness to the fact that there have always been people who think that the only way to promote holiness is to keep us under the tight bondage of law. There were such in Paul's day. He anticipates their objection by repeating in substance the question with which he opened the chapter. In reply to it he restates the position in a more extended way. Verses 16 to 23 are an extension and amplification of what he had just stated in verses 12 to 14.

He appeals to that practical knowledge which is common to us all. We all know that if we yield obedience to anyone, though not nominally their servant we are their servant practically. That is the case also in spiritual things, whether it be serving sin or God. Judged by this standard, we were without a question once the slaves of sin. But when the Gospel "form of doctrine" reached us we obeyed it, thanks be to God! As a result we have been emancipated from the thralldom of sin, and have become servants of God and righteousness. Well then, being now servants of righteousness, we are to yield our members in detail so that God may have His way with us.

This yielding then is a tremendously important business. It is that to which our knowledge and our reckoning lead up. If we stop short of it our knowledge and our reckoning become of no effect. Here doubtless we have the reason of so much that is feeble and ineffectual with Christians who are well instructed in the theory of the thing. They stop short at yielding themselves and their members to God. Oh, let us see to it that if as yet we have never had it done, as a once accomplished act, we have it done at once! Having it done we shall need and find

grace for the continuous yielding of our members in the service of God.

All this supposes that the old master, sin, is still within us, only waiting for opportunities to assert itself. This makes the triumph of grace all the greater. It also increases to us the value of the lessons we learn. We learn how to yield our members servants to righteousness to holiness, even while sin is lurking within, eager to reassert itself. In serving righteousness we serve God, for to do the will of God is the first element of righteousness. And righteousness in all our dealings leads to holiness of life and character.

Instead, then, of continuing in sin, as those enslaved by its power, we are set free from it by being brought under the sway of God. Twice do we get the words, "made free from sin" (verses 18 and 22). Formerly we were "free from righteousness." We have escaped the old power and come under the new. This is the way of holiness and life.

Everlasting life is here viewed as the end of the wonderful story. In the writings of the Apostle John we find it presented as a present possession of the believer. There is no conflict

between these two views of it. That which is ours now in its essence, will be ours in its full expanse when eternity is reached.

The last verse of our chapter, so well known, gives us a concise summary of the matter. We cannot serve sin without receiving its wages, which is death. Death is a word of large meaning. In one sense death came in upon man when by sin he was utterly separated from God. The death of the body occurs when it is separated from the spiritual part of man. The second death is when lost men are finally separated from God. The full wages of sin includes death in all three senses.

In connection with God no wages are spoken of. All is gift. The very life in which we can serve Him is His own gift through Jesus Christ our Lord. Thus at the end of the chapter we come back to the thought with which the previous chapter closed. We may well make our boast in the eternal life which is ours by God's free gift, and heartily embrace all the consequences to which it leads.

Chapter 7

THE OPENING WORDS of chapter 7 direct our minds back to the 14th and 15th verses of the previous chapter, where the apostle had plainly stated that the believer is not under law but under grace. A tremendous controversy had raged around this point, to which the Acts bears witness — especially Acts 15.

That point was authoritatively settled at Jerusalem as regards the Gentile believers. They were not to be put under the law. But was the point as clear when Jewish believers were in question?

It was evidently by no means clear to the Jewish believers themselves. Acts 21:20, proves this. It was very necessary therefore that Paul should make the matter abundantly plain and definite; hence his recurring to the theme as he opens this chapter. The words enclosed in brackets in verse 1 show that he is now specially addressing himself to his Jewish brethren. They alone knew the law, in the proper sense of the term. Gentiles might know something about it as observers from without: Israel knew it from within, as having been put under it. This remark of Paul's furnishes us with an important key to the chapter, indicating the point from which things are viewed.

The first six verses of this chapter are doctrinal in nature, showing the way by which the believer is delivered from the bondage of law and brought into connection with Christ. From verse 7 onwards, we have a passage which is highly experimental. The actions of the law, on the heart and conscience of one who fears God, are detailed. We are given an insight into the experimental workings of law which ultimately prepare the believer for the experience of the deliverance found in Christ and in the Spirit of God. It is a remarkable fact that in all chapter 7 there is not one mention of the Holy Spirit; whereas in chapter 8 there is probably more mention of Him than in any other chapter of the Bible.

The Apostle's starting point is the well known fact that law extends its sway over a man as long as he lives. Death, and death only, terminates its dominion. This is seen very clearly in connection with the divine law of marriage, as stated in verses 2 and 3.

The same principle applies in spiritual things, as verse 4 states, though it does not apply in exactly the same way. The law is in the position of husband and we who believe are in the position of wife. Yet it is not that death has come in upon the law, but

that we have died. Verse 4 is quite plain as to this. Verse 6 appears to say that the law has died, only here the correct reading is found in the margin of reference Bibles. It is not, "that being dead ... ," but rather, "being dead to that ..." The two verses quite agree.

We have become dead to the law "by the body of Christ." This at first sight seems somewhat obscure. Paul refers, we believe, to that which was involved in our Lord taking the body prepared for Him, and thereby becoming a Man. He took that body with a view to suffering death, and hence the body of Christ is used as signifying His death. It is the same figure of speech as we have in Colossians 1:22, where we are said to be reconciled "in the body of His flesh, through death."

We have died from under law's dominion in the death of Christ. In this way our connection with the first husband has ceased. But all is in view of our entering into a new connection under the risen Christ. Every Jew found the old husband — the law — very stern and unbending, a wife-beater in fact; though they had to admit they richly deserved all they got. We, Gentiles, can hardly imagine how great the relief when the converted Jew discovered that he was now under Christ and not under

law. "Married" to Christ, risen from the dead, the standard set was higher than it ever was under law, but now an unbounded supply flowed from Him of the grace and power needed, and hence fruit for God became a possibility. As Husband, Christ is the Fountain-head of all support, guidance, comfort and power.

How striking the contrast which verse 5 presents! Indeed the verse itself is very striking for it names four things that go together: — flesh, law, sins, death. Of old the law was imposed upon a people "in the flesh." In result it simply stirred into action the sin which ever lies latent in the flesh. Consequently the "motions" or "passions" of sins were aroused and death followed as God's judgment upon all. "Flesh" here is not our bodies, but the fallen nature which has its seat in our present bodies. Every unconverted person is "in the flesh;" that is, the flesh dominates them and characterizes their state. But you notice that for believers that state has passed away. The Apostle says "when we were in the flesh."

Another contrast confronts us when we turn to verse 6. "when we were ... But now." Having died with Christ, we are not only dead to sin, as chapter 6 enforces, but dead also to the law and therefore delivered from it. Consequently we can now serve

God in an entirely new way. We not only do new things, but we do those new things in a new spirit. In the previous chapter we read of "newness of life." (verse 4.) Now we read of "newness of spirit."

We read of people in Old Testament days who turned from lives of recklessness and sin to the fear of God — Manasseh, King of Judah, for instance, as recorded in 2 Chronicles 33:11-19. It might perhaps be said of him that he walked in newness of life during the last years of his reign. Yet he could only serve God according to the principles and ways of the law-system under which he was. It was impossible for newness of spirit to mark him. If we want to see service in newness of spirit we must turn to a converted Jew of this present period of grace. He may once have done his best to serve God in the spirit of strict law-keeping. Now he discovers himself to be a son and heir of God in Christ Jesus, and he serves in the spirit of a son with a father — a spirit which is altogether new.

An employer may set two men to a certain task, one of them being his own son. If the young man in any degree realizes the relationship in which he stands he will set about the work in a spirit altogether different to that of a hired servant. Our illustra-

tion would perhaps have been even nearer the mark had we supposed the case of a wife serving her husband's interests. Delivered from the law by death, the death of Christ, we are linked with the risen Christ in order to fruitfully serve God in a spirit that is new.

Teaching such as this most evidently brings Christ into prominence and puts the law into the shade. Does it in any way cast an aspersion on the law? Does it even infer that there was something wrong with it? This point is taken up in verses 7 to 13, and it is made abundantly clear that the law was perfect as far as it went. The mischief was not with the law but with the sin which rose up against the law, finding in the law indeed that which provoked it, and also that which condemned it.

Verse 7 tells us how the law exposed and condemned sin. Before the law came we sinned but did not realize what sinners we were. Directly the law spoke we discovered the true state of the case. Just as a plumb-line reveals the crookedness of a tottering wall, so the law exposed us.

Yet it was sin and not law that wrought the mischief, as verse 8 states; though sin somewhat camouflaged itself by springing

into activity directly it was confronted with the definite prohibition of the law. The very fact that we were told not to do a thing provoked us to do it!

As a matter of fact then the law affected us in two ways. First, it stirred up sin into action. It drew a line and forbade us to step over it. Sin promptly stirred us up to transgress by stepping over it. Second, in the presence of this transgression the law solemnly pronounced the death sentence upon us. True, the law set life before us; saying, "This do, and thou shalt live." Yet in point of fact all it ever did in regard to us was to condemn us to death, as failing utterly to do what it commanded. These two results of the law are tersely stated at the end of verse 9: — "Sin revived, and I died."

This being the state of the case, no blame of any kind attaches itself to the law, which is "holy, and just, and good." Sin, not the law, is the culprit. Sin worked death, though it was by the law that the sentence of death was pronounced. Sin indeed was working before ever the law was given, but directly it was given sin had no excuse and its defiance became outrageous. Sin by the commandment coming became exceeding sinful, as verse 13 tells us.

We have now got to a part of the chapter where the Apostle speaks in the first person singular. In verses 5 and 6 it was "we ... we ... we ..." after the question with which verse 7 opens it is all "I ... I ... me ... I ..." This is because he now speaks experimentally, and when experience is in question each must speak for himself.

