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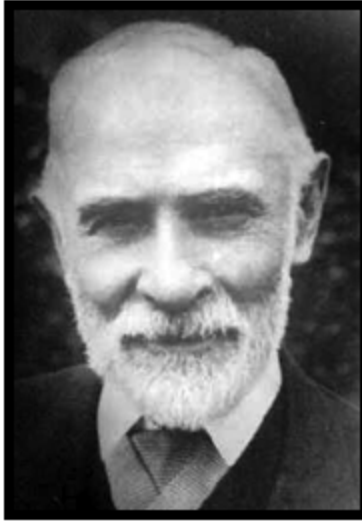
V11 Outline of Romans

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PREFATORY NOTE

That believers on the Lord Jesus Christ should be established according to Paul's glad tidings is one of the greatest spiritual needs of the present time. It is by the grace and power of God alone that this can be brought about; but, under His good hand, the prayerful consideration of Paul's epistle to the Romans will greatly contribute to it.

This "OUTLINE" — which is largely the substance of a series of readings during the year 1926 — is published with the earnest desire that God may be pleased to use it for edification, and for confirmation in the faith.

Quotations from the Holy Scriptures are generally, throughout this book, from the widely known and exceedingly valuable New Translation by J. N. Darby.
C. A. COATES.

ROMANS 1

Romans 1

This epistle presents to us God's glad tidings, not exactly as preached to the ungodly, but as unfolded to saints. It begins on the note of divine calling. Paul was a called apostle, and he wrote to those in Rome who were the called ones of Jesus Christ, saints by divine calling. This gives God His place as the prime mover in the work of grace. God has called certain persons, and the effect of the calling is that they have an appreciation of Jesus Christ. Now God would have all such to understand and be established in the great principles of His actings in grace through the Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore we have this wonderful epistle to establish us in the grace that has come to us.

The calling is entirely on the divine side. "Whom he has predestinated, these also he has called", Romans 8: 30. It is helpful for the youngest believer who has an appreciation of Christ to know that the calling of God brought it about. An apprehension of God's calling imparts stability to the soul. In addressing even an unspiritual people like the Corinthians the apostle laid emphasis on the calling. They, like those in Rome, were "called saints". It is "to them that are called" that Christ becomes "God's power and God's wisdom". He counsels the saints to consider their calling, and to see that it did not include "many wise according to flesh, not many powerful, not many high-born", 1 Corinthians 1:2; 1 Corinthians 1:24; 1 Corinthians 1:26. What dignifies the saints is the divine calling.

God calls men by the gospel. Paul said to the Thessalonians, "He has called you by our glad tidings to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ". Whatever the instrument used, it is God who calls; it is not the preacher but God. Paul speaks here of saints as "called ones of Jesus Christ", verse 6. It is very sweet to think that if I have appreciation in my heart of Jesus Christ it, is because I am one of His called ones. There has been a personal activity on His part in relation to me that has singled me out from amongst men to be for Him and for God. It was not the preacher — not the one who spoke to me about my soul — but Jesus Christ Himself. He has spoken in a direct and personal way to me, and the sense of that moves the affections.

The effect of His call is that, Jesus Christ becomes a personal reality to one. The most, wonderful preaching in the world could not of itself bring that about. I do not say the Lord could not use it, but it is His own personal and powerful voice that makes Him a reality to the soul. A person called does not always come to light in a moment, but he has a secret in his heart that is powerful enough to break through every hindrance eventually. It has been

known for a seed dropped into a crevice in a rock to have such power that even a huge rock has been rent by its growth. The call of Jesus Christ brings about something in the soul that must work its way out. We have examples in Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathaea. They were called ones of Jesus Christ, and the effect was that they came into view eventually as having appreciation of Him in spite of every natural hindrance.

There is something direct and personal in being called of Jesus Christ. It is easy to see that a "called apostle" was one whom the Lord took up personally, and upon whom He conferred grace and apostleship. But He has also called each saint. The calling is a divine one, and all the exercises and experiences of the soul stand connected with it. The effect of the call is that Jesus Christ is known by the soul as God's salvation. The greatest good has been brought in by God for men by "the one man Jesus Christ". That Man "borne witness to by God ... by works of power and wonders and signs, which God wrought by him", is now made Lord and Christ in heaven. And the glad tidings of the day of Pentecost was, "Repent and be baptized, each one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for remission of sins, and ye will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit". How blessed to think of the saints as being "the called ones of Jesus Christ"! To such He has become a great and precious reality. One to whom there could not possibly be a rival, for none but He could deal with sin and death so as to be God's salvation to the ends of the earth. He is the One in whom God has met the whole situation that has been brought about by sin and Satan's power, and the One by whom the blessing of God for men has come in. Every one who knows Him thus, and believes on Him, has been called by Jesus Christ.

That call separates one from all the schemes, devices, and methods that, men have for putting things right. Every sane person would admit that this is a world where things are wrong, and most would admit that they are wrong themselves, but the world is full of schemes to put things right. When Paul wrote this epistle there were all kinds of things in the world, as there are now, which were thought of some value. There were moralists and philosophers, and an ancient religion that had been originally of God. But Paul stands out as a man separated from all these things, separated to God's glad tidings. He has a theme, but it admits of no mixture. God's glad tidings stands by itself, and will not link itself on to any other supposed good for man. Paul is not at liberty to mark out his own course; he is a "bondman"; he belongs altogether to Jesus Christ. For Paul there was but one Man — the Son of God, Jesus Christ. He alone, as God-given, can meet the situation. As subjects of the divine call we realise that everything centres in that one Man. The one called of Jesus Christ may have to learn ten thousand things, but he is assured that

everything hangs on Him. The apostles had the sense that all hung on Him, spite of much dullness and ignorance; they said, "To whom shall we go?" The saints — called such by God — have the conviction in their souls that His Son, Jesus Christ, is the one Man who can bring in everything on God's part for men. He can deal with everything that men are under by reason of sin. Whatever men are under, He can bring them out of it in a holy way. It is proved because He could bring people out of death, and if He can do that He can do anything. We need to get in our souls with God a sense of the reality of Jesus Christ. That is the starting point of everything, and nothing can be built in the soul except on that foundation. Paul says to the Corinthians — "Jesus Christ is in you": he says, "Prove your own selves, do ye not recognise yourselves that Jesus Christ is in you?" They could not deny it. One called of Jesus Christ cannot deny that Jesus Christ is in him. This is not a thing that can be blown away by a gust of wind; the calling of God is a substantial divine reality that not all the power of Satan can disannul. The call of Jesus Christ is a call from heaven; nothing could be more effective than that.

I should like every young believer to get a sense of the reality of it. If we have an appreciation of Jesus Christ, we have it as a result of His call which establishes a personal link with Him. The initial thing from the point of view of Romans is the divine call.

The glorious Person to whom Paul was bondman came in on the line of all the ancient promises, on the line of God's faithfulness. The holy writings had contained promises for many long centuries, and the coming of the Son of God into Manhood was according to all that had been previously announced by God. He came of David's seed according to flesh. I have been struck by the fact that, in regard to the stability of David's seed, God uses the figures of the sun and moon. Psalm 89: 29 says, "I will establish his seed for ever and his throne as the days of heaven"; and verse 35 says, "Once have I sworn by my holiness, I will not lie unto David. His seed shall endure for ever, and his throne as the sun before me: it shall be established as the moon for ever, and the witness in the sky is firm". God uses heavenly figures to set forth the stability connected with David's Seed. If everything on earth were shaken to pieces it would not affect the stability of the sun and the moon in the heavens. The blessing that has come in now is described as "the sure mercies of David", Isaiah 55: 3; Acts 13: 34. The calling links one with all the stability of that. What has come in on God's part by Jesus Christ is marked by the stability of resurrection.

The object of this epistle is to confirm and establish us in the blessedness of what God has brought in for men in His faithfulness to His promises, and in

His grace as a Saviour God. Faith is necessary on our side, as we see in verse 5. The calling is on the divine side, but along with it there is the obedience of faith on our side. This wonderful Person, this one Man, God's Son Jesus Christ our Lord, becomes the Object of faith. Men come into obedience to God that way. God has made obedience very attractive by showing that it is the way of infinite and everlasting blessing. When we see the blessedness of what God proposes in the glad tidings, it leads us to judge our self-willed distrust of Him, and to come into obedience by way of repentance and faith.

The intent of this epistle is that we should be built up in the knowledge of God, and that we should see Jesus Christ in relation to God. God has intervened in that One man, His own Son; He has brought in a Man able to deal in divine holiness and power with everything that has been the fruit of sin. Jesus Christ can secure everything that is for the pleasure of God, and He can do it in a holy way. He was "marked out Son of God in power according to the spirit of holiness by resurrection of the dead". The glad tidings come to us in all the value of the Person of the Son of God, and of the holiness that resided in Him. In Him holiness and power were found together. It is to be noted that resurrection power in the Son of God is "according to the spirit of holiness". The disciples had a profound sense that He was "the Holy One of God". He came in to touch everything under which man has lain, and to touch it in holiness, so that men might be set free from the power of everything they had become subject to through sin. Whether our state is one of just, lawlessness, or weakness, He can take us out of it. In the light of this we can understand the apostle being "separated to God's glad tidings". It stood apart from everything else and it had no rival. If the Son of God can take persons out of death, *He can do anything*. It is not Christ's resurrection that Paul speaks of here, but of dead persons; the word "dead" is in the plural. I may be under a terrible power of sin, but if the Son of God can take men out of death itself, He can take me out of everything that is a manifestation of the power of evil, and He can do it in a holy way.

The service of the glad tidings is in behalf of Christ: when here He was the blessed Servant. In Mark's Gospel we see the perfection of His personal service towards men, but now the same character of service is continued in the apostle — "By whom we have received grace and apostleship in behalf of his name". The blessed service of Christ is being carried on, though He is not here personally. The grace of it was there as well as the divine commission. Paul had a divine commission and could come into the world as an ambassador for Christ, but the grace of the service was there also. He was prepared to labour, to suffer, to go through every kind of difficulty and sorrow and trial to carry on the service of the glad tidings so that men might know

God. "His name" implies that Christ is personally absent: but the service is carried on in His behalf. When here Christ was not only prepared to serve but to suffer, and Paul had grace as well as apostleship to carry on the same kind of service. Apostleship is official, but if the vessel of gift is to be in correspondence with the gift there must be grace too. Paul got both the grace and the apostleship directly from Christ, and his activities were the activities of Jesus Christ representatively. He would say to the Corinthians, "Since ye seek a proof of Christ speaking in me", etc. If Jesus Christ were in them it was a proof that Christ spoke in Paul. It is in that way that God's testimony comes to men; it is really a continuation of Mark's Gospel. And it is in that way that God is delivering men from lawlessness and bringing them into obedience.

When people came into contact with Paul they saw a man who was imbued with divine compassions — a man prepared to suffer that they might be blessed. He was prepared to suffer every indignity, to be put in prison, stoned, beaten with rods; he was ready to go through all kinds of perils that men might know God: that was the gospel livingly presented. Think of God taking that way to bring men into obedience! That God should assert His rights, and what is due to Himself, in that way is very wonderful. He has approached men in a way that, wherever there is faith, rebukes all the lawlessness of man, and his self-willed distrust of God, and brings him into obedience. That is the object of the gospel. By way of faith man comes into right relations with God, because God can never cease to be God, In becoming a Saviour God and a Justifier, He is still God, and is entitled to command, and it is for the creature to obey. The preaching of Jesus Christ is according to the command of the eternal God, and it is for the obedience of faith. God would bring His lawless and disorderly creature into right relations with Himself by setting forth His authority in the way of grace and blessing through Jesus Christ our Lord. Faith is a new moral link between the creature and God. There was the original link of creation, but that link has been morally broken by the fall — though man has not ceased to be responsible. Now God proposes to put the link on again, and this time by His own wonderful intervention through Jesus Christ. God has come in by Jesus Christ where all was ruined by sin and death; He has brought in an object of faith — One in whom His grace and salvation are brought near to men, and faith in that blessed Person establishes a new link on man's part with God. The calling of God and of Jesus Christ brings faith into action. God has made known the glad tidings of Jesus Christ His Son, and they go forth "among all the nations". They are not limited to the Jew; and wherever repentance and faith are brought about it is the evidence of divine calling; wherever there is a work of God in man it manifests itself by repentance and faith. There was not the testimony of the glad tidings in the

Old Testament: God gave many promises, but now we have the glad tidings. Paul says to the Galatians, "Before faith came, we were guarded under law, shut up to faith about to be revealed... But faith having come, we are no longer under a tutor". From Moses the public dispensation was one of law, though there were also promises of God on which the people of God could lay hold. But God having now come out in righteous grace it is definitely the time of faith, and the glad tidings are preached for the obedience of faith among all nations. The righteousness of God is "on the principle of faith to faith".

God has introduced a new principle according to which He can be known, and man can become righteous with Him. It is a principle that would never occur to the mind of man, for man would never have thought of being righteous with God except on the ground of his own works. But God in the glad tidings proposes to justify man without his making a single contribution. If the light of that comes into a man's soul, and God becomes known to him in that way, it is seen to be the most blessed thing possible to be in obedience. It secures every blessing — righteousness, salvation, and the knowledge of God so that one can worship Him — and all brought near in pure and perfect grace, which is available for all men, for God is too great to be limited to the Jew. The creature having become fallen and guilty, if he is to be placed in righteousness with God it must be brought about entirely by God Himself, and how He does it is made known in the glad tidings.