The opening words of verse 14 may seem to be an exception to what we have just said but they are not. It is a fact that the law is spiritual, and not a mere matter of experience — and it is stated as a fact which we know. In contrast with it stands what "I am," and this has to be learned as a matter of sad experience, "carnal, sold under sin."

How do we learn what we are? Why, by making a genuine effort to conform to the spiritual demand which the law makes. The more earnest we are about it the more effectively is the lesson burned into our souls. We learn our sinfulness in trying to be good!

Let us recall what we learned in chapter 6 for there we were shown the way. Realizing by faith that we are identified with Christ in His death we understand that we are to reckon

ourselves dead to sin and alive to God, and consequently we are to yield ourselves and our members to God for His will and pleasure. Our souls fully assent to this as right and proper, and we say to ourselves, with considerable enthusiasm perhaps, "Exactly! that is what I am going to do."

We essay to do it, and lo! we receive a very disagreeable shock. Our intentions are of the best but we somehow are without power to put these things into practice. We see the good and approve it in our minds, yet we fail to do it. We recognize the evil of which we disapprove, and yet we are ensnared by it. A very distressing and humiliating state of affairs, which we find stated in verse 19.

In verses 14 to 23 we get "I" no less than 24 times. "Me" and "my" occur 10 times. The speaker evidently describes an experience, during which he was simply swamped in self-occupation. All his thoughts were turned in upon himself. This is not surprising for this is exactly the normal effect of the law upon an awakened and conscientious soul. As we examine those verses, we can see that the exercises recorded resulted in valuable discoveries.

1. He discovered by experience the good and holy character of the law. It is good as verse 9 states; but he now has to say "I consent to the law that it is good."
2. He discovered by experience his own fallen state: not only "carnal" but "sold under sin." Anyone who has to confess that he is so overpowered to be compelled to avoid what he wishes and practice what he hates, and so be in the humiliating position of continually disowning his own actions (verse 15) is indeed enslaved. We are like slaves sold in the market to a tyrannical master: — sold under sin.
3. Yet he learns to distinguish between what has been wrought in him by God — what we call "the new nature" — and the flesh which is the old nature. Verse 17 shews this. He recognizes that there is his true "I" connected with the new nature, and an "I" or a "me" which he has to repudiate, as being the old nature.
4. He learns by experience the true character of that old nature. If it be a question of "me," that is, "the flesh" (here you see, it is the old "me" that he has to repudiate)

in that no good is found, as verse 18 tells us. Good simply is not there. So it is useless searching for it. Have some of us spent weary months, or even years, looking for good in a place where it is non-existent?

5. He learns further that though he is now possessed of a new nature, an "inward man" (verse 22) yet that in itself bestows no strength upon him. The inward man may delight in God's holy law; his mind may consent to the law that it is good, but all the same there is a more powerful force working in his members that enslaves him.

What a heart-breaking state of affairs! Some of us have known it bitterly enough. Others of us have a taste of it now. And if any as yet have not known it they may well be alarmed, for it at once raises a question as to whether they are as yet possessed of a new nature. If there is nothing but the old nature, struggles and exercises such as these must in the nature of things be unknown.

Such exercises are of great value as preparing the soul for the gladness of a divinely wrought deliverance.

As we draw near to the end of chapter 7 it is important for us to notice that in this passage the word law is used in two senses. In the great majority of instances it refers of course to the law of God formulated through Moses. In verses 2 and 3 however we get "the law" of a husband; in verse 21, "a law"; in verses 23 and 25, "another law," "the law of my mind," and "the law of sin." In these cases the word is evidently used to signify a power or force which acts uniformly in a given direction: in just the sense in which we use the word when we talk of "the laws of nature."

If then we read again the above verses, substituting the words, "controlling force" for the word, "law," we may gain a somewhat clearer view of what the Apostle is saying. Take verse 23. The controlling force with each of us should be our minds: our bodies should be held in the subject place. This should be so in a very special way with those whose minds have been renewed by the power of God. But there is sin to be reckoned with, which exerts its controlling force in our members. The terrible fact has to be faced by us, and experimentally learned, that if left to ourselves, sin proves itself the stronger force, assumes control and we are held in captivity.

No wonder the Apostle in the remembrance of it cries out in anguish, "O wretched man that I am!" We too know something of this wretchedness, surely. Have we never felt ourselves to be like a wretched seagull bedraggled from head to tail with filthy oil discharged from passing ships? The law of its mind, the law of air both without and within its feathers, is totally overcome by the horrid law of sticky oil! And who shall deliver it? It has no power in itself. Unless someone captures and cleanses it, it must die.

Verse 24 contains not only the agonized exclamation but also that important question, "Who shall deliver me?" The form of the question is important. Earlier in the story, when the speaker was passing through the experiences detailed in verses 14 to 19 for instance, his question would have been, "How shall I deliver myself?" He was still searching for something within himself which would accomplish it, but searching in vain. Now he is beginning to look outside himself for a deliverer.

When not only our self-confidence but our self-hope also is shattered, we have taken a big step forward. We inevitably then begin to look outside ourselves. At first perhaps we only look for help, and consequently look in wrong directions. Yet sooner

or later we discover it is not help that we need, but rather a positive deliverance by a power that is not of ourselves at all. Then, very soon, we find the answer to our cry. Deliverance is ours through Jesus Christ our Lord, thanks be to God! He is as able to deliver us from the slavery of sin as He is from the guilt of our sins.

Chapter 8

But how DOES this deliverance work? How is it accomplished? We find an answer to these questions when we commence to read chapter 8. At the end of chapter 7 the law of sin and death proved itself far more powerful than the law of the renewed mind. In the opening of chapter 8 the law of the Spirit, who is now given to the believer, proves itself far more powerful than the law of sin and death. The Apostle can exultingly say, It has "made me free."

Not only have we life in Christ Jesus but the Spirit of that life has been given to us. Thereby a new force enters our lives. Coming under the controlling power of the Spirit of God we are released from the controlling power of sin and death. The greater law overrides the lesser.

The point may be illustrated by many happenings in the natural world which surrounds us. Here, for instance, is a piece of iron. It lies motionless upon the ground, held to the spot by the law of gravitation. An electric magnet is placed above it and the current is switched on. Instantly it flies upward, as though suddenly possessed of wings. A new controlling power has come on the scene which, under certain conditions and in a limited sphere, has proved itself stronger than the power of gravitation.

The Holy Spirit has been given to us that He may control us, not that we may control Him. How does He exert His influence? He works within the believer, but it is in connection with an attractive Object without — Christ Jesus our Lord. He is here not to speak of Himself or to glorify Himself, but to glorify Christ. He indwells us, not that He may foster the old life, the life of the first Adam; the life of which He is the Spirit is the life of Christ, the last Adam. We are "in Christ Jesus," as the first verse shows, and we are that without any qualification whatever, for the words which close the verse in our Authorized Version should not be there having evidently crept in from verse 4, where they rightly occur.

There is nothing to condemn in Christ Jesus, and nothing to condemn for those in Christ Jesus. The reason for this is two-fold. Verses 2 and 3 each supply a reason, both beginning with "for." Verse 2 gives the practical or experimental reason. The believer under the control of the Spirit is set free from the control of that which formerly brought the condemnation in. Being a statement of a liberty which has to be experimentally realized the Apostle speaks still in a personal and individual way — "has made me free."

Verse 3, on the contrary, is a statement of what has been accomplished by God in a judicial way at the cross of Christ. The law had been proved to be weak through the flesh, though in itself holy and just and good. It was like a skilful sculptor set to the task of carving an enduring monument — some thing of beauty intended to be a joy for ever — out of a great heap of dirty mud. A heart-breaking, a hopeless task, not because of any defect in the sculptor but because of the utterly defective material with which he had to deal. The law could condemn the sinner, but it could not so condemn sin in the flesh that men might be delivered from servitude to sin and, walking after the

Spirit, be found fulfilling what the law had righteously required.

But what the law could not do God has done. He sent forth His own Son, who came in the likeness of sinful flesh — only in the likeness of it, be it noted, for though perfectly a Man He was a perfect Man, without the slightest taint of sin. God sent Him "for sin," that is, as a sacrifice for sin; so that in His death sin in the flesh might be condemned. Sin is the root principle of all that is wrong with man; and the flesh is that in man which furnishes sin with a vehicle in which to act, just as the electricity generated in a power station finds a vehicle for its transmission and action in the wires that are carried aloft.

We know that sin had its primary origin in the heavens. It began with Satan and the fallen angels, yet Christ did not come to die for angels and consequently it was not sin in the nature of angels which was condemned. He died for men, and it was sin in the flesh that was condemned. It was condemned, you notice, not forgiven. God does indeed forgive sins, which spring forth as the fruits of sin in the flesh; but sin — the root principle — and the flesh — the nature in which sin works — are not forgiven but unsparingly condemned. God has con-

demned it in the cross of Christ. We must learn to condemn it in our experience.

We are to judge as God judges. We are to see things as He sees them. If sin and the flesh lie under His condemnation then they are to lie under our condemnation. Sin and the flesh being judged in the cross, the Holy Spirit has been given to us that He may energize the new life that is ours. If we walk in the Spirit then all our activities, both mental and bodily, will be under His control, and as a consequence we shall be found doing what the law requires.

Herein, of course, is a marvellous thing. When under the law and in the flesh we were struggling to fulfil the law's demands and continually failing. Now that we are delivered from the law, now that we are in Christ Jesus and indwelt by the Spirit of God, there is a power which can enable us to fulfil it. And as we do walk in the Spirit and not in the flesh, and according to the measure in which we so walk, we do actually fulfil what the law has so rightly demanded of us. This is a great triumph of the grace of God. As a matter of fact though, the triumph may be even greater, for it is possible for the Christian "so to

walk even as He [Christ] walked" (1 John 2:6). And the "walk" of Christ went far beyond anything that the law demanded.

We may sum up these things by saying that the Christian — according to the thoughts of God — is not only forgiven, justified, reconciled, with the Spirit shedding abroad in his heart the love of God; but also he sees the divine condemnation of sin and the flesh in the Cross, he finds that his own vital links before God are not with Adam fallen but with Christ risen. Consequently he is in Christ Jesus, with the Spirit indwelling him, in order that, controlling him and filling him with Christ, as an Object bright and fair before his eyes, he may walk in happy deliverance from the power of sin and be gladly fulfilling the will of God.

Nothing less than this is what the Gospel proposes. What do we think of it? We pronounce it magnificent. We declare the whole scheme to be a conception worthy of the mind and heart of God. Then our consciences begin to prick us, reminding us how little these wonderful possibilities have been translated into actualities in our daily experience.

The Apostle Paul, you notice, did not lay down his pen nor turn aside to another theme when he had written verse 4. There is more to be said that may help us to gain a real and experimental entrance into this blessed deliverance so that we may be living out the life of Christ in the energy of the Spirit of God. Verses 5 to 13 continue taking things up from a very practical standpoint.

Two classes are considered. Those "after" or "according to" the flesh and those according to the Spirit. The former mind the things of the flesh: the latter the things of the Spirit. The mind of the flesh is death: the mind of the Spirit life and peace. The two classes are in complete contrast, whether as to nature, character or end. They move in two totally disconnected spheres. The Apostle is of course speaking abstractly. He is viewing the whole position according to the inward nature of things, and not thinking of particular individuals or their varying experiences.

We may very rightly raise the question of our own experiences. If we do, what have we to say? We have to confess that though we are not after the flesh yet we have the flesh still in us. Hence it is possible for us to turn aside from that minding the

things of the Spirit, to mind the things of the flesh. And, in so far as we do, we come into contact with death rather than life and peace. But let us make no mistake about it; if we go in for the things of the flesh, we are not seeking things which are properly characteristic of the Christian, but rather wholly abnormal and improper.

The things of the flesh appeal to the mind of the flesh, and that is simple enmity against God. This saying which occurs in verse 7 may seem hard, but it is true, for the flesh is essentially lawless. Not only is it not subject but it cannot be. Do we believe that? Let the flesh be educated, refined, religionized; let it be starved, flogged, restrained; it is just the old flesh still. The only thing to do with it is to condemn it and set it aside, and this is just what God has done, as stated in verse 3. May we have wisdom and grace to do likewise.

It is clear that since the mind of the flesh is simply enmity against God, those "in the flesh" cannot please Him. If we would see a complete contrast with this we must turn to 1 John 3:9. There we find that the one born of God "cannot sin." All who are not born of God are in the flesh; that is, their state is characterized by the flesh and nothing else. There is no new

nature with them, and hence the flesh is the source of all their thinkings and doings, and all is displeasing to God. The one who is born of God partakes of the nature of Him of whom he is born.

But not only is the believer born of God, he is also indwelt by the Spirit of God, who seals him as Christ's. This great reality entirely alters his state. Now he is no longer in the flesh but in the Spirit; that is, his state is characterized by the presence and power of the Spirit of God, who is also called in verse 9 the Spirit of Christ. There is but one and the self-same Spirit yet the change in the descriptive title is significant. Christ is He from whom we derive our origin spiritually, the One to whom we belong. If indeed we are His, we are possessed of His Spirit, and consequently should be Christ-like in our spirits, so really so that all may see that Christ is in us.

According to verse 10 He is in us if His Spirit indwells us, and hence we are not to be ruled by our bodies. They are to be held as dead, for acting they only lead to sin. The Spirit is to be the Energizer of our lives and then the outcome will be righteousness. To do the will of God is practical righteousness.

Our bodies are spoken of as "mortal bodies" in verse 11. They are subject to death, indeed the seeds of death are in them from the outset. At the coming of the Lord they are to be quickened. The God who raised up Christ from the dead will accomplish this by His Spirit. In this connection we have a further description of the Holy Spirit. He is "the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead." Indwelling us in this character, He is the pledge of the coming quickening, whether it reach us in resurrection of the body or in the change to be wrought in the bodies of saints who are alive and remain to the Lord's coming.

The conclusion to be drawn from all that we have just been considering is that the flesh has no claim upon us whatever. It has been judged in the Cross. It is antagonistic to God, irreconcilably so, and we are not "in the flesh." We are indwelt by the Spirit, and "in the Spirit." We are therefore in no way debtors to the flesh that we should live after it, for life according to the flesh has but one end — death. The Spirit is in us that we may live according to Him. That means putting to death the deeds of the body, refusing practically its promptings and desires. That is the way to what is really life according to God.

What great importance all this gives to the indwelling of the Spirit of God. He produces an altogether new state or condition in the believer, and He gives character to the state that He produces. He is the power of Christian life in the believer, the Energy that breaks the power of sin and sets us free. But He is more than this for He is an actual Person indwelling us, and so taking charge of us.

In the bygone dispensation the Jew was under the law as a schoolmaster or tutor. It took him by the hand as though he were a child under age, and led him until such time as Christ came. Now Christ having come we are no longer under the schoolmaster but like sons of full age in our father's house. Not only are we sons but we possess the Spirit of God's Son. All this we find in Galatians 3 and 4. Verse 14 of our chapter refers to this truth.

Those who were in the position of minors were put under law as a schoolmaster, and were led by it. We who have received the Spirit of God and are led by Him are the sons of God. Christ is the Captain of our salvation, gone on high. The Spirit indwells us on earth, as our Leader in the way that goes up to

glory. Praise be to our God! Our hearts should indeed be filled with everlasting praise.

We have in our chapter a wonderful unfolding of truth concerning the Spirit of God. We have seen Him, in verse 2, as the new law of the believer's life. In verse 10, He is presented to us as life, in an experimental sense. In verse 14 He is the Leader, under whose guardianship we have been placed while on our way to glory.

Further He sustains the character of a Witness, as we find in verse 16. Being made sons of God we have received the Spirit of adoption, and two results flow out of this. First, we are able to respond to the relationship which has been established, turning to God with the cry of, "Abba Father." Second, the Spirit gives us the conscious enjoyment of the relationship. We know in our own spirits that something has happened, which has brought us out of darkness into light. The Spirit corroborates this, bearing witness to what has happened, even that we are now children of God.

The witness goes even beyond this, for if we are children then are we heirs, and that jointly with Christ; for by the Spirit we

are united to Christ though that truth is not developed in this Epistle. What amazing truth is this! How often does our very familiarity with the words blind us to the import of them! Let us meditate on these things so that there may be time for the truth to sink into our hearts.

The chapter opened with the fact that we are in Christ, if true believers. Then we found that having the Spirit of Christ, Christ is in us. Now we come to the fact that we are identified with Him, both in present suffering and in future glory. The point here is not that we suffer for Christ in the way of testimony and that glory is to be our reward hereafter: that we find elsewhere. The point rather is that being in Him and He in us we share in His life and circumstances, whether here in sufferings or there in glory.

This leads the Apostle to consider the contrast between present sufferings and future glory, which contrast is worked out in the paragraph comprised in verses 18 to 30, though it is at once stated in very forcible words that the sufferings are not worthy of any comparison with the glory.

The same contrast is drawn in 2 Corinthians 4:17, and even more graphic language is employed; "A far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." In our passage the matter is considered with greater wealth of detail. The paragraph seems to fall into three sections. First, the character of the coming glory. Second, the believer's comfort and encouragement in the midst of the sufferings. Third, the purpose of God which secures the glory.

First, then, the glory is connected with the manifestation of the sons of God. The sons will be manifested when the Son, who is the Firstborn and Heir, is revealed in His glory. Then the creature (that is, the creation) will be delivered from the bondage of corruption and share in "the liberty of the glory of the sons of God." (N.Tr.) It has well been remarked that the creation does not share in the liberty of grace which we enjoy even amidst the sufferings, but it will share in the liberty of the glory. The creation was not made subject to vanity by its own will but rather as the result of the sin of the one to whom it was subject; that is, of Adam. And creation is represented as anxiously looking out in hope of the deliverance which will arrive with the manifestation of the glory. When the sons are

publicly glorified the year of release and jubilee will have come for the whole creation. What glory that will be! How do present sufferings look in the light of it?

Still there are these sufferings, whether for the creation as a whole or for ourselves in particular. Verse 22 speaks of the former. Verses 23 and 26 of the latter. We have infirmities, as well as the groans which are the fruit of pain, whether physical or mental. What then, in the second place, have we to sustain us in the midst of it all?

The answer is again that we have the Spirit, and He is presented to us in three further capacities which He fills. He is the Firstfruits (v. 23), the Helper and the Intercessor (v. 26).

We are already sons of God. Yet we wait for "the adoption," that is, for the full state and glory of the position, which will be reached when our bodies are redeemed at the coming of the Lord. We have been saved in hope (not, by hope) and are consequently put in the position of patient waiting for the promised glory. Saved are we in expectancy of glorious things to come, yet we have the Firstfruits in the Spirit who has been given to us. The firstfruits were offered up in Israel as the pledge and

foretaste of the coming harvest (see, Lev. 23:10, 17, 20), so in the Firstfruits of the Spirit we have the pledge and foretaste of the redeemed body and the glory that is ahead.

Also the Spirit helps our infirmities. This word helps us to see that a clear distinction exists between infirmities and sins, for the Spirit never helps our sins. Infirmity is weakness and limitation, both mental and physical, and therefore if unassisted we may very easily fall victims, ensnared by sin. The help of the Spirit is that we may be strengthened and delivered.