God grants men repentance: He grants them the great favour, that they can own they have been all wrong; they have done their own will, they have sought their own pleasure, they have not glorified their Creator, they belong to a fallen race. But God has come in by His Son, "the one man Jesus Christ", to make known His grace and salvation. God's authority has taken that wonderful form. It is not a law demanding, nor a righteous judgment coming on offenders, but the salvation of God by His Son Jesus Christ. The question now is, Will men obey a Saviour God? This is not limited to the Jew; the testimony is rendered "among all the nations". The called ones come into the blessing of it according to the pleasure of God.

When men have faith in Jesus Christ they begin to appreciate Him, and they become "beloved of God" (verse 7). It is most blessed to have the consciousness of being loved of God. "Beloved of God", I take it, is connected with what had come to pass in their souls. It is a great contrast to what is said in this chapter of certain persons, that they were "hateful to God". If there is appreciation of Jesus Christ in my heart it makes me an object of affection to God. There is a general and universal love of God, "The kindness and love to man of our Saviour God appeared", Titus 3: 4. That is God's beneficence. He is

truly the great Philanthropist; He loves man, and the proof of His love is that He has provided salvation for man through Jesus Christ, His mercy comes in to save man. But when a man repents, there is something there that God can delight in — there is joy in heaven, and before the angels of God, when one sinner repents. When the repentant one is brought to faith in Jesus Christ and to appreciation of Jesus Christ, he comes under the affections of God, he is “beloved of God”. It is often a great joy to me to have the consciousness that Christ is precious to me, and to think what that means to God. He can look down and see one who was a poor wretched sinner deserving nothing but death and judgment, brought to appreciate the outgoings of His grace through Jesus Christ — brought to value Jesus Christ. Such an one is an object of delight to God, and divine affections flow out on him. Jude addresses the saints as “called ones beloved in God the Father and preserved in Jesus Christ”.

God’s Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, is preached as God’s great intervention in grace, God’s salvation, and as faith in Him gets place with us, there is that which calls out upon us the affections of God. It is all the result of divine calling; no one comes to faith in Jesus Christ except by divine calling: it is what God has wrought. The one who believes in Jesus Christ comes at once in a definite and personal way under the affections of God. This is not general but personal and particular. Every saint ought to be able to say, God loves me, and to say it consciously. He loves me because of the appreciation of Christ which He has brought to pass in my heart.

We could not think of lawlessness continuing in one who had the faith of the glad tidings, because it, is “*obedience* of faith”. He really is recovered from lawlessness to be in obedience to God. No doubt if we speak of things practically there may be a good deal of lawlessness — that is, of doing his own will — in a believer, but the secret of that is that many have not really known the power of the glad tidings. They have received as much of the gospel as met their sense of need, without seeing that it came to them to give God His place with them, and to bring them into obedience to Him as known in grace. If people continue in lawlessness I am sure they are not established in the glad tidings, because the glad tidings rebukes all that, and checks it, not only in its outward manifestations, but in the root. It brings God, as known in grace, into man’s affections. How could God be known in my affections and I be a lawless man? The condescending gentleness of God is wonderful; He removes lawlessness not by crushing it by the thunder of His power, but by making Himself known in grace and salvation. Does it not make one think well of God? What can a man think of himself after he has seen himself in the light

of Romans 3? But he will assuredly think well of God as known to him in grace and righteousness.

Then grace and peace are ever flowing out towards us from God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ. What we need is condition of soul to avail ourselves of the supply that is available.

The effect of all this being known is that the saints become like a city set on a hill — all the world talks about them. Paul says, "I thank my God ... that your faith is proclaimed in the whole world". There was a company in the centre of the Gentile world in the light of a Saviour God, and Paul had intense interest in them. He had not seen them but he was serving them in a priestly way; he thought unceasingly of them in his prayers. Serving God in his spirit in the glad tidings of His Son would be priestly service, and it would be largely connected with prayer; serving in spirit would find its outlet in prayer. The danger with us is that levitical service is greater than priestly service; that is, there is more service manward than Godward. The quality of levitical service hangs largely on what is priestly. Paul carried on all his service in a priestly way. He speaks of "carrying on as a sacrificial service the message of glad tidings of God" — that is, priestly — "in order that the offering up of the nations might be acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit". Think of a man going out to preach with that in his mind all the time; thinking, I am going to bring them in as a holy offering to God! Paul had the deepest interest in these saints though he was not the instrument of their blessing. He longed to see them, to have an opportunity of serving them personally. He was quite conscious of the spiritual gift that had been entrusted to him, and he was exercised that they should be in the value of what he had spiritually. Whatever spiritual gifts any of us have, lay us under obligation to impart to others what we have by the grace of God. Paul by special grace had the fulness of the blessing of Christ; he says, "I know that coming to you I shall come in the fulness of the blessing of Christ". He knew that they needed establishing, as we all do, and he was greatly desirous to impart to them some spiritual gift.

That is the spirit of all true service. Where should we have been as to the precious things of God if many servants of Christ had not imparted to us their spiritual gifts? Spiritual gifts are given that they may be imparted; and the more spiritual gifts are passed on the more material there is for what is mutual. Ministry is not exactly mutual, but it leads to what is mutual. The enjoyment together of the mutual comfort of faith is very sweet. Paul looked to have comfort by their mutual faith. What a blessed thing when saints are brought, through ministry and the imparting of spiritual gifts, to such a condition that they are a mutual comfort to one another. The great servant

himself, who could assert his dignity as "apostle of nations", could speak as one looking forward to being comforted by the faith that was in the Roman saints. Their faith was necessary to his comfort as his gifts were necessary to their edification. It is not what we know of Scripture, but the light of God in our souls, that makes us a comfort to one another. It is "each by the faith winch is in the other".

Paul regarded himself as under obligation to all men in regard to the glad tidings. This is a character of obligation created by the knowledge of God in grace. I doubt whether we feel as much as we ought the righteous obligation connected with the glad tidings. Paul says, "I am a debtor both to Greeks and barbarians, both to wise and to unintelligent". While that was peculiarly true of Paul as having become minister of the glad tidings, and being apostle of the nations, yet in principle it is applicable to us all. In our measure we are under obligation to men to make known to them what we know of God. The grace Paul had received made him ready to discharge the obligation. He says, "I am a debtor ... so far as depends on me am I ready to announce the glad tidings to you also who are in Rome". It is a great thing to be ready to pay one's debts. "For if I announce the glad tidings I have nothing to boast of; for a necessity is laid upon me; for it is woe to me if I should not announce the glad tidings. For if I do this voluntarily I have a reward, but if not of my own will; I am entrusted with an administration", 1 Corinthians 9: 16, 17. That is from the divine side, but here he is a debtor to men, and he freely owns his indebtedness to all sorts of men, and in discharging his obligation he is ready to go to Rome and preach the glad tidings there. The obligation was created by the attitude that God has taken up in regard to men, and it is due to men that He should be made known to them by those who know Him.

There are three beautiful statements here: "I am a debtor"; "I am ready"; "I am not ashamed". They show the attitude of Paul's spirit in relation to the glad tidings. A better knowledge of God, as brought to us in the glad tidings, would not only enlarge our sympathies and compassions, but would increase the sense of obligation towards men.

The glad tidings is God's power to extricate men from the whole power of evil here. There is a power put at man's disposal for his complete deliverance. As to the heathen world all was submerged in idolatry and vile lusts; moralists and philosophers could tell people what was right without being any better themselves; and the Jew boasted in God, and the light he had from God, but his ways were dishonouring to God so that people outside blasphemed God, for men always blame God for the sins of those who profess to know Him. These were the conditions which made the salvation of God necessary; God

came in by the glad tidings to extricate men from every phase of the power of evil.

"To Jew first". The Jews were "the sons of the prophets and of the covenant" — a beautiful designation. So, as Peter said, "To you first God, having raised up his servant, has sent him, blessing you in turning each one of you from your wickedness", Acts 3: 25, 26. The faithfulness of God gave the Jew the first place because of the promises. Indeed, salvation in the Old Testament is almost everywhere for the people of God. But it was to go out, as announced prophetically, unto the ends of the earth.

When the Spirit of God uses a word in the New Testament it is generally helpful to see how He has used it in the Old Testament. "Salvation" is a word frequently used in the Old Testament. It very often signifies deliverance from the power of an enemy; it implies the helplessness and unsoundness of man in himself, and it also carries with it the thought of adornment with moral beauty.

At the Red Sea there was all the power of the enemy, utter weakness in the children of Israel, and before them the impassable waters. But they were told to "Fear not: stand still, and see the salvation of Jehovah, which he will work for you today; for the Egyptians whom ye have seen today, ye shall see them again no more forever. Jehovah will fight for you, and ye shall be still", Exodus 14: 13, 14. And afterwards they sang, "My strength and song is Jah, and he is become my salvation", Exodus 15: 2.

It is noticeable how often salvation is spoken of in relation to the power of the enemy. Hence military figures are frequently used. "Jehovah is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my rock, in whom I will trust; my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my high tower. I will call upon Jehovah, who is to be praised: so shall I be saved from mine enemies", Psalm 18: 2, 3. We read of salvation as a shield, a helmet, as walls and bulwarks. All this serves to show that there is a tremendous power hostile to man, from which he needs to be freed, and from which he cannot free himself. "For vain is man's deliverance", Psalm 60: 11; 108: 12. And we read, "Put not confidence in nobles, in a son of man (Adam) in whom there is no salvation", Psalm 146: 3. There is no denying the presence of great power of evil in this world, a power adverse to God, and to man as God's creature; but in whatever form that power may act, the glad tidings is God's power to salvation for men.

Then there is unsoundness in man himself; there is no health (salvation) in his countenance until God becomes his salvation. The word "health" in Psalm 42: 11, and Psalm 43:5 is really "salvation". We may see in Romans 3:9-20 how morally unsound man is, but, God's power comes in to give him entirely new

features — to set the light of salvation in his very countenance, and to give soundness where every moral disease had made itself manifest. What a contrast there is between what we read in Romans 3 and what Paul could say of the saints in Rome in chapter 15:14! "But I am persuaded, my brethren, I myself also, concerning you, that yourselves also are full of goodness". The glad tidings had proved itself to be God's power to salvation to them, and that made all the difference.

We get also in the Old Testament the thought of being "clothed with salvation" (Psalm 132:16), of being "clothed ... with the garments of salvation" (Isaiah 61: 10), and we read of the meek being beautified with salvation (Psalm 149:4). This speaks of adornment. Salvation includes being invested with moral beauty through the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, so that we may appear

"Like Thee in faith, in meekness, love,
In every beauteous grace".

One can understand Paul not being ashamed of a glad tidings which was God's power to bring all this about for those who were sinful men.

It is clear from the Old Testament that God's salvation will be realised and publicly known in Israel in a coming day when "All Israel shall be saved. According as it is written, The deliverer shall come out of Zion; he shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob", Romans 11:26. God's way will then "be known upon earth, thy salvation among all nations" (Psalm 67: 1,2); "all the ends of the earth" will then see "the salvation of God" in the house of Israel (Psalm 98:1-3; Isaiah 52:7-10). The prophetic Scriptures abundantly testify how completely God will deliver Israel from all their enemies, and from all their unsoundness, and that He will clothe them with moral beauty. But all this is anticipated in the glad tidings preached today, which is God's power to salvation to every one that believes. Paul said to the Jews at Rome, "Be it known to you therefore, that this salvation of God has been sent to the nations; they also will hear it", Acts 28:28.

Believing the glad tidings is man's link with God's power for salvation. If people are not saved from what is evil they are neglecting the great salvation. One would wish that, as we read this epistle, we might believe it, so that it might be God's power to us. What we have the faith of we can speak about. Paul believed and therefore spoke; he was not ashamed of the glad tidings. I think we have often to find, after professing to be believers for many years, how little we do believe the glad tidings, and no doubt that is the secret why so many fail to walk in the power and beauty of God's salvation. The glad tidings

covers a very great scope of blessing, and the link with it on our side is faith. The Holy Spirit is given to those who believe, but the power of the Spirit is not practically utilised beyond the measure of our faith.

Paul was himself a demonstration of the power of God's salvation. He says, I "was a blasphemer and persecutor, and an insolent overbearing man". "For we were once ourselves also without intelligence, disobedient, wandering in error, serving various lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another. But when the kindness and love to man of our Saviour God appeared, not on the principle of works which have been done in righteousness which we had done, but according to his own mercy he saved us through the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, which he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Saviour" Titus 3: 3 - 6. As saved he walked in righteousness, holiness, and love. "Love works no ill to its neighbour: love therefore is the whole law", Romans 13: 10.

Salvation and righteousness are often linked together in the Old Testament, and they go together in the glad tidings. The gospel comes to extricate man from the power of evil, and to invest him with moral beauty in place of his natural uncomeliness, and it also reveals the righteousness of God. If the Jew thinks of his past history he can only feel utterly ashamed, and say, "What shall we do, brethren?" (Acts 2: 37). If the Gentile thinks of his past history he can only tremble like Felix, or fall down like the jailer. Not one of us has any righteousness of his own, but "righteousness of God is revealed" in the glad tidings. It is well for us to understand thoroughly what this means.