Then again, such is our weakness and limitation that very frequently we find ourselves in circumstances where we simply do not know what to pray for. Then the Spirit indwelling us takes up the role of Intercessor, and utters His voice even in our groanings which baffle utterance. God who searches all hearts, knows what is the mind and desire of the Spirit, for all His desires and intercessions are perfectly according to the mind of God, whatever our desires might be. God hears according to the Spirit's desires, and not according to ours, and we may well be very thankful that this is so.

We must not miss the connection between verses 26 and 28, though it is not very clear in our version. It is, "We do not know what we should pray for as we ought ... but we do know that all things work together for good to them that love God." This thing and that thing may appear to work evil, but together they work for our spiritual good. This must be so, inasmuch as the Spirit indwells us, helping our weaknesses and interceding in our perplexities; and also in the light of the fact that God has taken us up according to His purpose, which nothing can thwart.

This brings us to the third thing: the purpose of God, which secures the glory. Two verses cover the whole statement; its exceeding brevity only enhancing its force.

There are five links in the golden chain of divine purpose. The first is foreknowledge, which is rooted in the very omniscience of God — rooted therefore in eternity. Next comes predestination: an act of the divine Mind, which destined those whom He foreknew to a certain glorious place long before they existed in time. From other scriptures we know that this predestination took place before the foundation of the world.

But predestination was followed by the effectual call which reached us in the Gospel. Here we come down to time, to the moments in our varied histories when we believed. The next step practically coincided in point of time with this; for we were justified, and not only called, when we believed. Lastly "whom He justified them He also glorified." Here our golden chain, having dipped down from eternity into time, loses itself again in eternity.

Yet, as you will notice, it says, "glorified" — the past tense and not the future. That is because, when we view things from the standpoint of divine purpose, we are carried outside all time questions, and have to learn to look at things as God looks at them. He "calls those things which be not as though they were." (Rom. 4:17). He chooses, "things which are not." (1 Cor. 1:28). Things, which are not to us, exist for Him. We are glorified in the purpose of God. The thing is as good as done, for His purpose is never violated by any adverse power.

See then the point at which we have arrived. In the Gospel God has declared Himself as for us in the wonders of His justifying grace. This came before us up to the close of chapter 5. Then the enquiry was made as to what should be our response to

such grace; and we have discovered that though we have no power in ourselves to make a suitable response, there is power for it, since we are set in Christ and indwelt by the Spirit of God. We are set free from the old bondage that we may fulfil the will of God. Moreover we have seen how many-sided are the capacities which the Spirit fills as indwelling us. He is "Law," "Life," "Leader," "Witness," "Firstfruits," "Helper," "Intercessor." And then again, we find ourselves in the embrace of the purpose of God, which culminates in glory — a purpose that nothing can frustrate.

No wonder the Apostle returns to his question, as to what we shall say, with all these things before him! What can be said but words that breathe the spirit of exultation? The question occurs in verse 31, and from thence to the end of the chapter the answer is given in a series of questions and answers, ejaculated with that rapidity which betokens a burning and triumphant heart. These verses lend themselves not so much to exposition as to meditation. We will just notice a few of the more salient points.

God is for us! Fallen man instinctively thinks of God as being against him. It is far otherwise, as the Gospel proves. His heart

is toward all men, and He is actively and eternally for all who believe. This effectually silences every foe. No one can be effectively against us, however much they would like to be.

The gift of the Son carries with it every lesser gift that we can hold with Him. Notice, in verse 32, the word "freely," and also "with Him." Do we want anything which we cannot have with Him? In our folly or haste we may sometimes want such things. On quiet reflection however we would not have for one moment what would entail separation from Him.

God is our Justifier, not man. In the presence of this no one will succeed in laying so much as one thing to our charge. Even among men, when once the judge has cleared the prisoner it is practically libel to bring the charge against him.

If no charge can be brought there is no fear of condemnation. But if in any way that could be in question there is a perfect answer in Christ, once dead but now risen, and at the seat of power as an Intercessor on our behalf. Notice that this chapter presents a twofold intercession: Christ at the right hand of God, and the Spirit in the saints below. (vv. 26, 34.)

Could we have a more perfect expression of love, the personal love of Christ, than we have had? We could not. Yet the question may arise — so timorous and unbelieving are our hearts — May not some thing arise, some force appear, which will separate us from that love? Well, let us search and see. Let us mentally ransack the universe in our search.

In this world, which we know so well, there is a whole range of adverse powers. Some of them are exerted directly by evil men, such as persecution or the sword. Others of them are more indirect results of sin in the government of God, such as distress, famine, nakedness or peril. Will any of these things seen and felt, separate us from Christ's love? Not for one moment! Again and again has a timorous convert been assailed by brutal men, who have said in effect, "We'll knock these notions out of you." Again and again has the effect of their persecution simply been to knock the truth securely in. He has not only won in the conflict but come out of it an immense gainer, and so more than conqueror. By these very things he has been rooted in the love of Christ.

But there is an unseen world — a whole range of things of which our knowledge is very small. Ills, that we know not of,

always take on a more fearsome aspect than ills that we know and understand. There are the mysteries of death as well as of life. There are powers of an angelic or spiritual order. There are things that may lie in distant ages or reaches of space that we may yet have to traverse, or creatures that as yet we have not known. What about these?

The answer is that none of these shall for one moment separate us from the love of God. That love rests on us in Christ Jesus our Lord. He is the worthy and all-glorious Object of that love, and we are in it because connected with Him. The love reached us in Him, and we, as now in Him, stand abidingly in that love. If Christ can be removed out of the embrace of that love, we can be. If He cannot be, neither can we. Once grasp that great fact and Paul's persuasion becomes our persuasion. Nothing can separate us, for which eternal praise be to our God!

Our chapter, then, which began with, "No condemnation", ends with, "No separation." And in between we discover ourselves to be taken up according to the purpose of God, in which there can be no violation.

Chapter 9

CHAPTER NINE OPENS another section of the Epistle, a very clearly defined one. In Rom. 1 - 8 the apostle had unfolded his Gospel, in which all distinction between Jew and Gentile is seen to be non-existent. He knew however that many might regard his teaching as indicating that he had no love for his nation and no regard for God's pledged word relating to them. Consequently we now have three dispensational chapters in which the mystery of God's ways concerning Israel are explained to us.

In the first three verses of chapter 9 Paul declares his deep love for his people. His affection for them was akin to that of Moses, who prayed, "Blot me, I pray Thee, out of Thy book" (Ex. 32:32). Then in verses 4 and 5 he recounts the great privileges which had been accorded to them. Last of these, but not least, there sprang out of them the Christ, whose Deity he plainly states.

How then came it that Israel was in so sorry a plight? Had the Word of God failed? Not for one moment; and the first great fact brought forward to explain the situation is that of the sovereignty of God.

Now Israel were the last people in the world who could afford to quarrel with the divine sovereignty, for again and again it had been exercised in their favour. This point comes very clearly before us up to verse 16. God made a sovereign choice in regard to the sons of both Abraham and Isaac. He chose Isaac and Jacob, and set aside Ishmael and Esau. If any wished to object to God making a choice, they would have to obliterate all distinction between themselves and both Ishmaelites and Edomites. This they would not contemplate for one moment. Well then, God was only continuing to do as He had already done, and hence not all who were of Israel by natural descent were the true Israel of God.

Moreover when Israel made the golden calf in the wilderness they would have been blotted out in judgment had the law had its way. Instead God fell back upon His sovereign mercy, according to words from Exodus 33:19, quoted here in verse 15. Thus is a third case of God exercising His sovereignty in their favour, even as verse 17 supplies us with an example of God exercising His sovereignty against Pharaoh.

The plain facts are these: — (1) God has a will. (2) He exercises it as He pleases. (3) No one can successfully resist it. (4)

If challenged, the rightness of His will can always be demonstrated when the end is reached. God is like the potter and man is like the clay.

How often God's will is challenged! How much reasoning has taken place on the facts stated in our chapter! How slow we are to admit that God has a right to do as He likes, that in fact He is the only one that has the right, inasmuch as He alone is perfect in foreknowledge, wisdom, righteousness and love. Things may often appear inexplicable to us, but then that is because we are imperfect.

Verse 13 has given rise to difficulty. But that statement is quoted from the book of Malachi; words written long after both men had fully shown what was in them; whereas verse 12 records what was said before their birth. Others have objected to God's words to Pharaoh as quoted in verse 17. The answer to such objections lies in our chapter, verses 21 to 23. Men pit themselves against God, hardening their hearts against Him, and in result God makes a signal example of them. He has a right so to do; while others become vessels of mercy, whom beforehand He prepares for glory.

Consequently if any object to what God is doing today, in calling out by the Gospel an elect people both from Jews and Gentiles, the answer simply is, that God is only doing again in our days what He has done in the past. Moreover the prophets had anticipated that He would act thus. Both Moses and Isaiah had foretold that only a remnant of Israel should be saved, and that a people formerly not beloved would be called into favour. This is stated in verses 25 to 29.

The matter is briefly summed up for us in the closing verses. Israel stumbled at that stumbling-stone, which was Christ. Further they misused the law, treating it as a ladder by which they might climb into righteousness, instead of a plumb-line by which all their supposed righteousness might be tested. Israel had missed righteousness by law, and Gentiles had reached righteousness by faith.

Chapter 10

THIS LEADS THE Apostle, in the early part of chapter 10 to contrast the righteousness of the law with that of faith, and once more he expresses his fervent love and desire towards his people. His prayer for them was for their salvation. Very clear

proof this, that they were not saved. Religion they had, zeal they had, the law they had, but they were not saved. Wrongly assuming that they were to establish their own righteousness by law-keeping they went about to do it, and miserably failed. And the very zeal with which they went about it blinded them to the fact that Christ was the end of the law, and that God's righteousness was available for them in Him.

How much better it is to have God's righteousness than our own, for ours at the best would be only human. Every one that believes has Christ for righteousness, as verse 4 tells us. And Christ is "the end of the law." The word end is used here, we believe, just as it is in 2 Corinthians 3:13, signifying the object in view. The law was really given in view of Christ. It paved the way for Him. If only Israel had been able to steadfastly look to the end of the law they would have seen Christ. It is quite true of course that Christ being come, all thought of righteousness being reached by law came to a conclusion. But that is not the primary meaning of verse 4.

Next, we have a striking contrast drawn between the righteousness of law and the righteousness of faith. The former demands the works that are in keeping with its requirements and prohibi-

tions. Words will not do, works must be produced. By those works, if produced, men shall live. Failing to produce them, and to go on failing to produce them, men shall die.

In contrast thereto the righteousness of faith does not demand works at all. It does not demand that we ascend into heaven to bring Christ down, for down He is come. Nor does it demand that we descend, as though to bring Him up from the dead, since from the dead He is risen. In penning these words the Apostle evidently had in his mind the words of Moses as recorded in Deuteronomy 30:11-14. Read that passage and see. You will notice that verse 8 of our chapter, as to the form of it, is suggested by verse 14. The word of the Gospel is sent by God to us. Received by us in faith, it becomes the word of faith to us, entering our hearts and coming out of our mouths.

Of old God brought His commandment very near to Israel that they might do it. He has brought His word even nearer to us in Christ. It is now not a word of what we ought to do, but of what Christ has done, and of what He Himself has done in raising Christ from the dead. On our part the word only demands that we believe with the heart that God has raised Him from the dead, and that we confess Him as Lord with our mouths. When

heart and mouth thus go together there is of course reality. Real subjection to Jesus as Lord carries with it salvation.

Notice the distinction that is drawn in verse 10 between righteousness and salvation. The faith of the heart in Christ puts a man into right relations with God — the faith of the heart, be it noted, as distinguished from the faith of the head, or mere intellectual apprehension. Real conviction of sin produces a heartfelt sense of need, and consequently heartfelt trust in Christ. That heartfelt faith God sees, and He reckons the man as right with Himself. Now the man goes a step further and confesses Christ publicly, or at least openly, as his Lord. This at once puts Him outside the world system in which the Lord is refused. His links with the world thus being cut, he steps into the blessedness of salvation.

Salvation is a word of very large meaning, as we have before seen. If we confine it in our thoughts to deliverance from the hell that our sins deserve, we miss a good deal of its significance. The moment we believe we are righteous before God, but until we definitely range ourselves under the Lordship of Christ by confessing Him personally as Lord, we do not get free of enslavement to the world, nor can we expect to experience the

might of His authority and power on our behalf. How much do we know — each one of us — of a life of happy freedom in subjection to the Lord, and in occupation with His interests?

It is not supposed for one instant, of course, that we are going to believe in Jesus and not confess Him as Lord with our mouths. That would be impossible if our faith be the faith of the heart, since it is out of the abundance of the heart that the mouth speaks. Verse 11 of our chapter makes this point very clear. The believer is not ashamed. This is quoted from Isaiah 28:16. The same verse is quoted in the last verse of the previous chapter, and it is also quoted in 1 Peter 2:6. The, "make haste," of Isaiah becomes, "ashamed," in Romans, and "confounded," in Peter. A good illustration this of how New Testament quotations enlarge the sense of Old Testament predictions. The one who believed Isaiah's word would never have to flee in panic-stricken haste before the avenging judgment. Neither shall we. But we have also One introduced as Lord, who fills us with confidence and in whom we glory. Who, really knowing Him, would be ashamed to confess Him?

Our salvation, then, lies in calling on the name of the Lord, as is stated so plainly in verses 12 and 13. There is richness of

supply and of power in Him, and all is at the disposal of the one who calls upon Him, without any distinction. Here we have the "no difference" of grace, just as in chapter 3 we had the "no difference" of guilt. Jesus is "Lord over all" whether they call upon Him or whether they do not. But the richness of His saving power is only at the disposal of those that call upon Him.

Do we call upon Him? Without a doubt we called upon Him at the hour of our conversion, and salvation we received. But is it the habit of our hearts to call upon Him in every emergency? A daily salvation we need, and a daily salvation is for us as we call upon Him — a salvation from every spiritual danger. The Lord does not always deliver His saints from physical dangers, threatened by the world without: sometimes He permits them to suffer grievous things, as in the case of Stephen, for instance. But then see how mighty was the spiritual salvation that Stephen enjoyed, even while his persecutors were breaking his bones. He furnishes us with the finest possible illustration of spiritual salvation flowing from the Lord, who is over all.

How important then is the Gospel, in which He is presented as Lord for the submission of faith. Verses 14 and 15 emphasize this. If men are to be saved they must hear the Gospel and God

must send it. With Him it all begins. God sends the preacher. The preacher delivers the message. Men hear of Christ and they believe in Him. Then they call upon the Lord and are saved.

But all begins with God. Every true preacher is sent forth by Him, and beautiful are their feet as they go. Paul quotes from Isaiah 52, where the prophet speaks of the coming days, when at last the tidings of deliverance comes to Zion by the advent of the Lord in His glory. Equally beautiful however are the feet of those who carry the tidings of His advent in grace and humiliation, and of all that was accomplished by it for our salvation.

The trouble is that all have not obeyed the Gospel, as Isaiah also indicated. Obedience is by faith. The word, "report," really occurs thrice in this passage; for verse 17 more literally rendered is, "So faith then is by a report, but the report by God's word." When the report reaches our ears, backed by the authority of God's word, we believe it. Then it is that we can say like the Queen of Sheba, "It was a true report that I heard."

The report then has gone forth. It had gone forth even in the early days when Paul wrote this epistle. The blessing however

was conditioned upon the obedience of faith. Now as a nation Israel had remained unbelieving, and the warning words of the prophets were in process of being fulfilled.

In the first verse of the chapter the Apostle had expressed his fervent desire and prayer, which was for their salvation. In the closing verses he sets forth the sad facts of the situation. They were a disobedient and gainsaying people. The word, "gainsaying" means, "contradicting." They continually said, "No" to all that God proposed, and denied all that He asserted.

Yet God had borne with them in long patience, stretching out His hands in entreaty, as it were. Now the moment had come for a change in His ways. Israel had stumbled over Christ as a stumbling-stone, and were for the time being set aside.

Chapter 11

THOUGH ISRAEL, as a nation, has been set aside for a time, they have not been cast away for ever. Some Gentiles in the conceit of their hearts thought so when Paul was writing, and not a few think so today. But God forbid that it should be so, for they are His people foreknown for a special object, and in

that event His object would be defeated. The Apostle immediately cites his own case as proof. Mercy had been shown to him and he was an Israelite, a sample of that remnant which God was then calling, and a pledge of the ultimate restoration of his nation. God is still today calling a remnant just as one was preserved in the days of Elijah.

"I also am an Israelite," says Paul. In passing let us place against those words that other declaration of Paul made to an unfriendly and critical audience of his own nation, "I am verily a man which am a Jew." (Acts 22:3) The two statements are worthy of note in view of the widespread propaganda of British-Israelism which rests so largely upon the assumption that "Jew" always means the two tribes, who are utterly rejected; whereas "Israel" means the ten, to whom all the blessings belong, and who are identified by them with the English-speaking peoples. If that assumption be wrong the main part of their theory collapses like a bubble. Paul punctures British-Israelism.

But let us pick up the thread of the argument. When Israel was practically apostate in the days of Ahab, God reserved to Himself no less than seven thousand who were true to Himself at heart, though only Elijah was an outstanding figure in testi-

mony. This was the fruit of His grace, and the same grace still works. The result is "a remnant according to the election of grace" (v. 5). As a nation Israel had despised grace and sought for righteousness by law-keeping, only to miss it and to be blinded (v. 7). Bowing to grace the remnant had been saved.

Verses 8-10 show us how their stumbling and consequent blindness had been anticipated by Old Testament prophets. Verse 11 indicates one great result flowing from it: thereby salvation had been presented to the Gentiles. The succeeding verses down to 15 contemplate their ultimate national restoration, and its results are strikingly contrasted with the results of their setting aside.

As a result of their stumble the Gospel of grace has been sent forth among the nations and the Gentile world greatly enriched. It has meant "the reconciling of the world;" that is, the world which was left alone and in the dark, while God was concentrating all His dealings upon Israel, has now come up for favourable consideration in the light of the Gospel. The reconciliation spoken of here is not, as in Rom. 5, something vital and eternal, the fruit of the death of Christ, but something provisional and dispensational, the fruit of Israel's stumble.

Today Israel is fallen and diminished and broken, and lo! all this has worked out in favour of the Gentiles. What then will be the result of "the receiving of them," of "their fulness?" — that is, of God once more taking them back into favour? A further great accession of blessing in the earth, so great as to be likened to "life from the dead." The main point of the passage, however, is that Israel having been set aside from the exclusive place they once held, the Gentiles are now being visited in blessing, whilst at the same time God is still preserving an election from amongst Israel according to His grace.

This is confirmed and amplified, in verses 16-24, by an illustration concerning an olive tree and grafting. No doubt the olive is specially chosen for the illustration, inasmuch as being the source of oil it is figurative of spiritual fatness, or blessing. Israel once had this place of blessing in the earth in connection with Abraham their ancestor. They forfeited it, as we have seen, and now Gentiles have come into it; as we read, "That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ." (Gal. 3:14.)

This transference is pictured as the breaking off of natural branches from the olive tree, and the grafting in of branches

from a wild olive, so that these formerly wild branches now partake of the fatness of the good olive, drawing their supplies from its root. The grafting process suggested is "contrary to nature," as verse 24 points out. It is nothing new however to discover that the processes of grace work on opposite lines to the processes of nature.