God is righteous in all His ways. He is righteous in punishing the wicked, and in so ordering that men reap as they sow. He is righteous to take account of all that pleases Him in His people, and to compensate them for what they suffer from the ungodly. And the righteousness of God as spoken of in the Old Testament has very largely this character.

But there are scriptures in the Old Testament which refer to God's righteousness in another connection. For example, we read in the last verse of Psalm 22, "They shall come, and shall declare his righteousness unto a people that shall be born, that he hath done it". What a marvellous character has the righteousness of God in that Psalm!

It gives us the utterance of Christ as the forsaken One, passing through the unfathomable sorrows of atonement, and of that dark hour when atonement was made. He has so glorified God in bearing sins, and suffering the judgment due to sin, that we find that those who fear God, and who seek God, are able to praise and glorify Him, and "All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn unto Jehovah, and all the families of the nations shall worship before

thee". The "seed" and "generation", the "people that shall be born", of Psalm 22: 30, 31, would answer to the "called" ones in Romans who have faith, and to whom the righteousness of God is revealed in this wonderful way. He has provided One who could bear the judgment due to sin and to sinners so that He might become the praise of all those who seek Him. The Psalm does not speak in so many words of their being *justified*, but the fact that they praise and are satisfied and worship implies that they are. But we see plainly here the sufferings of Christ in atonement as the ground of blessing to the ends of the earth, and this declared prophetically to be God's righteousness.

Another Old Testament scripture will help us to see the character of God's righteousness in this way of grace. "My people, remember now what Balak king of Moab consulted, and what Balaam the son of Beor answered him ... that ye may know the righteousness of Jehovah", Micah 6: 5. Balak would have had God's people cursed, but the answer he got was: "Behold, I have received mission to bless; and he hath blessed, and I cannot reverse it,. He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither hath he seen wrong in Israel", Numbers 23: 20, 21. That was, as Micah tells us, "the righteousness of Jehovah". It was really on the ground of the death of Christ — though that death was yet future — that God could in righteousness thus regard His people. The wondrous work of Christ upon the cross has so glorified God, so vindicated Him, that He can justify — or hold as righteous — every one who believes the glad tidings, and His righteousness is revealed in His so doing. It was "borne witness to by the law and the prophets" (Romans 3: 21), as we have seen in the scriptures referred to, but it is now "revealed" and "manifested".

Is it not wonderful "glad tidings", that the righteousness of God should be known to us in the way of mercy and grace, and in absolving us from every charge? So that sinful and ungodly men can be justified from all things that stood against them without any works of their own. It is entirely of God that this should be; His righteousness is revealed in it.

The Jews were "ignorant of God's righteousness", Romans 10: 3. That does not mean that they did not know that God was righteous. But they were ignorant of that which is revealed in the glad tidings;

viz., that in infinite grace God is the Justifier of every one that believes. Hence they sought to establish their own righteousness — as so many are doing today — and did not submit to the righteousness of God. God has revealed His righteousness in the way of perfect grace; it is for man, the guilty creature, to submit to it, and to find thereby the knowledge of God, and without it nothing can be built up in a divine way in the soul. It is a question of the light of God

into which we come through faith. No natural process of reasoning could ever bring us to know the righteousness of God in justifying the ungodly. It is brought in "on the principle of faith", and God was entitled to reveal His righteousness in that way. In no other way could it have been revealed to a fallen and guilty creature in the way of blessing. The sin of man has not deprived God of the right to take His own course, and His sinful creatures can rejoice that it has not. It is their only hope — their only outlet from ruin and condemnation. How we can glory in the righteousness of God as thus revealed! How we can boast in the blessed God thus known to us! Like the convicted and repentant man in Psalm 51, delivered from blood-guiltiness, we can sing aloud of His righteousness.

"How can man be just with God?" was asked by Job about two thousand years before Christ. The question is answered now; the whole secret and way of it is out; God has His own blessed way of bringing it about. His righteousness is "by faith of Jesus Christ towards all", It is brought in "on the principle of faith" in contrast with any works or merit on man's part, and no subsequent works or service of the believer make God one whit more righteous in justifying him. The ground of it was laid in the death of Christ, and nothing can be added to it by man; it is "*righteousness of God*".

In a coming day the righteousness of God will be known publicly, for He will have judged all evil, and fulfilled all His promises of blessing. "Jehovah hath made known his salvation: his righteousness hath he openly showed in the sight of the nations. He hath remembered his loving kindness and his faithfulness toward the house of Israel: all the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God", Psalm 98: 2, 3. But at the present time God's righteousness is not in public display; it is revealed "on the principle of faith, to faith". On the ground of the death of Christ God can exonerate from every charge the creature who has sinned and come short of His glory, and reveal His righteousness in doing it. No claim of His throne has been lowered a hair's breadth; His glory has been fully met; and now His righteousness is favourable to sinful men. But no reasoning on man's part, no influence of natural religion, no exercise of conscience in itself, could ever reach the knowledge of this. It would be daring and wicked presumption on the part of a sinful creature to expect such an action of grace on the part of the Creator against whom he has sinned if it had not been revealed on God's part. But being revealed it is known to faith, and to faith only. Our works or conduct have nothing to do with it; it is purely and altogether a question of how God has revealed Himself, and of the character in which faith knows Him. Hence it is written, "But the just shall live by faith". It is rather striking that Paul should bring in this scripture here, because it suggests that the faith principle is something to live

by. It is not simply that one is justified by faith at some particular moment, when one believes the glad tidings, but the one who is in the place of a just man with God *lives* on that principle. He has continuously before him the righteousness of God, and the way that God has dealt with sin in the death of Christ. This maintains self-judgment, and an abiding sense of the ground on which he is with God. It is the foundation and secret of true piety, and of a holy and happy life. If we do not know the righteousness of God thus there can be no solid peace, and no true enjoyment of the love of God.

There is not the slightest toleration of unrighteousness with God. On the contrary, "There is revealed wrath of God from heaven upon all impiety, and unrighteousness of men holding the truth in unrighteousness". That wrath was revealed at Calvary, when the holy Sin-bearer was forsaken by God. The unrighteousness of men came before God there, one might say, in its totality, as taken up in grace by Him who was personally the righteous One, and the wrath of God was upon it. What men deserved has come upon One who took it up as sent by God for that very purpose, and in His bearing it, it has been revealed that unrighteousness must come under the wrath of God. A preacher of the gospel gave up, for a time, the Scriptural truth as to eternal punishment, but he returned to it because he found that he could no longer preach the atonement. The wrath of God upon all unrighteousness in the vicarious judgment-bearing of Christ on the cross is the foundation on which God's righteousness can be known in the way of grace, but it is also the solemn witness of what will come upon men if they continue in unrighteousness and do not obey the glad tidings. We need to have the truth of this deeply laid in our souls in these days when men have such loose and human thoughts of mercy, grace, and love. The thought of mercy and grace has been gathered from Scripture, but in men's minds these things get divorced from what happened at Calvary, and the truth is really held in unrighteousness. The heathen, the moralist, the Jew, the Christian all have some measure of truth — the Christian, as having the Scriptures, has the whole truth — but all, apart from divine calling, hold it in unrighteousness. If men speak or think of the love of God in such a way as to lose sight of the reality of His wrath they hold the truth in unrighteousness. The fact is that His love is known through His beloved Son having come as Man to drink the unspeakable cup of atoning sorrows, and to bear the wrath due to unrighteousness. It is on this ground that righteousness comes in for guilty men. "But to those that are contentious, and are disobedient to the truth, but obey unrighteousness, there shall be wrath and indignation, tribulation and distress, on every soul of man that works evil, both of Jew first, and of Greek", Romans 2: 8, 9.

At the cross we see heaven's estimate of unrighteousness; it is contrasted with any manifestation of God's judgment in a governmental way in His dealings with men on earth. And if men do not avail themselves of the righteousness of God for blessing, on the ground of Christ's judgment-bearing, they will most assuredly have to undergo for themselves "wrath, in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, who shall render to each according to his works", Romans 2: 5,6.

All men have some truth — even the darkest heathen.

"Because what is known of God is manifest among them, for God has manifested it, to them — for from the world's creation the invisible things of him are perceived, being apprehended by the mind through the things that are made, both his eternal power and divinity — so as to render them inexcusable". The widest testimony of God is in creation. "The heavens declare the glory of God... There is no speech and there are no words, yet their voice is heard. Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their language to the extremity of the world", Isaiah 19: 1 - 4. But, alas! whatever truth men have — whether as known in creation, or through conscience applying the knowledge of good and evil, or by the law, or the glad tidings — they hold it in unrighteousness. This evidences man's state as fallen and departed from God.

The present world began with the knowledge of God, for the whole population of the world stood around Noah's altar. But, "knowing God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful". That is the secret and root of all the evil in the heathen world. Men did not glorify God, and they were not thankful. The result of this was that they fell into folly, and their hearts were darkened, so that they degraded God. They "changed the glory of the incorruptible God into the likeness of corruptible man and of birds and quadrupeds and reptiles". The result of that was that God gave them up judicially to degrade themselves by vile lusts. It was not that their vile conduct led to their giving up God, but the dishonouring of God led to the vile conduct. They "changed the truth of God into falsehood, and honoured and served the creature more than him who had created it, who is blessed for ever. Amen". All the corruption of the heathen world came in through that. It is most important in its bearing on us. The more light we have as to God the more needful it is that we should glorify Him and be thankful.

We have the light of all God's testimonies, whether in creation, or in the knowledge of good and evil, or in the law, or in the glad tidings. Indeed, we might say we have all the light that God can give as to Himself. Now, if we do not glorify Him as God we shall surely fall into some form of idolatry. Our security and our happiness depend on our retaining God in our knowledge in

the light in which He has made Himself known to us. If we give this up we may drop to any depth of corruption. It is very solemn to see that in the last days of the Christian profession the moral state is described by Paul in words almost identical with those which he uses here of the heathen world before Christianity came into it. See 2 Timothy 3: 1 - 5. If men do not believe the truth, but have pleasure in unrighteousness, they are sure to come under the solemn judicial dealing of God. "For this reason God sends to them a working of error, that they should believe what is false, that all might be judged who have not believed the truth", 2 Thessalonians 2: 11, 12. This is exceedingly serious in view of the many forms of false teaching which are abroad at the present time.

But, thank God, it is still the day of salvation, and God is making known His righteousness in the way of grace, and faith has the gain of it. There is much external light, but all hangs on the place God has in the faith of our souls. To whatever depth of vileness men may have sunk, the righteousness and salvation of God are available wherever there is faith. Paul carried the glad tidings into the heathen world in all its moral corruption, and it proved itself to be God's power to salvation. Look at the ten lepers in 1 Corinthians 6: 9, 10! And Paul adds, "And these things were some of you; but ye have been washed, but ye have been sanctified, but ye have been justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God". That was said of people who had been just as bad as those described in Romans 1: 26 - 32.

All men are accountable to God, and they are inexcusable, but God is revealing His righteousness at the present time, not in fastening the guilt of men's sins upon them, but in clearing them of every charge. His power is on our behalf for salvation from all the power of evil under which we have fallen. As to the scope of the gospel, it is to be preached to every creature under heaven. Those actually reached and blessed are those called in God's sovereignty. All that God is as revealed in grace is available on the principle of faith. God introduced a principle of blessing in Abraham that becomes available for all nations — the faith principle. "Know then that they that are on the principle of faith, these are Abraham's sons; and the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the nations on the principle of faith, announced beforehand the glad tidings to Abraham: In thee all nations shall be blessed. So that they who are on the principle of faith are blessed with believing Abraham", Galatians 3: 7 - 9. Blessing in Abraham is blessing on the principle of faith. Blessing in Abraham's seed is blessing in Christ. "In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth bless themselves", Genesis 22: 18. Men must be blessed in Abraham in order to bless themselves in the true Isaac. While all blessing is in Christ the Seed, it is only reached and possessed through faith.

We see in the latter part of this chapter that underlying all the corruption into which man has fallen is the terrible fact that he has given up God. "They did not think good to have God in their knowledge". That is the root of all man's wrong-doing, and he can only be put right by being recovered to the knowledge of God, and the glad tidings comes to bring this about. Repentance is the evidence that God has got His place, in some measure at least, in the soul of His sinful creature. The repentant sinner realises that he is away from God, and that his state and ways have been displeasing to God, but this conviction is ever accompanied by some sense of goodness and mercy in God, so that the soul turns to God. Repentance is "towards God" (Acts 20: 21), and there is joy in heaven and before the angels of God when a sinner repents, because it shows that he is being restored to God.

"And according as they did not think good to have God in their knowledge God gave them up to a reprobate mind to practice unseemly things". 'A mind void of moral discernment' is the judicial result of men not thinking good to have God in their knowledge. Then all kinds of unseemly things are done, But when God begins to work in man He produces an exercised mind, as we see in Romans 7: 23, when the law of the mind is governed by the fear of God and the desire to do what is right in His sight. And then, as having the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus, and being set at liberty, the believer is transformed by the renewing of his mind. He can then take account with pleasure of the good and acceptable and perfect will of God, and prove it to be so by practically carrying it out. God then has His place in the knowledge of those who are the subjects of His compassion and grace, and the result is that they do seemly things such as are set forth in Romans 12 - Romans 15.