It is important for us Gentiles to realize what has happened, and the way in which it has happened. Israel has lost their old position through unbelief, and we hold our new position by faith. So let us beware! If Gentiles do not abide in faith what can they expect but that they too in turn shall be broken off? The grafted-in branches from the wild olive cannot expect better treatment than the original branches of the tree. Again bear in mind that the point here is not the spiritual blessing of individual believers, but the dispensational change in God's ways, which has put rebellious Israel under His governmental displeasure and brought Gentiles into a place of favour and opportunity in connection with the Gospel.

God's dealings in this matter illustrate the two sides of His character — goodness and severity — as verse 22 makes plain. The severity of God is tremendously discounted, if not denied,

in many religious circles today. It exists nevertheless, and those who discount or deny it will have to face it in due season. The natural branches — poor scattered Israel — are going to be grafted in again, and the high-minded Gentile branches broken off. The times of the Gentiles are running to their end.

With verse 25 we drop the figure of the olive tree and resume the main theme of the chapter. The apostle very plainly predicts Israel's blindness is only going to last until the fulness of the Gentiles is come in. Then their eyes will be opened, and Israel as a whole will be saved. This will happen when once more the Lord Jesus returns. The blindness is only "in part," since all along God has been calling out an election from amongst them. When Jesus comes again "all Israel" will be saved: that is, Israel as a whole, or nationally. It does not mean that every individual Israelite will be, for the Scriptures show that many amongst them will worship anti-christ and perish.

"The fulness of the Gentiles" refers to God's present work of calling out an election from amongst the Gentile nations also. When that work is complete and the whole "fulness" or "complement" secured, the end will come. God's present purposes of grace to the nations will be secured, and then He will proceed

to secure His purposes in regard to Israel; for He never repents, or changes His mind, regarding His gifts or His calling. Only He will secure those purposes, not on the ground of man's merit but of His mercy.

The rendering of verse 31 in the New Translation is, "So these also have now not believed in your mercy, in order that they also may be objects of mercy." The Jews nationally rejected the Gospel just because it was mercy, sent specially to the Gentiles (Acts 22:21-22, exemplifies this), and eventually they will be profoundly humbled and receive blessing on the same ground as the Gentile dog.

As Paul concluded his survey of God's dispensational dealings and ways, as He saw mercy ultimately flowing out even to his own countryman, once so hardened and self-righteous, his soul was filled with adoration. He burst out in the doxology with which the chapter closes. We may call it the doxology of the wisdom of God, just as that at the end of Ephesians 3 is the doxology of His love, and that in 1 Timothy 1 the doxology of His grace. The apostle glorifies that wisdom which lies behind all His ways, carrying everything finally to a glorious consum-

mation, wherein is jointly achieved His own glory and the blessing of His creatures.

Chapter 12

THUS Rom. 11 ends very much as Rom. 8 ended. In both we have the purpose of God and His electing mercy. Small wonder then that chapter 12 opens with an appeal based upon the mercies of God. In this way we commence the hortatory and practical section of the epistle. There is only one thing to do in response to the abounding compassion which has reached us in the Gospel — we present our bodies to God as a sacrifice livingly devoted to Him. This is reasonable, or intelligent, service on our part, and acceptable to Him.

In Rom. 6:13 the Apostle had indicated that the way of deliverance from the service of sin was to yield ourselves to God, and our members as instruments of righteousness to God. We were to have the thing done, definitely and for ever, as a settled thing. The exhortation here is very similar. Have we each of us had a moment in our histories when, conscious of the abounding mercies of God, perhaps overwhelmed with them, we have definitely presented our bodies as something livingly devoted

to Him? Once each of us held his body as the vehicle wherein his own will would be expressed. Once we each said in effect, "I am the captain of my body and it shall serve my pleasures." Have we now surrendered it to Another, that it may serve His will and be used for His service and glory? We perform no really intelligent service for Him until we do this. We cannot be intelligent in the Gospel without seeing that such a course is the only proper response.

This will of course involve what is enjoined upon us in verse 2. Nonconformity to this world — or age — will mark us, inasmuch as we shall necessarily be conformed to the will of God. But God has His own way of bringing this about. Sometimes we see conformed Christians — sadly conformed to this age, and their bodies continually bearing witness to the fact. Sometimes too we see reformed Christians, trying with a good deal of laborious effort to imitate Christ and do as He would do. What is set before us here is the transformed Christian, the transformation proceeding from the mind within to the body without.

Our verse does not speak of what God has done, or is doing, for us. It speaks of what we are to do. The responsibility is put

upon us. We are not to be fashioned according to this age: we are to be transformed. Both these things, the negative and the positive, are to be worked out day by day. The renewing of our minds, and the transformation effected thereby, are not things accomplished in a moment once and for all, but something to be maintained and increased all through life.

Since the divine instructions to us are that we be transformed by the renewing of our minds, we may well enquire how we may get our minds renewed. The answer is, by getting them formed according to God's thoughts and forsaking our own. And how shall this be? By soaking them in God's Word, which conveys to us God's thoughts. As we read and study the Word in prayerful dependence on the enlightening of the Spirit of God, our very thinking faculties, as well as our way of thinking, become renewed.

Here then is opened up before us the true way of Christian saintliness. We are not set to laboriously fulfil a code of morals, or even to copy the life of Christ. We are brought into contact with that which alters our whole way of thinking, and which consequently transforms our whole way of living. Thus it is that we may prove the will of God for ourselves, and discover

it to be good, acceptable and perfect. What is good before God will be good to us, since our minds will have been brought into conformity to His.

The very first point where our conformity to the thoughts of God — and consequent non-conformity to the thoughts of the world — will be manifested, is in connection with self-esteem. Naturally each of us thinks no end of himself, for we have not learned to take our true measure before God. The more our minds are renewed the more we see ourselves as God sees us, and know that it is the measure of our faith that counts with Him. Faith brings God into our lives, and hence the measure of faith determines our spiritual calibre. We once heard a Christian remark of another, with gravity and a tinge of sadness, "Well, if we could buy that good brother at the price we put upon him, and sell him again at the price he places upon himself, we should make a huge profit!" God help us to learn how to think with great sobriety as to ourselves, realizing that not intellect, not social status, not money resources, not natural gifts but faith is the determining factor.

The fact is, of course, that the greatest and weightiest of us is but a tiny part of one far greater whole. This is emphasized in

verses 4 and 5, where for the first time, as far as this epistle is concerned, it is intimated that though saved individually we are not to remain isolated individuals but are brought into a unity — the church of God. We are one body in Christ, each being a member of that one body. The practical outcome of this fact is that we each have our different functions, just like the members of our natural bodies have, and no one of us can absorb all the functions to himself, nor anything like all of them.

In verses 6-15 we get the practical working out of this. Each has his own gift according to the grace bestowed, so each is to recognize the part he is to play in the scheme. Each too is to take care that what he does, he does in the right way and spirit. The one who prophesies, for instance, is only to do so according to his faith. His knowledge may run beyond his faith but let him take care not to speak beyond his faith. This, if observed, would cut out a lot of unprofitable talking in the gatherings of God's people. So too he that gives is to give with simplicity. He that shows mercy with cheerfulness, so that he does not do a kind act in an unkind way. And so on. The details of these verses hardly need remarks of ours, save that we may point out that "Not slothful in business," is rather, "As to diligent zeal-

ousness, not slothful." It has no reference to the keenness with which we pursue our secular callings.

The closing verses of the chapter give more general instructions as to what becomes us according to God's mind. Lowliness of mind; openness and honesty; a peaceable spirit; absence of the almost universal spirit of retaliation and vengeance; love, so active as to "retaliate" by kindnesses, and so overcome evil with good; these are pleasing to God, and pleasing to us in so far as our minds are transformed into conformity to His. The figure of "heaping coals of fire" on the head of one's enemy is doubtless suggested by Psalm 140:10. The Psalmist prayed for it in keeping with the age of law in which he lived. Our verse shows us the Christian way of doing it.

We may say then that this twelfth chapter gives us the good and acceptable and perfect will of God for us in many of its details. Many of the features mentioned are by no means beloved by the men of the world. Some would please them well enough so long as they get the benefit of them — they will, for instance, quite like the honesty which would lead the Christian to be a prompt payer of accounts, and the absence of vengeance when they perchance take some unrighteous advantage of him. It is

only the believer with his mind renewed who can see the beauty of them all.

And it is only the believer, whose renewed mind is working out a transformation in his life, that will begin to really practise them.

Chapter 13

THE EARLIER EXHORTATIONS of chapter 12 had to do with our behaviour in the Christian circle. Then from verse 14 to the end we were instructed how to behave in relation to the men and women of the world, it being plainly assumed that we shall find a good deal of hostility in that quarter. As we open chapter 13, we are instructed how to act in regard to the governments and authorities of this world. A very important point this for the early Christians, who were frequently undergoing persecution from the authorities; and for us, whose lot is cast in an age when authority is treated with scant respect.

The Christian's attitude is to be, in one word — subjection. We are to avoid "resisting the power," that is setting ourselves in opposition to it. The reason given for this must be carefully

noted: the "powers that be" are a divine institution, and to set oneself in opposition is to oppose the God, whom they are intended to represent, and to merit judgment. In these verses (1-7) authorities are viewed in their proper character according to the divine intention, rather than as they often are in actual practice.

At once, therefore, we may call out as to the sad travesty of authority so frequently seen. But we must remember that, when these words were penned, Nero had just about ascended the imperial throne in Rome, and the man who wrote the words was soon to suffer grievous things at the hands of the religious authorities in Jerusalem. Read Acts 23:5, and 26:25, noting in these instances how effectively Paul practised what here he teaches us. Only one thing exempts us from the subjection here demanded, and that is when subjection to authorities would involve us in disobedience to God. Then we must be obedient to the highest Authority. As Peter said, "We ought to obey God rather than man" (Acts 5:29).