ROMANS 2

Romans 2

This chapter is of great importance in relation to the glad tidings: what underlies it is the necessity for repentance. This is essential for every one because there is no acceptance of persons with God; God only regards moral conditions; it would not be suitable for Him to do otherwise. Moral conditions are summed up in faith and repentance. The first chapter of this epistle brings out the indispensability of faith as being man's moral link with God as known in grace, and as being the principle on which the righteousness and salvation of God are available to men. But another principle is equally important, and that is the absolute necessity for repentance. Any gospel that leaves that out will leave the soul weak and unestablished in its relations with God, and exposed to the power of the enemy.

Every one who has sinned is responsible to repent, and the fact is established here that he is inexcusable. In chapter 1 the fallen creature is inexcusable in the presence of the testimony of creation. But in this chapter man is inexcusable because he knows how to judge others when they do wrong, which proves that he has the knowledge of good and evil. No characteristic of man is more general than the ability to judge that others do evil, and that renders him inexcusable. One sinner can judge evil in another, but the Spirit of God says to every one who does it, You are just as bad yourself; you do the same things. It turns the eye of the conscience in on self.

The soul must take the ground of judging itself. Paul says, You have a judgment about such things, but you do them yourself; you do the very things you judge in others. If you can judge they are evil, you may be sure that God's judgment is not less accurate than yours, and how are you going to escape the judgment of God?

The principle is of universal application, "O man, every one who judgest". It applies to every one who has ability to judge the evil that another does. This chapter supposes light as to God's goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering. Verse 7 supposes Christian light. We might use any light that we have from God in the way of judging others; this is usually done with a view to excusing ourselves; but it really renders us inexcusable. There is necessity for man to take the ground of repentance because he is the same kind of being as the one he judges. Paul does not hesitate to say, "Thou that judgest doest the same things".

The glad tidings includes a good deal that, we are, perhaps, not disposed to put into it; for instance, part of the glad tidings is that God is going to judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ. What glad tidings can there be in that? It forces on man the absolute necessity of repentance, and that is the way man can get morally right with God. For man to get right with God is the most blessed thing possible, so it is part of Paul's glad tidings to insist that the secrets of men are going to be judged by Jesus Christ.

There is no true repentance without faith. Any change in a man's course or conduct without faith would be simply reformation, or turning over a new leaf. It could only lead to a man going about to establish his own righteousness. It would not have reference to God. There must be some light from God in the soul to produce repentance. Repentance is a change of mind produced by the knowledge of God in grace, so that man takes account of his sinful course and of all the evil he has done, and takes up a new attitude in regard to it. Instead of justifying it and going on with it, he condemns it and separates himself morally from it. He judges it in presence of divine goodness, and in presence of the grace revealed in the glad tidings. We have been seeing how God in righteousness can justify men who have sinned, but this requires repentance. It would not be a righteous act on God's part to justify an unrepentant sinner. Repentance, where it is genuine, is "towards God"; the soul begins to review its state and course in relation to God; it is not merely a question of how we have behaved before men, but like Psalm 51: 4, "Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done what is evil in thy sight".

But then on the ground of the death of Christ it is a righteous thing with God to exercise goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, and He waits in His goodness that men may take the ground of repentance. But if they will not, if they are hard and impenitent, they are inevitably moving on to the day of wrath. God's goodness leads to repentance; He is so good that though my course and actions deserve His judgment, instead of judging me there have been riches of goodness, longsuffering, and forbearance. Do I despise them? "Despisest thou the riches of his goodness, and forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads thee to repentance?" The principle is established here that God must judge evil wherever He finds it. If a man remains identified with evil he must come under the judgment of God: the only thing that morally separates a man from evil is repentance. Justification clears him judicially, but repentance clears him morally.

It is very beautiful to think of the riches of the goodness of God, of His forbearance and longsuffering. God is saying, as it were, I am waiting patiently

for you to think of things as I do. Then He has helped us wonderfully in the judgment of ourselves by bringing in Christ; that is the greatest possible help in the direction of repentance. God has brought in "glory and honour and incorruptibility" as things to be sought after, but as things substantiated in Christ. These things are now brought within the view of men, and we do not begin to move on the line of what is good till we come under their influence. Paul speaks about those who, "In patient continuance of good work, seek for glory and honour and incorruptibility". God has brought in a perfect contrast to all the shame and dishonour and corruptibility of the first and fallen man: glory and honour and incorruptibility are in Christ. God has brought in these wonderful things as an attractive goal, and they are to be sought after. In the light of Christ a profound depth of self-judgment is brought about, because I find that every motive in my heart, every feature of my inward being, is the perfect contrast to the glory and honour that has appeared in Him. There is nothing at all in me that God could put distinction upon, but there is everything in Christ that God could put glory and honour upon. Man is God's image and glory, but he only gets this in a moral sense by having Christ as Head.

Repentance is of the greatest importance, and it should be thought of, not as a thing done once for all, but as kept up continuously so that we judge ourselves and move on the line of good. We may repeat that God only regards moral conditions in man: there is no acceptance of persons with Him. J.N.D. said that repentance goes on deepening all through the lifetime of a saint. The older a saint gets the more humble and contrite he should be in regard to himself as a man in the flesh: but he should surely get an ever-deepening appreciation of the Man God has invested with glory and honour. God is working to bring His creature away from the line of what is evil on to the line of what is good; that is the object of the glad tidings.

At the end of this chapter Paul speak specifically to the Jew; and he shows how one might be on the ground of making one's boast in God and in the truth, and in all the light and knowledge one has got, and yet be going on in an evil course and in a state displeasing to God. This applies in principle to the Christian: he might do the same. This chapter brings us in a very definite way to moral realities: nothing can be pleasing to God but that His creature should be going on with what is good; He has brought in the glad tidings that by His salvation we might be delivered from what is evil and put on the line of what is good. The only conditions are that there should be faith which gives God His place with us, and that in the light of God having His place with us we should judge ourselves. We repent in the light of the goodness of God and the moral perfection that has been disclosed to us in Christ. He is the Man of God's

pleasure — the Man of glory, and honour, and incorruptibility. I am the man of shame, dishonour, and corruptibility, and I judge myself. Christ is the Man for God, and now through grace He is the Man for me. It is very simple, but there is profound importance in it. It is a great thing to come to this in one's soul; then one is not professing all kinds of things and yet going on inwardly with what is evil. It says at the end of the chapter, "He is a Jew who is so inwardly" — it is what we are inwardly that is important.

We find some here who are said to be contentious and disobedient to the truth, and who obey unrighteousness. That supposes the light of the gospel has come in, but instead of man submitting to it he is contentious; he is disobedient to the truth, but he obeys unrighteousness. There is no blessing for that condition, or for a man with a hard impenitent heart. Such a man moves on inevitably to the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God. It is very solemn, but there is no getting away from it.

As Christ comes into the vision of our souls, what is marked by glory, and honour, and incorruptibility gets a real place with us, and we seek it. We find in Psalm 8 that God is mindful of fallen man, "What is man that thou art mindful of him?" — that is, mortal man. But God visits the Son of Man, and crowns Him with glory and honour. That is not the man under death, but the Man on whom God can put every distinction — Christ. Which man have we before us? The man of shame, dishonour, and corruptibility, or the Man of glory, honour, and incorruptibility? We have all realised, I trust, that we cannot go on with the two. God would have us to be definitely and persistently going on with what is good and in definite separation from what is evil, so that there might be with us a patient continuance of good work (not works). That is, the Christian having God and Christ before him moves on the line of good. It is good work in contrast to all the evil that marks fallen man. The Christian moves on an entirely new line, a line on which God can put distinction. "Glory and honour and peace to every one that works good". The object of the glad tidings is not simply to save men from judgment in the future, but to put the believer on a line where God can approve the whole course he follows, and put distinction on him, even "glory and honour and peace". That is what God would do with every one of us. How blessed to have ability, in the light of God and Christ, to judge and part company morally with all that we were according to flesh, and to go on with all that is good, so that the whole life becomes a patient continuance in good work.

The point in this chapter is that if we are going on with evil we are going on with that which God must judge, for He cannot go on with evil. But God is active in His grace to put us on another line altogether, and He does it by the

glad tidings. If we judge ourselves we shall not be judged; that is an important principle. Justification clears the ungodly sinner who believes from every charge under the eye of God, but then there is also repentance by which the one who has believed is cleared morally, because he judges for himself all that God judges. Then the believer's thoughts and affections are identified with what God approves; he seeks glory, honour, and incorruptibility as seen in Christ; he has "changed his man". If we move on that line we shall have glory, honour, and peace, but if we go on with evil we shall meet with wrath and indignation, tribulation and distress.

A certain quietness and consciousness of integrity with God come about by repentance even when the soul may not have full peace. A man who judges himself has the inward consciousness that he is now with God, and that he is on the line of righteousness, and there is a relief of soul in this. One has the consciousness of uprightness with God. If I am going on with something evil I cannot be thus with God, but when I judge my evil-doing and separate myself from it I have the consciousness that I am so far in correspondence with God.

Man glories in his shame, but it is only the features of Christ that have true glory. Peter never forgot what he saw on the Mount; he says, "He received from God the Father honour and glory". There was a Man who could be distinguished by God, for His every feature was delightful to God; He could be saluted as the beloved Son of God in whom the Father had found His delight. He has gone to God now in resurrection, in incorruptibility, to be eternally with God beyond death. We see the glory and honour of Christ in Psalm 8: 5 and incorruptibility in Psalm 16: 10. The man of shame and dishonour decays, and goes down to the dust of death. But Man as marked by glory and honour is invested with incorruptibility. Christ risen lives to God in eternal and undecaying conditions. He is set before God's face for ever; Psalm 41: 12.

The glad tidings in power in our souls would completely separate us morally from corrupt and fallen man, and set us on the line of pursuing all that belongs to the Man of glory, and honour, and incorruptibility, and on that line we have the consciousness that we are approved of God.

The Jew by possession of superior light was brought under special condemnation, and that is very solemn because in principle it applies to any who have special light. If we have the oracles of God, so much the worse for us if moral conditions are not there. The secrets of men will all be judged. There are certain things which men naturally like to hide — motives and reasons for conduct, the deep inwardness of things! There is a whole world of things which men like to hide, but it is just those things which God is going to judge. It is most important for us as saints to cultivate a secret history that

can be approved of God, so that there may be no hidden motives or movements that will not bear the light. One would not care to be conscious of allowing, or consenting to harbour, a motive that would not stand the light of God's presence. It is not that innumerable evils are not there in one's flesh, but their true character is detected and judged in secret, so that the secrets of the believer's heart are that he mourns and judges what is of the flesh, and delights in what is of Christ. This secures inward purity and righteousness and holiness. A soul having the knowledge of God in the light of the glad tidings is glad to have all investigated.

He desires, like the man in Psalm 139, to be searched. How many could say that they have been more distressed about what they have found in secret within than by anything they have ever done? The blessed thing is that we can be with God about it, and in judging it be morally separate from it, and free to pursue the line of what is good. Grace entitles us to do this.

"Grief according to God works repentance to salvation, never to be regretted". In repentance we take up a definite attitude in regard to things that, we have been going on with, so that we are in moral separation from them. That works out in the way of salvation, and we never regret that. The Jew had the light that God had been pleased to give in Old Testament times; he rested in the law, and made his boast in God; he knew God's will, and was well able to teach others what was right. But he did not teach himself; he was not a model or pattern of the things that he taught, but was a discredit to them.

James warns us not to be many teachers, for we shall receive the greater judgment. It is a serious thing to take the place of having light from God, and of bringing it before others; one feels more and more that we have no right to bring the truth before others, if it has not in some measure taken effect in our own souls.

The exercise of this chapter comes home to us all. We were speaking of the readiness to judge evil in others without being really any better ourselves. I suppose we have all found ourselves out as to this, when the eye of the conscience was turned inward, and it has led us to begin at home and judge ourselves in true repentance. The first section of this chapter emphasises the necessity for repentance; it is most important for every one of us to take account of it; it brings about a chastened and subdued spirit. A man with a broken and contrite heart will prosper spiritually; he will never give trouble to his brethren.

The Jew could teach what was right; he was sound in doctrine; but he was no pattern or model of what he taught. The consideration of this suggests Christ to us by way of contrast. God has brought in a Teacher who *was* everything

that He taught; there is in Christ a standard of excellence that we may well thank God for. When they said of Him, "Who art Thou?" He answered, "Altogether that which I also say unto you", John 8: 25. This chapter touches on different kinds of mistakes into which men fall; and there is no greater mistake than to think that because we know the terms of truth we are all right. There may be a good deal of such knowledge without any answer to it in the man who has it. "The scribes and the Pharisees have set themselves down in Moses' seat: all things therefore, whatever they may tell you, do and keep. But do not after their works, for they say and do not", Matthew 23: 2, 3. In contrast to that, Paul could say, "Thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life". He was after the model of the excellent standard. God would have us to learn how to judge what is evil in ourselves by knowing the excellence of Christ. There was no disparity between the Lord Jesus and what He taught; there is often great disparity with us. The consciousness of that in one who taught would keep him very chastened in spirit; there would be a subduedness about teaching that came through a self-judged vessel.

God deals with moral realities; He is concerned about what we are much more than about what we say. We have to remember in prayer that God deals with moral realities. "Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thy heart be hasty to utter anything before God", etc. (Ecclesiastes 5: 1 - 3). One secret, of our weakness in prayer is that, our expressions often go beyond our true desires. The glad tidings in power in our souls would liberate us from everything unreal, so that we should be real before God; every desire expressed in prayer thoroughly real out of a pure heart; and every word spoken in teaching to one another real and genuine: according to the excellence of the model seen so perfectly in Christ.

God is going to judge the secrets of men, and we have to face it; it is part of the gospel. If the glad tidings is in power in our souls it will put the secrets right. Then we shall have a man not only doing and saying right, but thinking and feeling right; all the motives down to the root of his moral being such as will bear the light of God. If we have not come to that we have more to learn about the power of the glad tidings. By the renewing of the Holy Spirit the believer has a renewed mind — a new way of thinking about everything. My thoughts are my secrets. What natural man would like to disclose his thoughts? He would not do it to his nearest friend. But if by the renewing of the Holy Spirit a man gets a renewed mind, it transforms him into correspondence to the will of God. He becomes assimilated to the excellent standard as seen in Jesus. One fears sometimes that we get our minds occupied with what we regard as advanced truth, and neglect the moral realities which the glad tidings would bring about. One might have sensations

of mental pleasure in accepting truth and yet the conscience not be touched. Nothing is more important, than to be exercised in conscience, and to keep a good conscience.

Only one kind of man will do for God. If we learn in these chapters, and in our own exercises, the character of the other man, it is only to turn us to the Man after God's own heart — the One who *was* everything that He taught. It is a comfort to know that we can see what the Lord Jesus *was* in what He said: it was perfectly set forth there; He was what He said. Paul in his measure was after that Pattern, and Timothy too. Paul said, Timothy will "put you in mind of my ways as they are in Christ; according as I teach everywhere". When he comes you will see it also in him; he will remind you of me! Timothy's ways were in Christ as well as Paul's; he was like Paul. The truest and most genuine self-judgment is not brought about by seeing one's wrong acts in the past, or even by the law, but by the soul coming into the presence of the perfections of Jesus.

At the end of the chapter Paul dwells much on what is inward or secret. "He is not a Jew who is one outwardly". I remember F. E. R. beginning an address by saying, "I take it for granted that I am addressing a company of good Jews". He had this scripture in his mind. We ought to aspire to be good Jews inwardly and spiritually, persons truly circumcised, not in the flesh, but circumcised in heart and spirit, so that things are right inwardly or in secret. One loves to think how perfect everything was in the inward life of Jesus. "The hidden manna" is just that; it was that in Jesus which was hidden from every eye but the eye of God. The manna suggests what is suitable to God in wilderness conditions and circumstances, a perfection that comes out of heaven and can manifest itself in relation to every detail in the wilderness, so that every grain of sand in the wilderness has its grain of manna upon it. The hidden manna speaks of Christ, not in His public life, but in what was secret under the eye of God. We read here, "Whose praise is not of men but of God". Think of the perfection of the secret exercises of Jesus! We can gather from the prophetic word — particularly from some of, the Psalms — intimations of what came under the eye of God in the inward exercises of the Lord Jesus in relation to His pathway in this world. I have been told that in icebergs, for every ton of ice above the surface, there are eight tons beneath the surface. What ballast we should have to steady our souls if our secret exercises with God exceeded everything that was public! It was like that in the life of Jesus; how much was there that never came under the eye of men! Upon His mother's breasts He was made to trust; Psalm 22: 9. Who saw the trust of the infant Jesus but the eye of God? And that was but the earliest manifestation of His inward perfection.

The overcomer in Pergamos has the hidden manna. When the church began to make a public appearance in the world, the Lord drew the attention of the overcomer to what was hidden; "the hidden manna", and the "white stone, and on the stone a new name written, which no one knows but he that receives it". Manna refers to the responsible path; it ceased soon after they crossed the Jordan, it stood in relation to the wilderness. We should all be more exercised about what is secret than what is public. If God is going to judge the secrets of men, that is where I must begin; that is the thing to be exercised about. What is outside will be all right if all is right within. If I want to see the excellent standard I must look at Jesus; I see there a life where every secret influence, motive, sympathy, feeling, and thought were in perfect correspondence with God. What God values is the inside of a man, His primary concern is not the outside: "Behold, thou wilt have truth in the inward parts; and in the hidden part thou wilt make me to know wisdom", Psalm 51: 6. God is working to reproduce the features of Christ in the hidden man of the heart; 1 Peter 3: 4. We should be concerned about things being genuine under the eye of God. In this epistle we get down to bedrock — to the reality of things; we are apt to be living a kind of external Christian life, and holding things in terms and phrases. A Jew could tell you what the Scriptures said about things, and he boasted in circumcision, which did indeed give him a privileged place outwardly. In the same way people sometimes boast in their baptism and even in the fact that they break bread. But unless there is moral correspondence with these things, they have no value under the eye of God. It is not that the external is unimportant, but to have value under the eye of God it must flow from what is internal. In the Lord Jesus everything flowed out from what was within. Think of all the inward perfection which was in Him! And even what was outward was comparatively hidden for thirty years; it was entirely out of sight as far as the public world was concerned. But how choice was its value under the eye of God! The allusions to Christ in this chapter are veiled, but the veiled allusions to Christ in Scripture are a very precious heritage of faith.

We are apt to ignore moral realities; to keep them in view is a constant exercise. It is not in vain that the judging of the secrets of men is part of the gospel: it secures that everything shall be taken up as before God who knows all. It would bring about deep exercise in every upright soul, and lead to one saying, "Search me, O God, and know my heart; prove me and know my thoughts". Have I any object but Christ?

The human heart is ever ready to rest in ordinances. The Jew rested in the fact of circumcision, and that he was numbered among the people of God. To be outwardly amongst the people of God is truly a privilege, but without obedience it is of no spiritual value, God had said by the prophet Jeremiah

that "all the house of Israel are uncircumcised in heart", Jeremiah 9: 26. God looks for subjection to Him, and the practical setting aside of the will of the flesh by obedience. This is the true circumcision, and the one who has it is accounted circumcised. So that the uncircumcised Gentile who does what is pleasing to God judges the Jew who transgresses. Ordinances and outward privileges can never make up for the lack of submission and obedience. Everything is tested, not by what is held and taught, or by any outward privilege that one might have, but by the one standard of obedience. The power of Christianity is known in secret; the place God has in the heart is the hidden spring of everything. Obedience is the test of everything; the Lord insists in John 14 that it is the test of love.

ROMANS 3

Romans 3

In this chapter Paul raises the question, "What then is the superiority of the Jew? Or what profit of circumcision? Much every way: and first, indeed, that to them were entrusted the oracles of God". After what he had said some might think there was no superiority in the Jew, and no profit in circumcision. But outward privileges are advantageous as far as they go. In the first place the Jew had the oracles of God. This was a great advantage, though, in result, it turned out to condemnation, as is shown in this chapter, for the oracles of God stopped their mouths and stripped them of every excuse, and gave them the knowledge of sin.

When the oracles were given to Moses they were "living", Acts 7: 38. That suggests to me that when God communicated those wonderful things to Moses it was in His mind that they should not be connected with man after the flesh at all, for that man was under death. The whole system of the tabernacle was "living" under the eye of God, for it spoke of Christ. The "living oracles" expressed the mind of God, which ever centred in Christ: and no doubt, as one who had the Spirit of Christ, and with whom God spoke face to face, Moses understood this in some measure. To such a one they were "living oracles".

Those who are in possession of the Holy Scriptures may be said to have the oracles of God now. The Scriptures may cease practically to be light from God for men: that is a very solemn thing, and it is largely the case in Christendom today. But they are still the oracles of God, and it is a great privilege to have them, but it is a privilege that carries with it grave responsibility. If men have the oracles of God they are inexcusable. In chapter 1 men are inexcusable because they have the testimony of creation, and in chapter 2 they are inexcusable because they have the knowledge of good and evil, and know how to judge evil in others. In chapter 3 men are inexcusable because they have the oracles of God. All this is to prepare the way for the glad tidings — to show that men are verily guilty and without excuse, and that they are shut up to God, and to His pure mercy, for blessing. God is clearing the ground that He may bring in blessing in the perfection of His own grace.

Outward privileges amongst the people of God do not give faith. It may be expected that amongst those who profess to know God there will be the evidence of unbelief, but that does not invalidate "the faith of God". "The faith of God" would be that faith which takes account of God, and accepts God's estimate of things in contrast to one's own. It is better to take God's estimate.

"But let God be true and every man false; according as it is written. So that thou shouldest be justified in thy words, and shouldest overcome when thou art in judgment". I suppose David, blessed man as he was, had not really taken God's estimate of himself. No doubt David had written many Psalms before he wrote Psalm 51, and he had probably expressed as a prophet more than once God's estimate of man, but it is possible to do this without really justifying God in one's own spirit. David had to fall into terrible sin to bring home to him that God was justified in everything He had said about man.

It is one thing to justify God in a general way, and admit that we are all sinners, but it is another thing to be personally searched, and to admit that God has said the truth about *me*. "Man's spirit is the lamp of Jehovah, searching all the chambers of the soul", Proverbs 20: 27. We see David's spirit searching all the chambers of his soul in Psalm 51. He had to find out that God was justified in His words; he had to prove personally what he was capable of. It is most important to justify God. Unbelieving man is false. I only begin to have truth in the inward parts when I justify God. It is a very serious thing to read a chapter like this, and set our seal to it, and say, It is all true, not only in general of mankind, but true of *me* as one of Adam's race. I justify God in every word of it. Apart from this we shall never really understand the righteousness of God, or even see the need of it. To humbly bow our souls under the truth of this chapter is the way of blessing, and it is better to come to a true judgment of ourselves in secret with God than to have to plunge into one evil after another to demonstrate that we are what God says we are. God must be justified; He is true; and everything that comes out of my heart naturally in relation to God is a lie. That is the terrible result of the incoming of sin.

"The faith of God" means that God has really come before the soul. God does not come before the natural man; there is no fear of God before his eyes, nor does he seek God; he says in his heart, "No God". That is the language of my heart according to what I am naturally as a child of fallen Adam. If that is so, blessing can only come in by pure mercy and grace on God's part, and the gospel shows how God has come out to make Himself known that we might have "the faith of God". The more thoroughly I am convinced of the truth of what I am as born into this world, the more glad I am to know that God has come out in righteous grace that I might be blessed through Jesus Christ His Son, His anointed Man, and that, as having the faith of God and of Jesus Christ, I can be justified and receive the Holy Spirit.

But now another important part of the truth is touched on: viz., that man's sinful state in no wise relieves him of responsibility. This epistle shows how

God meets every attitude that the mind of man takes in relation to Himself and His truth. One attitude of man's mind would be this, If I was brought forth in iniquity and conceived in sin, and if all my wrong-doing only proves that God is righteous in describing me as sinful, how could I help it? Why should I be judged for doing wrong? Men would wish to disclaim responsibility; they very often take that line. Paul reasons this out in verses 5 - 8: "If the truth of God in my lie has more abounded to his glory, why yet am I also judged as a sinner?" A man will say callously, If my sinful state, and all the wrong thoughts of my heart about God, only prove that He has said the truth about me, I cannot help going on in evil, and why should God judge me for it? I will go on sinning, and hope it will turn out all right in the end. "Let us practise evil things, that good ones may come". Paul himself had been charged with saying this. I suppose his pressing the total ruin of man by nature, and that all blessing must come in from God in pure grace, had been perverted by his adversaries in this way. But he has a very short answer to those who would thus set aside the creature's responsibility.

He says, "Whose judgment is just", and with that he leaves the subject.

The seven scriptures quoted here from the Old Testament give a terrible description of man after the flesh — our old man. There is no place for God with that man, and therefore no righteousness and no goodness. This stops every mouth, and brings in all the world as "under judgment to God"; that is, all men have incurred His displeasure; they do not answer to what He requires. But those called of God separate themselves by repentance from the man described here; they judge themselves in the light of God; they "let God be true". If we look up the scriptures here cited we shall find that they not only contain God's estimate of "the children of men", but that they also show that God does secure a people for Himself.

For example, Psalm 14 not only tells us that "Jehovah looked down from the heavens upon the children of men", and what He saw in them, but it also says, "God is in the generation of the righteous", and it speaks of those whom Jehovah calls "my people", and of the afflicted who has Jehovah as his refuge. Psalm 5, which is the next scripture quoted, speaks of some whose "throat is an open sepulchre", but it also gives the language of one who can say, "But as for me, in the greatness of thy loving-kindness will I enter thy house; I will bow down toward the temple of thy holiness in thy fear. Lead me, Jehovah, in thy righteousness". Psalm 140 not only speaks of some who have adder's poison under their lips, but it voices the confidence of one who can say, "Jehovah, the Lord, is the strength of my salvation". God secures a generation for Himself, with whom He has a place, and who have faith in Him. Man

cannot produce that generation; it comes in, not on the line of nature or of descent from Adam, but, according to this epistle, by the calling of God.