If we merely think of government as it exists in the world today we must certainly be confused. In all directions there are over-turnings, with power passing into the hands of strange people.

Under the slogan of "Liberty" worse tyrannies and atrocities take place than those enacted under the despots of older times. But if we look away to God and His Word, all becomes simple. We are not set in the world to make governments or to alter governments, but to seek the interests of our Lord, while yielding all proper honour and subjection to governments, whatever they may be. The instructions apply to such matters as tribute and custom, as verse 7 shows. We are to pay all that is due in the way of rates, and custom, as well as income tax. What the authorities may do with our money, when they get it, is their matter, not ours. In the mercy of God we are relieved of that heavy responsibility.

Verse 8 extends the thought, of rendering what is due, far beyond governments to all men. The Christian is to be free of all debt, except the debt of love. That he can never fully pay. The object of infinite love himself, his attitude is to be love in this unloving world. In so doing he fulfils the law though he is not put under it, as we saw so clearly in chapter 6.

All the foregoing is confirmed and fortified by what we get in the closing verses of the chapter. We should be characterized by this subjection and love, because we are left in the world

during the period of its night, in order that we may display the graces of the Lord Jesus Christ while we wait for the coming day. It is very easy to forget this and to settle down into a state of drowsy insensibility like the world. Hence the call to awake. The hour of our final salvation draws nearer!

We are certainly in the darkness. Do we not feel it? But the works of darkness we are to cast off, like filthy old cloths, and we are to put on "the armour of light." We are to be enveloped in the light which belongs to the day, to which we belong. The believer is to be shining and luminous in the midst of the darkness, and the very light we wear will prove itself to be armour. The shining Christian is by his shining protected and preserved. In one word, we are to put on the character of the Lord Himself, instead of catering for the desires of the flesh.

With what power should these words come to us! And with what urgency! If the night was far spent and the day at hand when Paul wrote, how much more so today. It is indeed high time to awake out of sleep and array ourselves in our shining armour. Only we must always remember that the "putting on," whether of verse 12 or 14, is not the assuming of something wholly external to ourselves, but rather putting on something

from within, rather as a bird puts on its feathers. We saw this in principle, when considering Rom. 12:2.

Chapter 14

CHAPTER 14 is entirely occupied with a matter that gave rise to very difficult problems in the early years of the church's history. The Jewish converts carried with them pretty naturally their views and feelings about matters of eating and drinking, about the observance of days, and customs, and the like. Their thoughts were partly based on the law of God, and partly on the tradition of the elders, but at any rate their feelings were very strong. The Gentile converts had no such feelings, and were inclined to regard it all as so much obstinate stupidity on the part of their Jewish brethren. Here was a cause of endless friction. The whole question is raised here, and settled with that admirable simplicity which characterizes Divine wisdom.

We must not let our interest flag at this point. We must not say — These questions do not exist today. The whole thing is of purely academic interest. We can dismiss it.

Not so. It is rather of very live and pressing importance. Though the exact questions that agitated and divided first-century Christians may have largely faded away, there are many others of an analogous nature taking their place, and much distress and harm is caused today when the instructions of this chapter are not observed. We will not go through the chapter verse by verse, but summarize it, by observing that there are in it three principles established, and three exhortations given; one connected with each principle.

The first is stated in verse 4. We may call it the principle of Christian liberty. In these matters that have to do with personal behaviour and conscientious service to the Lord, we are set free from the lordship of our brethren, by being set under the overlordship of Christ. We may be right or wrong in our judgment, but the thing of prime importance is that we each, with a single eye for our Master, do what we believe to be pleasing to Him. The exhortation which hinges upon this is, "Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind."

God intends us to be exercised as to such matters, each for himself. Were there a definite command in Scripture there need not be the exercise. Then, simple obedience is the only course

pleasing to God. But these other matters, how many they are. Should I go here or there? Should I partake of this or that? May I enjoy this pleasurable recreation or not? Ought we to carry out this service or this ordinance in this way or that way? What acrimonious and harmful controversies have raged around such questions. And the answer is so simple. Let the wrangling cease! Hands off each other! Each man to his own knees, in the presence of his own Master, that he may get, as far as in him lies, the knowledge of his Master's will.

Having settled in the Master's presence what we believe He would have us do, let us do it in the simplicity of faith. Only it must be faith, and not self-will. And we must not go beyond or lag behind our faith. To do this is to bring condemnation (not, damnation) into our consciences, as the last two verses of the chapter tell us.

Some will say, "But this principle of liberty is sure to be abused." No doubt: but note how it is guarded by what we have in verses 10-12. Here is enforced the principle of individual responsibility to God. I may not lord it over my brother, and if I attempt to do so he need not pay much attention to me; but let him remember the judgment seat of Christ. Christ has died and

risen again that He might establish His rights in both spheres, that of the dead and that of the living. All our movements then, dying or living, must be in relation to Him. But in giving account to Him we shall be rendering account to GOD. This is a tremendous fact, calculated to move every one of our hearts, and make us very careful in what we do or allow.

The exhortation in connection with this confronts us in verse 13. "Let us no longer therefore judge one another," this is the negative side of it; and the positive is, "but judge ye this rather, not to put a stumbling-block or a fall-trap before his brother" (N. Trans.). We are to keep our eyes on the judgment seat for ourselves, and as regards our brethren see to it that we do not provoke them to a fall. Lower down in the chapter this is worked out in a very practical way. Verses 15, 20, 21, for instance. Strong language is used. The Apostle speaks of destroying "him ... for whom Christ died." He says, "destroy not the work of God."

God's sovereign work cannot be annihilated, and the true sheep of Christ shall never perish; but both one and the other can be wrecked in a practical way. The case supposed here is that of some Gentile Christian, spiritually robust and unfettered by

prejudice, flaunting his liberty before the eyes of his Jewish brother, who, though still strong as to the law, is weak in the faith of the Gospel. Thereby the weak brother is tempted into doing things with which afterwards he bitterly reproaches himself, settling down perhaps under a spiritual cloud until his dying day.

You and I may be working mischief like that, if we do not take care. So let us look out, and keep our eyes on the judgment seat.

In saying this we have practically anticipated the third great principle of the chapter. It is that of Christian brotherhood, or fraternity, we may say. Verse 15 clearly states it. "Thy brother ... for whom Christ died." If Christ died for that weak brother of ours — troublesome and awkward fellow, though he may sometimes be — then he must be very dear to Christ. Shall he not be dear to us? And let us not forget that you and I may sometimes prove ourselves troublesome and awkward fellows in his eyes. Then may God give him grace, as formerly to us, to view us as those for whom Christ died.

Based upon this principle comes the exhortation of verse 19. Being brethren we are to pursue the things that make for peace and edification. We are to be keen to build up, not to knock down. We are to aim at peace not at strife. If tempted to transgress, let us ask ourselves Moses' question, "Sirs, ye are brethren; why do you wrong one to another?"

It is possible for us to get things so astray in our thoughts that when we see a feeble brother we say, "See, here is a weak one! Let us give him a push and see if he will fall over." He does fall, poor fellow. Then we say, "We always thought he would. Now you see he is no good, and we are well rid of him." And when we stand before the judgment seat of Christ who died for him, what is going to be said to us? If we could hear it now, it would set our ears a-tingling. There is loss to be received as well as reward at that judgment seat!

Once more let us emphasize the fact that all these instructions relate to matters of individual life and conduct and service, and must not be stretched to include vital truth of God and to condone indifference as to that. Verse 17 lifts our thoughts onto a higher plane. God has established His authority and rule in the hearts of His saints, and this is not concerned with details as to

eating and drinking, but with the features of a moral and spiritual order which are well pleasing to Him. That we should be living lives of practical righteousness and peace, and of holy joy, in the power of the Spirit of God, is to His glory. We are brought under His sway, and His Spirit is given to us, to this end.

As brought into that kingdom the principles that are to prevail amongst us are, Liberty, Responsibility, Fraternity — as we have seen — the responsibility being God-ward. At the close of the seventeenth century the great cry in France became, "Liberty, Equality, Fraternity" — the equality being manward. What tragedies followed! Very soon a situation developed which was the total negation of all three words! Let us see to it that we observe our three words, which work in the direction of righteousness, peace and joy.

Chapter 15

THE FIRST PARAGRAPH of chapter 15 sums up and completes this subject. The sum of the instruction is that those saints who are strong in the faith ought to bear the infirmities of their weaker brethren. Instead of pleasing themselves they

are to aim at what will be for the spiritual good of the other. The attitude of mind which says, "I have a right to do this, and I am going to do it, no matter what anybody thinks!" is not the mind of Christ. It is exactly what Christ did not do!

"Christ pleased not Himself." The prophet testified this, and the Gospels bear witness to it. He was the only One on earth who had an absolute right to please Himself, yet He lived absolutely at God's disposal and identified with Him; so completely so that, if any wished to reproach God, they naturally heaped their reproaches on the head of Jesus. He is our great Example. We need to ponder Him, as made known to us in the Scriptures and as we do, the patience and comfort necessary, if we are to follow Him, become ours.

So then, we are to manifest the grace of Christ in our dealings the one with the other: we are to be "like-minded ... according to Christ Jesus." For this we need not only the Scriptures to direct us, but the very power of God Himself, who is the God of patience and consolation. Thus strengthened we shall be able to glorify Him together. Instead of the mind and mouth of the weak being filled with criticisms of the strong, and the mind and mouth of the strong being filled with contempt of the weak

(see, Rom. 14:2), the minds and mouths of all are to be filled with the praise of God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. This presents a perfectly lovely picture: does it not?

Well, then, in spite of such differences as may exist, we are to receive one another in the happy enjoyment of Christian fellowship, so that the lovely picture may be realized, to the glory of God.

Having dealt with matters of practical life and behaviour, from verse 8 the Apostle gives us a little summary of his earlier teaching as to the relations of the Lord Jesus with both Jews and Gentiles. He did come as the Servant of all God's purposes in regard to His ancient people; so that the promises made aforetime to the fathers have been confirmed, though as yet they have not been all fulfilled. Then as regards the Gentiles, He came as God's Messenger of mercy to them, so that ultimately they too might glorify God. This showing of mercy to Gentiles, though perhaps quite unexpected by the Jews, was no new thought on God's part, for it had been indicated in Old Testament Scripture. Moses, David and Isaiah had all borne testimony to it, as verses 9-12 show us.

The believers in Rome were mainly Gentiles, hence there is a special force in the Apostle's desire in verse 13. They had been without God and without hope in the world — as the Gentile believers in Ephesus were reminded — and now God, who is the God of hope, is to fill them with such joy and peace that they abound in hope. This is a most desirable, a most glorious result, which is achieved as the fruit of faith in the Gospel; for it is, "in believing," and also, "through the power of the Holy Ghost." Believing the Gospel, the Holy Spirit is received, and peace, hope and joy follow, as the fifth chapter of our epistle taught us.

Many there are who earnestly desire peace and joy, but they think to arrive at them in working, in resolving, in praying or in feeling, but none of these things lead to the desired end. It is only in believing. Faith, and faith alone, puts the soul into touch with God. And only by the Spirit are our hearts filled with all joy and peace and hope, which are the proper fruits of the Gospel. It is very fitting that the Apostle should desire these things for those to whom he wrote, seeing that this epistle unfolds the Gospel which produces them.

In verse 14 Paul expresses his confidence in the believers in Rome, and from that point he turns to write of more personal matters, both as regards them and as regards himself.

First, he deals with his own service to the Lord and unbosoms to them his intentions as well as referring to what he had already accomplished. This occupies all the remaining verses of chapter 15.

Paul's ministry has especial reference to Gentiles, and in verse 16 he speaks of it in a very remarkable way. He ministered the Gospel amongst them as a sacrificial service, so that he considers those who were converted as being offered up to God for His acceptance in the sanctification and fragrance imparted by the Holy Spirit, who had been conferred upon them as believers. In this perhaps he alludes to the sanctification of the Levites, as recorded in Numbers 8:1-19. It is expressly said there, "And Aaron shall offer the Levites before the Lord for an offering of the children of Israel, that they may execute the service of the Lord."

This shows us the spirit in which the Apostle carried on his gospel service. The apostle Peter speaks of Christians as royal

priests who show forth the virtues of the One who has called them, and what we find here is in keeping with that. Paul acted in priestly fashion even in his gospel labours, and the fruit of them was seen in Gentile converts offered to God for His service as a band of spiritual Levites. In all this therefore he could boast, but his boasting was "through Jesus Christ," or, "in Christ Jesus"; for it was all referrable to Him as the great Master-worker.

These thoughts lead to a brief survey of his labours already accomplished. First, as to their great scope and extent, "from Jerusalem, and in a circuit round to Illyricum." Illyricum lay to the north west of Macedonia, so we can see what a vast district he had fully covered, considering the difficulties of transport in his day. Second, as to their peculiar character of pure and unadulterated evangelization. He was the pioneer of the Gospel in a supreme sense. He addressed himself to the Gentiles in a way that no other apostle did, and he went into strange cities that no other had visited. In this he was helping to the fulfilment of Scripture, as verse 21 shows.

Just because this was the special character of his service he had been hindered from coming to Rome. Christians had already

gravitated to it as the metropolis of the world of that day, and thus the Gospel already had a footing there. Yet we can see Paul's missionary heart looking beyond Rome to distant Spain, and contemplating a journey thitherward some day, with a call at Rome on the way. For the moment he had before him a visit to Jerusalem in order to carry thither the contribution for the poor saints, made by the believers in Macedonia and Achaia.

We find an allusion to this collection for the saints in 1 Corinthians 16:1-4, and again at much greater length in 2 Corinthians 8 and 9. If those passages be read we can at once see why the Apostle here places Macedonia before Achaia. The Philippians were poor as compared with the Corinthians yet they were far more liberal. They talked less and gave more. The Acts of the Apostles furnishes us with a twofold explanation of what gave rise to the need. There was a famine in those days (Acts 11:27-30), and also the believers in Jerusalem had been in a special way impoverished by the "Christian communism" they practised at the beginning (Acts 2:44-45). Their impoverishment however furnished the occasion for the cementing of practical bonds of Christian fellowship between Gentile and Jew.

There was a strong tendency in those days for Jew and Gentile to fall apart, and this tendency was increased by the scheming of Judaizing teachers from Jerusalem. Hence Paul evidently considered this collection a very important matter and insisted on being the bearer of the bounty himself. He was quite aware of the danger he ran, and verse 30 and 31 of our chapter show that he had some premonitions of coming trouble. Whether he was really right in going to Jerusalem has been a much discussed question. We need not attempt to answer it here, but we shall do well to note that the prayer, in which he asked the Roman saints to join with him, was answered, though not in just the way he hoped. He was delivered, but not as a free man. He was delivered from his persecutors by his imprisonment at the hands of the representatives of Caesar.

So also did he finally come amongst the Roman Christians with joy, being refreshed among them, as Acts 28:15, witnesses. Another proof this of how God answers our prayers, but in the way that is according to His will, and not according to our thoughts and wishes. We may also be sure that Paul came amongst them in fulness of blessing. Philippians 1:12-13, is proof of this, as also Philemon 10. Peace was what the Apostle

desired, peace in which both the saints of God and the work of God might flourish, hence the chapter closes with the desire that the God of peace might be with them.

We shall do well to notice the three ways in which God is characterized in this chapter. "The God of patience and consolation" in verse 5. "The God of hope" in verse 13. "The God of peace" in verse 33. Having noted them we shall do well to meditate upon them. What God is at any time He is always, and what He is for any of His people He is for all and for each. Therefore He is all this for you and for me.

Chapter 16

IN CHAPTER 16 we get the closing salutations. Phebe seems to have been the bearer of the epistle, and Paul works in this word of commendation concerning her so that the saints at Rome might freely and without question receive her. She had succoured many and even Paul himself in the course of her service at Cenchrea. The word, "servant" is really, "deaconess."

From verse 3 to verse 15 we have a long list of names of those in Rome to whom salutations were sent. At the head of the list

come two names that we are familiar with, Priscilla and Aquila. It is evident that they head the list designedly, for of no others are such words of high commendation spoken. They had laid down their lives on Paul's behalf, though in God's mercy their lives had been preserved to them. This is the limit of human love according to the Lord's words in John 15:13. It is also what every Christian ought to do if the occasion arises, according to 1 John 3:16; because we are here not only to display human kindness but, as those who partake of the Divine nature, to display divine love.

The Apostle shows a wonderful discrimination in his salutations. This one is a kinsman: that one a helper: the other is chosen in the Lord. Again, these are beloved, and that one is well-beloved, and these are of note among the apostles. Some have laboured and others have laboured much. In the largeness of his spiritual affections he had a definite link with each. But evidently Priscilla and Aquila outshone all as the exponents of a love which was divine, and that gave them the first place over the heads of many more gifted than themselves.

That love of divine quality, which gives itself even to death, stands alone in its value. This was exemplified in the days of

David — see, 2 Samuel 23:13-17. It is made plain in the solemn words of our Lord recorded in Revelation 2:4. We have no doubt but that it will be most fully manifested in that day when we all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. So let us take it to heart now.

"Love never faileth," love is pure gold;
Love is what Jesus came to unfold;
Make us more loving, Master, we pray,
Help us remember, love is Thy way."

Verses 17-20 follow, giving us a picture which is the very reverse of all this. There were those in the earliest days, as also today, who served not the Lord but their own selfish desires. Such produce divisions and are to be avoided. Their words may be beautiful — smoother than butter — but they are contrary to the doctrine. This is the test. Not, can they speak pleasant things; but, do they speak according to that which we have received from God? The prime mover in all error is Satan, and when he is bruised under the feet of the saints by the God of Peace there will be peace indeed.

There follows the salutations of a band of labourers who were with Paul as he wrote; and again it seems in verse 24 as if he is closing his letter, as previously in verse 20, and at the end of Rom. 15. Once more, however a word is added. It appears that at this point according to his custom Paul took the pen from the hand of his amanuensis to write with his own hand. His closing words are of deep importance.

The Apostle Paul had a twofold ministry, as he unfolds in Colossians 1:23-29. To both ministries he alludes very briefly in these closing verses. The Gospel, which he calls "my Gospel" he had unfolded very fully in this epistle. The "mystery" he had not mentioned at all, though it had been revealed to him and other of the prophets, and had been promulgated in prophetic writings. He would have the believers at Rome know that important as it was that they should be established according to the Gospel he had just unfolded, it was equally important that they should be established according to the mystery, of which it was not his purpose to write at that time.

If important for the Romans, then for us also. God is able to establish us in both. Are we concerned about both? If not we ought to be. Because the church, as an outward, visible, pro-

fessing body, is in a broken condition we are not exempted from concerning ourselves about the mystery, but rather it is the more necessary for us. The mystery concerns the Gentiles, hence it is made known to all nations, and made known for the obedience of faith: made known, not merely to be understood but to be obeyed.

Never more than today was there a crying need for really established Christians. God alone can establish us, and we are only fully established if established in both. No man can stand securely if only standing on one leg. The Gospel and the Mystery are like two legs whereon we may securely stand. Let us aim at standing on both.