The evidence of divine calling is that one condemns himself, and separates himself by repentance from all that he was as a child of Adam. He justifies God, and he learns that God's righteousness is manifested towards him "by faith of Jesus Christ". Divine calling sets things in motion in the soul; the fear of God comes in — faith, self-judgment, the appreciation of Christ. It is not always possible to tell which moves first in the soul; the fact is, these things largely move together like the spokes of a wheel. When a man fears God, and seeks Him, he is evidently morally apart from the man described in Romans 3: 10 - 18. He is prepared to appreciate, and set value on, Jesus Christ as God's anointed Man, when that blessed Man is presented to his faith in the glad tidings.

"Wherefore by works of law no flesh shall be justified before him; for by law is knowledge of sin". A divine rule applied to "the children of men" can only give knowledge of sin, just as a plumb-line applied to a crooked wall exposes its crookedness. The case is so proved against "all the world" that no one can say a word in self-defence. The law cannot justify; it only manifests the wrong that is there.

"But now without law righteousness of God is manifested, borne witness to by the law and the prophets; righteousness of God by faith of Jesus Christ towards all". What an immense change is this from everything we have been reading from verse 19 of chapter 1 to verse 20 of chapter 3! We come now to what is OF GOD, manifested in grace to sinful men, wholly apart from law, and it is of the utmost importance that we should apprehend it. We cannot have peace with God if we do not know His righteousness, and souls who have got blessing from such verses as John 3: 16 and John 5: 24 have to learn the righteousness of God according to Romans in order to have a solid foundation of peace. A servant of the Lord said that there was nothing like the love of God to break a sinner down, but that the righteousness of God must be the foundation of all true building up.

The "righteousness of God" is "borne witness to by the law and the prophets". The whole of Scripture testifies to the fact that God has a way of relieving sinful men of the burden of guilt, apart from any works of theirs, and His righteousness is made known in this wondrous way of grace. The teaching of the sin and trespass offerings, and, above all, that of the day of atonement, spoke of a ground of forgiveness, or clearance from guilt, entirely different from men's works. And as early as Genesis 4 God said to Cain, "If thou doest

not well, a sin-offering lieth at the door". It all bore witness to the righteousness of God.

There is a wonderful word in Isaiah 53: 11 as to how we are instructed in righteousness: "By his knowledge shall my righteous servant instruct many in righteousness; and *he* shall bear their iniquities". Isaiah 53 brings before us Christ as the Guilt-bearer. He was God's righteous Servant to bear iniquities, so that we might learn the righteousness of God in full remission. One loves to think of Christ in the way that He is presented here. Not only accomplishing in sufferings and death the great work of sin-bearing, but having perfect knowledge of all that He has effected thereby. The Blessed Person who accomplished the work is the One who understands it. We may feel that we know very little about it, but *God* knows the value of that atonement, and it is known also to *Christ*, His righteous Servant. It is precious to think that Christ, as God's righteous Servant, has not only established the righteousness of God in bearing the judgment of sin, but that He has perfect knowledge of what has been effected, so that He can instruct in righteousness those who have the faith of Him. How blessed to regard Romans 3 as the personal instruction of Christ! We need to be preserved from what is merely doctrinal and theological, and to learn the righteousness of God under the direct instruction of Christ. It is as it comes to our souls as His instruction that we learn its true value and blessedness.

Righteousness of God is "by faith of Jesus Christ towards all". God has introduced into this world a Man whom He could anoint. Every feature in Jesus, inwardly and outwardly, was suitable for the Holy Spirit to come into contact with. He was altogether God's delight; and God is now presenting Him as an Object for the faith of men. It is the business of those who preach to set Jesus Christ before men — to preach Him in the truth of His Person, and in the detail of His moral glory and wondrous worth, that men may have the faith of Him. How striking the first verse of Mark's gospel: "Beginning of the glad tidings of Jesus Christ, Son of God"! God has brought in One who is in every way worthy to be the Object of faith. He is the One of whom God could say from the opened heaven, "Thou art my beloved Son, in thee I have found my delight". God is saying to men, What do you think of Jesus Christ, My Son? No one will ever be able to say that there was something about Him which made it impossible to have faith in Him. He was God's Holy One, the perfectly righteous One, yet, withal, full of grace to sinful men, Has anyone found a flaw in Jesus? Is there anything that discredits Him, that would lead men to feel that He was untrustworthy? No, it must be admitted that He deserves to be the Object of faith to all men. There was everything in Him for God's pleasure and man's blessing. "The law was given by Moses: grace and truth subsists

through Jesus Christ", John 1: 17. Grace and truth were perfectly blended and united in one through Jesus Christ. We see all that is of God, and all that is suitable to God in a man, in Jesus Christ, and it is "towards all". The law was never towards all, but when God manifested His righteousness by faith of Jesus Christ it was "towards all". When He was here God was "preaching peace by Jesus Christ". It surpasses fable, and yet it is divinely true, that God has approached His sinful creatures in a Man, in the way of peace and grace and truth, awakening faith by the very character of all that He presented in that blessed Man. What did it effect when He was here? It attracted the wretched, the weary, the helpless, the sinful! Every one with a broken and contrite heart was moved and attracted. Every one exercised before God was attracted. And this is ever the effect of the preaching of Jesus Christ.

"Faith of Jesus Christ" takes account of Him in the truth of what He was, and what He is. In Jesus Christ we see the glory of God in a Man, for He was, and is, the Image and glory of God. We see in Him the full measure of that glory of which all Adam's children have come short. There is a personal Object for faith; not merely a finished work to rest on, but a Person for the heart. This breaks the power of the world in the heart of the believer. God says by the prophet Hosea, "I drew them with bands of a man, with cords of love", Hosea 11: 4. No one can gainsay that Jesus Christ has every feature and qualification that renders Him worthy to be the Object of faith. I think it was Napoleon who said that it would be a greater miracle to imagine such a Person than that such a Person should exist! It could never have entered the mind of man to delineate such a character. How could the natural man, as described in this chapter, have ever conceived the perfection, the moral glory, the holy beauty of God's Anointed? No! Jesus Christ is a divine Reality; and the "faith of Jesus Christ" is simply that He becomes a Reality in the heart of the believer. It is no working-up of sentiment or emotion, but perceiving the blessed character of the One in whom the grace of God is set forth to men, and having the faith of Him. But the preaching of Jesus Christ tests every heart that it comes to. If one turns from it, and says in effect, That is a Person I care nothing about, does he not condemn himself?

We can add now the wondrous fact that He has been in death, descending into the sinner's place and just desert, so that the righteousness of God might be known in the way of perfect grace.

On man's side "there is no difference; for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God". The more conscious I am that I have come short of the glory of God, the more thankful I am to have the faith of One who has not come short, but in whom the glory of God shines forth in the way of grace. It

is open to all men to have the faith of Jesus Christ, and all those who have it are "justified freely by his grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus". The word translated "freely" here is translated "without a cause" in John 15: 25. What a beautiful thought it gives of the ungrudging way in which God justifies! It is an act of pure favour; He has pleasure in relieving the believer of every charge and liability. There is complete absolution; no question of the believer's sins will ever be raised by God; all guilt is completely blotted out. "Be it known unto you, therefore, brethren, that through this man remission of sins is preached to you, and from all things from which ye could not be justified in the law of Moses, in him every one that believes is justified", Acts 13: 38, 39.

Then this is "through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus". Let us weigh this well, for it expresses one of the greatest thoughts of God. It is God setting forth that He has the right of redemption, and that He has exercised that right in the most wondrous way. He has provided for the recovery — the bringing back to Himself — of the creature that had fallen into a state of alienation, and under terrible liabilities. He has exercised the right of redemption that He might free His creature from every liability under which that creature had come by sin. Redemption will secure ultimately that the creature once fallen, and lost to God, will be set in sonship before Him with an incorruptible and glorious body. Justification is the first-fruit of redemption; redemption in its present application is the forgiveness of offences through the blood of Christ (see Ephesians 1: 7; Colossians 1: 14); but in its full result it will set the saints before God in the condition, place, and relationship of Christ as the risen and glorified Man. Redemption is in Christ Jesus; we see the character and value of it, its greatness and blessedness, there. God in bringing man back to Himself, through His own right of redemption, does not propose to recover him to the point from which he fell — to the innocence of Eden — but to a place and condition which will fully satisfy His Own heart. He redeems that He may have sons in the most blessed nearness to Himself (Galatians 4: 5), and we are God's sons in Christ Jesus; Galatians 3: 26. The full value of the redemption which is in Christ Jesus will not be manifested until the revelation of the sons of God, when with redeemed and glorified bodies holy myriads will be conformed to the image of God's Son, so that He will be the "firstborn among many brethren", Romans 8:19; Romans 8:23; Romans 8:29.

The redemption which is in Christ, Jesus is not developed as to all its results in Romans 3. It is introduced as that through which God justifies those who have the "faith of Jesus Christ". But it illumines the blessed character in which God is to be known. He is to be known in redemption. He had taught His people in Old Testament times that there was such a thing as the right of redemption. It

must have been very precious to God to intimate that to His people, for His glory was to come out in it. Satan had perceived that God's heart was set on man, so he brought all his subtlety to bear to rob God of the creature of His predilection, and man came under sin and death. But God fell back on the right of redemption, and brought in a new Head for man, One who by God's grace bore the judgment of sin, and the penalty of death to which man had become subject, and who is now a risen and glorified Man in heaven. It is not a redemption that takes man back to Eden and innocence, but that shows the full pleasure of God secured in a risen and heavenly Christ, and if men are blessed at all they are blessed according to the power of the redemption which is in Him.

Now, as we have said, the first-fruit of redemption is that the believer is justified freely by God's grace. God is acting within His redemption rights in justifying the believer; He has secured those rights at His own cost, and in virtue of the blood of Christ. If God justifies, and is righteous in doing it, "Who shall bring an accusation against God's elect?"

Then God shows us something of the glory of the Mercy-seat. "Christ Jesus; whom God has set forth a mercy-seat". The glorious character in which God is presenting Himself to sinful men is here magnified to the utmost. His throne has taken the character of a Mercy-seat. God is "of purer eyes than to behold evil", but He has at His own cost provided for its being dealt with in holy judgment, so that He might come out to men in purest mercy. The Mercy-seat was pure gold; it is all divine; it speaks of what God is — of what He has a glorious right to be — in mercy. The rending of the veil of the temple from the top to the bottom was an intimation that the Mercy-seat could now be brought forth from its secret place, and set forth on God's part to men. Soon it will be the day of the revelation of the righteous judgment of God, but it is now the day of the setting forth of Christ Jesus as the Mercy-seat. God is coming out in the glad tidings in the glory of His mercy. What volumes does it speak of the power and holy value of the blood of Christ! There could have been no Mercy-seat if the blood of the Sin-offering had not been sprinkled upon it. Thank God, He has provided the Bullock and the Goat of the Sin-offering, glorifying Himself in righteousness in view of the blessing of both heavenly and earthly companies of called ones. The burning outside the camp of the bodies of those beasts whose blood was carried into the holy of holies spoke of the consuming judgment which Jesus bore when He was the forsaken One upon the cross. But the blood sprinkled on the Mercy-seat told of the God-glorifying power of the death of Christ, which has so vindicated and satisfied every claim of God as to sin that His mercy can be set forth towards all. No creature will ever know the full value of the blood of Christ, but it is known to God, and He

is setting forth Christ Jesus as a Mercy-seat in the power and value of that blood. God is more glorified in the justification of a believing sinner than He would be in the eternal destruction of that sinner if he remained impenitent.

The blessed light of God known in redemption, and of Christ Jesus as the Mercy-seat, comes into the souls of men through faith. What a knowledge of the glory of God thus comes into man's heart — God known in His righteousness and holy mercy! It is impossible for God to add anything to make the appeal of His grace more powerful and touching. Is it not certain that if men remain untouched and impenitent after such a setting forth of God before their eyes, there can be no place for them but the lake of fire? The lake of fire was not prepared for men, but for the devil and his angels. It is the place where obdurate rebellion meets its just desert. But human beings who remain finally hard and impenitent after hearing of redemption and the Mercy-seat will share the doom of those wicked spirits.

Christ Jesus as the Mercy-seat in the power of His blood throws a wondrous light back over the Old Testament history, and illuminates the past ways of God in grace. The righteousness of God is hereby shown in passing by the sins of Old Testament believers; God passed by their sins on the ground of the death of Christ. And now Christ Jesus being set forth as a Mercy-seat shows forth the righteousness of God "in the present time, so that he should be just, and justify him that is of the faith of Jesus". God clears of every charge the one that is of the faith of Jesus, and His righteousness is shown forth in the fact that He does it through redemption, and on the ground of the value of the blood of Christ. Man's works and boastings have no place here; "a man is justified by faith, without works of law". It is purely a question of what GOD is, and the way in which He is pleased to present Himself to His sinful creature man. All hangs on that.

GOD cannot be limited to Jews, so that if He is just and the Justifier, *all men* may know Him to be so. But the principle on which He can be thus known is faith. Faith gives the light and truth of what God is a place in the heart of His sinful creature. How could works give the knowledge of God's righteousness through redemption, or the apprehension of Christ Jesus as the Mercy-seat, or any estimate of the value of His blood as meeting every claim of divine glory in regard to sin? These things are known to *faith*, and God justifies on that principle alone. The Jew who had the law could only be justified on the principle of faith, and if that were so, how useless it would be to propose works of law as a ground of righteousness to the uncircumcised Gentile! God would justify him also by faith. Boasting is completely excluded, for this great

blessing comes only through the knowledge of God as revealed in righteousness and grace — a knowledge received by faith.

ROMANS 4

Romans 4

The great subject of chapter 3 is the righteousness of God, but that of chapter 4 is the righteousness of faith: that righteousness of which the believer becomes possessed. The righteousness of faith is spoken of in this chapter as being *found* (verse 1); chapter 9 speaks of it as being *attained* (verse 30); the Lord spoke of it as something to be hungered and thirsted after. It is a very satisfying thing; for it puts the soul on ground with God from which there is a clear outlook into the whole world of divine glory.

We need to learn the righteousness of God first — to see how just God is in justifying. The righteousness of faith is the portion of those who believe on God in that character. Paul speaks in Philippians 3: 9 of “the righteousness which is of God through faith”. It was a cherished object of desire with him to be found in a condition where it would not be possible for any other kind of righteousness to intrude. Such a condition will be reached in the glorified state. But now faith is possessed of righteousness, attains it,

and this chapter opens out in a precious way the character of it: it is not God’s righteousness here, but the believer’s righteousness.

Abraham was the first one in Scripture in whom the principle was established of having righteousness put to account on the principle of faith. It pleased God to call Abraham and to make him the father of the family of faith. Adam was not exactly called, nor Abel, but Abraham was; the principle of divine calling first appeared in the ways of God in his case, and also the principle of having righteousness on the ground of faith. This is the principle on which alone man can become possessed of righteousness. Abraham was not the first righteous man, nor the first one who had faith. Abel was the first to be spoken of as righteous, and Noah was righteous too, and he became heir of the righteousness which is according to faith; but neither Abel nor Noah was constituted the father of the faith family as Abraham was. And in Abraham the principle was definitely introduced of having righteousness reckoned through believing God. “And he believed Jehovah and he reckoned it to him righteousness”, Genesis 15: 6; he did no works, he believed God. If Abraham has been justified on the principle of works he would have whereof to boast; but this could not be before God. It is necessary to be a child of Abraham to have blessing from God; it is necessary to believe on God. In this chapter it is entirely a question of believing on God, not on Christ. In chapter 3 we get the faith of Jesus Christ, and the faith of Jesus, but here it is believing on God: the soul is put into direct relation with God, as known through the glad tidings.

Through the glad tidings we know God as justifying the ungodly, and we could never know Him in this character otherwise than by the glad tidings.

It does not say here that He justifies believers, though that is true, but He justifies the ungodly. It is very striking that it should be put so. It brings out in the clearest and fullest way how entirely this matter stands apart from any kind of merit in the one who gets it. God justifies the *ungodly*; that is a strong word, the impious. It is God justifying on principles of His own which do not recognize any kind of merit in the person justified. God justifies ungodly persons; that is the God we know in the glad tidings. Do we not love to think of Him, to believe on Him, in that character? Those who do so are accounted righteous; they are justified. We have been shown in chapter 3 that He is perfectly righteous in justifying people who have sinned; and then, to set aside every thought of merit in the persons who are justified, we are told that He justifies the ungodly. That is the God we believe on.

David is brought in as declaring the *blessedness* of the man to whom God reckons righteousness without works. This goes a step farther. The "blessedness" would suggest a very precious and divine sense of the righteousness accounted to one — a positive delight in it — and this involves for us the gift, of the Spirit. The gift of the Spirit is not directly mentioned in this epistle until chapter 5: 5, but I do not think that the: "blessedness" spoken of in chapter 4: 6 could be in the soul apart from the Spirit. It is instructive to note that in this epistle, which so fully unfolds the glad tidings, there is no point formally mentioned at which the believer receives the Spirit. And one can see a reason in the wisdom of God for this. God would not have His saints occupied with the particular moment at which they received the Spirit, so as to dwell on it as a point of experience. He would rather emphasise what the Spirit does for us, as making good to our souls what God is as accounting us righteous. I believe the first action of the Spirit, as given to the believer, is to make good in the soul the knowledge of God in justifying grace. He gives the "blessedness" of this in the heart; He comes as the "seal of the righteousness of faith". The believer is set up with God as having found righteousness. He enjoys by the Spirit the blessed fact that his lawlessnesses have been forgiven, his sins covered, and that God will not at all impute sin to him. Everything connected with his former history of self-will has been blotted out; the Spirit witnesses that none of his sins or lawlessnesses will be remembered by God any more.

Paul says to the Galatians, "This only I wish to learn of you, Have ye received the Spirit on the principle of works of law, or of the report of faith? ... He therefore who ministers to you the Spirit, and works miracles among you, is it

on the principle of works of law, or of the report of faith? Even as Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness. Know then that they that are on the principle of faith, these are Abraham's sons... Christ has redeemed us out of the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, Cursed is every one hanged upon a tree), that the blessing of Abraham might come to the nations in Christ Jesus, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith", Galatians 3. This scripture shows very clearly that the righteousness of faith and the gift of the Spirit go together. And this corresponds with 2 Corinthians 3, where we find that in the new covenant there is the ministry of the Spirit and the ministry of righteousness. The old covenant ministered death and condemnation to all under it; the new covenant ministers the Spirit and righteousness; it serves out these precious realities so that believers become possessed of them. Have you known the "blessedness" of the justified man? Have you had the happiness in your heart of knowing that your lawlessnesses have been forgiven, your sins covered, and that God will not at all reckon sin to you? God would have you to know that this blessedness was in your heart by His Spirit given to you. Jeremiah speaks of new covenant blessing as being the knowledge of God in pardoning the iniquity of His people, and not remembering their sin any more (Jeremiah 31: 33, 34), but Ezekiel speaks also of God putting His Spirit within them; Ezekiel 36: 27. The two things go together.

"For by one offering he has perfected in perpetuity the sanctified. And the Holy Spirit also bears us witness of it", Hebrews 10: 14, 15. The Holy Spirit could not do otherwise than witness to the efficacy of the offering of Christ, and to the perfection in perpetuity of the sanctified, whether we think of His testimony in Scripture or in the heart of the believer. How could the Holy Spirit identify Himself with a doubt as to the righteousness of God, or as to the righteousness of faith? Romans 4: 7, 8, makes very clear what the righteousness is which God reckons to the believer without works. The "blessedness" of it is known in the heart of the believer by the Spirit.

This blessedness cannot be limited to the circumcision,

for Abraham had it in uncircumcision. Circumcision was the "seal of the righteousness of faith", and Abraham is not only father of all them that believe, but he is "father of circumcision" to the whole family of faith. If we believe God, Abraham is our father, but then what kind of father is he? What characterises him? He is "father of circumcision". The righteousness of faith has a divine Seal, and that Seal intimates plainly that the believer is henceforth to move on the line of righteousness; he must refuse the flesh by self-judgment; the flesh must be cut off. The family of faith is marked by

circumcision in a spiritual sense, and the power for this is the Holy Spirit. There can be no doubt that for us the Seal of the righteousness of faith is the gift of the Spirit, but looked at as presented in the type of circumcision; that is, as power to set aside the flesh practically. The Spirit is given that there may be the refusal of the flesh in self-judgment by the believer. The righteousness of faith has this Seal connected with it; it involves that the believer is not henceforth to walk after the flesh. If we do not move on that line we lose the gain and blessedness of having the Spirit. "For he that sows to his own flesh, shall reap corruption from the flesh; but he that sows to the Spirit, from the Spirit shall reap eternal life", Galatians 6: 8. "For if ye live according to flesh, ye are about to die; but if, by the Spirit, ye put to death the deeds of the body, ye shall live", Romans 8: 13.

It is interesting to see that, though the Holy Spirit is not expressly mentioned in Romans 4, we find these two things brought before us which could not be realised in the believer without the Spirit. The gift of the Spirit thus underlies the truth of this chapter, but presented in a veiled way for spiritual apprehension rather than in plain statement.

"For we, by the Spirit, on the principle of faith, await the hope of righteousness", Galatians 5: 5. The "hope of righteousness" does not mean that one hopes to get righteousness; it rather comprises everything that comes into the view of a man who has righteousness and the Spirit; such a one has an outlook on the whole scene of divine glory. The inheritance comes distinctly into his vision. The promise "to Abraham, or to his seed, that he should be heir of the world", was not by law but by righteousness of faith. That was the principle on which the inheritance could be possessed. Abraham was told by Jehovah that he should be "a father of a multitude of nations", and that kings should come out of him (Genesis 17). He was to inherit the world that he and his seed might hold all that God gave to them for His glory and pleasure. Now we know from Romans 8 that the called ones "are children of God. And if children, heirs also: heirs of God, and Christ's joint heirs". The inheritance is the whole vast scene of glory shortly to be revealed; it is all to be possessed and held for God's pleasure by Christ and His joint heirs. But the ground on which we can have part in it is the righteousness of faith.

Then at the end of the chapter we find that Abraham's history throws a further immense flood of light on this subject of the righteousness of faith. It brings out the fact that the God Abraham believed on was one "who quickens the dead". Abraham's faith laid hold of God as One who could bring in life where all was death; the power of life out of death — resurrection power — was with God. There are two great characters in which we believe on God. The first is

that He justifies the ungodly: that brings before us the measureless character of His grace. Then we believe on Him as the One who raised up the Lord Jesus: there we see His power; it is known in resurrection. We all have to learn, as Abraham did, death conditions. It is to be noted that the reading of verse 19 is probably that he *did* consider his own body already become dead and the deadness of Sarah's womb (see note in New Translation). He considered the death conditions, but after considering them he "hesitated not at the promise of God through unbelief". The power of God is a marvellous thing — His ability to bring out of death. Abraham was the first to have the faith of that. Enoch had faith that God could set aside the power of death, and take him to heaven without dying, but that does not go so far as resurrection. It is easier to believe that God could keep a man alive so that he should not see death, than to believe that He could bring him out of death after being in it. Martha and Mary said, "Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died"; but they had to learn that He could do more than that; He could bring Lazarus out of death after he had been in it — that is the power and glory of God. Abraham found inward strength in the faith of God's power. He gave glory to God as the God of resurrection power. It is here a question of what God is *able to do*. Not now His righteousness, or His grace, but His power.

The gospel puts these great foundations under the soul of the believer, so that he not only knows God in righteousness and grace, but in power — power that has acted in view of justification. Abraham's faith was "reckoned to him as righteousness. Now it was not written on his account alone that it was reckoned to him, but on ours also, to whom, believing on him who has raised from among the dead Jesus our Lord, who has been delivered for our offences and has been raised for our justification, it will be reckoned". I see not only God's righteousness and grace, but His power, active for my justification. Resurrection power is the glory of God, but it has come out in the way of grace to men; it has come out in relation to One who was delivered for our offences. If Jesus our Lord was delivered for our offences, how completely must that question be settled! No doubt we see here the anti-type of the scapegoat on which the sins of the people were laid by the hand of the priest to be carried away "to a land apart from men". That is where the sins of the believer are gone, carried away by Jesus to a land apart from men, never to appear again. And now the power of God has come in to raise up Jesus our Lord from the dead, and He has been raised for our justification. How complete, then, is that justification! Who could think of a spot or stain on Jesus risen from the dead! Jesus risen from the dead is surely whiter than snow! How it lowers this wondrous fact to make it merely a receipt to show that the debt is discharged. It is infinitely more than that. It is Man placed by

the mighty power of God in absolute stainlessness before Him. We may get a little thought of it by what was seen in the holy Mount. Matthew says, "His raiment was white as the light", and Mark tells us that "His raiment was exceeding white as snow, as no fuller on earth could white them". Was there less purity in the risen Jesus? Surely not. The power of God has come in to raise Jesus our Lord from the dead in stainless purity; He "has been raised for our justification". Who could think of a charge being brought against the risen Jesus? And I see there the measure and character of my justification. Is it not worthy of God to justify thus? Does it not surpass every thought of the creature mind? The blessedness of it is in the heart by the Spirit.

One would wish for power to be able to bring this blessed God before souls! It is not here a question of faith in Jesus our Lord, but of faith in God — God who has raised Him for our justification — who has set forth in that risen Man the character of righteousness of which He puts the believer in possession. Abraham gave glory to God. In the light and blessedness of justification this should be the continual attitude of our spirits Godward. We know His righteousness, His grace, His power; we are possessed of the righteousness of faith, and we have the Spirit: what is left for us to do is to give glory to God.

The angelic multitude in Luke 2 knew that all was wrapped up in the coming of that holy Babe, so heaven broke forth in joyous acclamations, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good pleasure in men". What a triumph! God known as doing all for His own pleasure, faith getting the gain of it, and having the seal of it in the possession of the Spirit!

"Jesus our Lord" intimates that the Person of whom he is speaking has become the Object of reverential affection. If He is not that to us, what we have spoken of will not have much value for us. But if we have the faith of Him, and of God who raised Him from among the dead, we have in our souls a solid and permanent foundation of peace.

ROMANS 5

Romans 5

It is of great importance to see the character of the believer's justification. Jesus our Lord has been raised from among the dead for our justification. He is clear of all the offences for which He was delivered, so as to be introduced without spot or stain into the scene of God's resurrection power. It is not a perfectly righteous Man living here for our justification, but One who has died, and been raised by God from among the dead. This evidently has in view an entirely new order of things where the power of sin and death is no longer known, As living in the world we were marked by offences, and were subject to the judgment of God, but Jesus our Lord was delivered for our offences, and entered into death for us. He has taken up all that we were under, He has maintained all that was due to God with reference to it, and now God has raised Him for our justification. We are justified in view of living in an entirely new order of things for the pleasure of God. Not justified so as to be relieved of the fear of judgment and left to go on with the "present evil world" (Galatians 1: 4) which is marked by lawlessness and lust, but justified in view of having a place in relation to Christ in what we may speak of as God's world. To apprehend this makes an immense difference practically to the soul, and it is most important in view of what follows in the teaching of this epistle.

In the present world everything is under sin and death, but if we have any knowledge of God at all we must be sure that He will not leave things like that. He is not going to allow Satan to have it all his own way; He will most certainly triumph over all the power of the enemy, and will in His own time set aside all the lawlessness that, has come in. He will bring in His own glory, and have a world where sin and death will not be supreme as they are in this world, but where His rule will be known in untold blessing. This is what Scripture speaks of as the world to come; it has ever been in the view of faith. It will be introduced by the personal return of the Lord Jesus Christ, who will bring all lawlessness under judgment, and who will introduce righteousness and peace and the blessed knowledge of God into the scene which has been so long characterised by the will of the fallen creature. The world to come will be marked by resurrection power, for the Son of man who will be supreme in it will be so as having tasted death for everything, and as having been raised by the mighty power of God. And the saints who will reign with Him will have been raised or changed. Satan will be bound, and the power of sin and death set aside.

Now if God justifies, we may be sure that He does not do it in view of giving us a place in the world which is in every way contrary to His mind, but He justifies in view of His own world. The believer is accounted righteous for that world, so that he can go into it without stain or reproach, no charge can be brought against him. We are justified for the world where all is suitable to God, where divine glory will shine, and which comes under the administration of the Lord Jesus Christ. That administration is not future to faith; it is a present reality. One has heard persons say that they would like to live in the millennium, but the Lord Jesus Christ is *now* enthroned at the right hand of God, and it is possible to come under His administration *now*. We have not to wait for the good of God's world until that world is publicly manifested — though we do rejoice in hope of it — but we come into it as under the present administration of the Lord Jesus Christ. As justified we come into that new order of things free from all charge or imputation of sin. And we come into it to be under the present sway of God in His kingdom, to be henceforth marked by righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit. So that what will mark the world to come is seen in its moral features in those who believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and who walk in the Spirit. We become, as James says, "a certain firstfruits of *his* creatures".

We have been "justified on the principle of faith", for we are not justified in ourselves, but in Another Man. It is "by faith of Jesus Christ", as Paul says to the Galatians, and he adds, "We also have believed on Christ Jesus, that we might be justified on the principle of the faith of Christ", and he speaks of believers as "seeking to be justified in Christ", Galatians 2: 16, 17. "*In him* every one that believes is justified", Acts 13: 39. Indeed, we know from 1 Corinthians 1: 30 that Christ Jesus is made righteousness to us.

The result of having been justified in this wondrous way is that "we have peace towards God through our Lord Jesus Christ". This is the state of our souls Godward, and it is the first effect of coming under the administration of our Lord Jesus Christ. There are no more harassing thoughts, no misgivings, no uncertainty. The whole outlook of the soul Godward is cloudless peace. There is not a question of guilt to distress, not an accusing voice to be heard. The believer is like Noah looking up into a clear sky after the waters of judgment were all gone from the face of the earth. Or like Israel when they saw their enemies dead on the seashore, and were able to acclaim Jehovah as their strength, their song, and their salvation. Our Lord Jesus Christ is the great and glorious Administrator of peace towards God. It is not only the result of redemption, and of our being justified, but it is administered to us "through our Lord Jesus Christ". It is the risen and exalted One at the right hand of God who dispenses it to us.

We come in this chapter, for the first time in the epistle, to this full title of "our Lord Jesus Christ". (He is so spoken of in the introductory verses of chapter 1, but I refer to the teaching of the epistle.) As the exalted One at the right hand of God He is set up as the glorious Administrator of divine grace. We can conceive what a wondrous time it will be when He exercises public administration in the world to come! But He is in administration now at the right hand of God. He is the true Joseph, with the royal ring and the chain of gold, Zaphnath Paaneah — "Prince of the power of the life of the world", as that title probably means. It is a beautiful title of Christ.

There is progressive presentation of Christ from the third to the fifth chapters of this epistle. He is spoken of as Jesus Christ — the blessed Anointed Man for God's pleasure; He was that in His life here. Then His death is brought in when He is set forth as a Mercy-seat in the power of His blood. Then we see Him as Jesus our Lord raised from among the dead. And, finally, He is set before us as our Lord Jesus Christ, the exalted One in heaven, the glorious Administrator of all heaven's grace and blessing. All God's favour to men is set forth in Him; He is made "to be blessings for ever", Psalm 21: 6. When the Queen of Sheba saw the administration of Solomon she said, "Blessed be Jehovah thy God, who delighted in thee, to set thee on his throne, to be king to Jehovah thy God! Because thy God loved Israel, to establish them for ever, therefore did he make thee king over them, to do judgment and justice", 2 Chronicles 9: 8. If Solomon's administration was such an expression of God's favour to Israel, what shall we say of the glorious administration of Christ, of which that was but a figure?

The character of His administration is that it brings into peace towards God, and into the sunshine of divine favour, all who come under it. Paul writes as one who was consciously under the shining of that administration — consciously in the wealth and bounty of it — and he links all believers with himself as having common participation in its blessedness. He says, "By whom we have also access by faith into this favour in which we stand". The access is "obtained and possessed" (see note to New Translation). It is not merely that the wealth and bounty are there, but faith realises need, and avails itself of the administration. The hungry people in Egypt had to go to Joseph, and they got their need fully met, and the result of his administration was that they were brought to be absolutely Pharaoh's; their money first, then their cattle, and finally their land and persons (Genesis 47), and this is in figure what the administration of the Lord Jesus Christ brings about. Under the powerful influence of divine grace and bounty, and divine compassion, ministered through Him, men come absolutely under the blessed sway of God — they become bondmen to God.

The Lord Jesus Christ is like the golden sceptre which King Ahasuerus held out to Esther. He is the expression of God's favour to men, and Romans 5 is faith touching the golden sceptre. We see how favourable God is to us as we consider the Lord Jesus Christ. God has placed the Lord Jesus Christ at His right hand in heaven, and put all the wealth of grace and blessing into His hand, so that we may know how favourable He is to us — that we may stand in a sense of it. I am not referring, for the moment, to our place of acceptance in Christ — that would be more our place Godward — but to the sense of infinite favourableness on God's part to usward into which we have access through our Lord Jesus Christ. Ephesians 1: 7 is that we are graced in the Beloved; that involves sonship; it is the place of favour in which we are set before the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. But in Romans 5 we have access into a sense of the great favour of God to usward. We are justified, have peace towards God, and we have access into God's infinite favourableness towards us, through our Lord Jesus Christ. Our Lord Jesus Christ in heaven sheds forth all the light of divine favour for faith to have access into. I have known a Christian regard a good stroke of business as a mark of God's favour! But if that favour were known through circumstances, Paul never had it, for he lost everything for Christ, and had a life of misery. He tells us that "if in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are the most miserable of all men", 1 Corinthians 15: 19. No, the favourableness of God to men shines not in circumstances here, but in the face of the Mediator. One is thankful for the mercy of food and raiment, and all that bears witness to God's consideration and care in the circumstances of the pathway here, but the true portion of the believer is the favour of God known through the Lord Jesus Christ, and it is outside and apart from all circumstances here.

What a place the believer has through the Lord Jesus Christ! He is justified, and has peace towards God, and access into ineffable favour. It is the glory of grace shining in the Saviour's face. 2 Corinthians 3 develops it further. The glory of the Lord is that He is the Mediator of the new covenant; all that God is in His favourableness to men shines forth in Him; it is according to His glory, and who can measure that? Now it is for faith to touch the Sceptre, to have access into the favour of God through our Lord Jesus Christ, and to stand in it.

Then "we boast in hope of the glory of God". From the days of the tower of Babel this world has been the scene of the glory of man, but from those days God has presented another world to faith. He called Abraham out, and told him that he should be the father of a multitude of nations, and that kings should come out of him; and He told him, too, that He would introduce a city which had foundations, "of which God is the artificer and constructor", Hebrews 11: 10. That city, as we know, has the glory of God; Revelation 21:

10. So that from the days of Abraham it has been faith's portion to look for a coming world in which will be a multitude of nations and kings, the offspring of Abraham through God's covenant, where all will walk in the light of that heavenly city which has the glory of God. The promise was to Abraham, and to his seed, "that he should be heir of the world", Romans 4: 13. But when faith inherits the world, it will not be a world of ambition, covetousness, pride, and man's vain glory, like the present world, but it will be a world where all is the product of God's working according to His covenant, and in which His glory will cover the earth as the waters cover the sea.

As we learn to know God through the glad tidings we see what constitutes the glory of God, and we boast in hope of that glory, as about to break forth and irradiate the whole scene where lawlessness and death have reigned so long. God's world will come into view at the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, and it will be filled with His glory. The better we know God, the greater sense shall we have of the blessedness of that coming day when His glory will shine forth under the administration of our Lord Jesus Christ. Notice that little word "our". It suggests that on our part we have already given Him His place. Though still disallowed and rejected by men generally, we have accorded Him His rights; we have, as it were, claimed Him as ours. He has become Lord to us, and that very fact, now openly confessed by us, separates us from the world that still disowns Him. And we boast in hope of the glory of God. To do so ensures our deliverance from the vain glory of this present world: it sets us apart from its pleasures and its politics.

"And not only that, but we also boast in tribulations, knowing that tribulation works endurance". Saints realise that the present course of things is not marked by righteousness or peace; it is not under the administration of our Lord Jesus Christ; and hence we expect to find pressures. Those who recognise the principles of God's world, and seek to be in accord with them, find that this means pressures here; the present time is marked by sufferings. Paul did not hesitate to tell young converts that "through many tribulations we must enter into the kingdom of God" (Acts 14: 22); and the Lord said to His disciples, "In the world ye have tribulation", John 16: 33. Three things are linked together by John: "*The tribulation and kingdom and endurance*", Revelation 1: 9; the one article puts the three things together. The present character of the kingdom involves tribulation and endurance, but we have companionship there. John speaks of himself as "your brother and fellow-partaker in the tribulation and kingdom and patience, in Jesus". All who are set for the kingdom of God participate in tribulation.

Now what is the attitude of our souls towards tribulations? *Naturally* we shrink from them, and would avoid them if possible; we would wish to be relieved of pressures. But *spiritually* we boast in tribulations. The believer who has peace towards God through our Lord Jesus Christ, and who is standing in a blessed sense of how favourable God is to him, has the inward conviction that tribulation is a spiritual advantage; it works endurance. This is not something which we are told: the word "knowing" here is the word for conscious knowledge; it suggests ability in the soul to take account of how things work experimentally. I do not think anyone will "boast" in tribulations until he has found them to be spiritually advantageous. Tribulation, or pressure, *gone through with God* has the effect of developing a precious quality of Christ in the saints. Having regard to the present condition of things, endurance is a most valuable quality. It is said of the Lord Jesus that He "endured the cross, having despised the shame", and that He "endured so great contradiction from sinners against himself", Hebrews 12: 2, 3.

This quality of endurance is now being worked in the saints; it fills up the interval between our first getting the light of the kingdom of God and that kingdom being publicly manifested. It is now a question of holding on steadily in the light of the Lord Jesus Christ in heaven, and of the coming glory, expecting that there will be pressures here, but inwardly assured that they are working endurance. They are bringing out the *staying power* that is resident in the one who has peace towards God, and who stands in divine favour. The ability is developed in the circumstances where it is needed, in the light of other circumstances where it will not be needed. Even as to the Lord it was "in view of the joy lying before him" that He endured. He went steadily through everything, and He says to us, "In the world ye have tribulation; but be of good courage: I have overcome the world", John 16: 33.

It is a great help to saints under pressure when they are able to dissociate themselves from natural thoughts, and to look at things according to the conscious knowledge which they have of the favourable working of these things. Without tribulation we could never acquire endurance. I suppose we have all had occasion to witness the development of this quality in suffering saints. It brings out the strength of the justified man, the strength which comes into the soul through the knowledge of the favour of God.

"Only in Jehovah, shall one say, have I righteousness and strength" (Isaiah 45: 24): the two things go together.

Thus endurance works experience. The saints are put to the proof, but — having endured — they are approved, That this is the force of the word here translated "experience" may be gathered from the other five passages where it

is used (2 Corinthians 2: 9; chapter 8: 2; chapter 9: 13; chapter 13: 3; Philippians 2: 22). It is as we are able to bear pressures, and endure, that the genuineness of the work of God in our souls is proved; things become experimental with us. This cannot be acquired by ministry or reading; it is the wrought product of *endurance*. Paul knew what he was talking about; it was not all ideas and theory with him.

And experience works hope. One learns to look outside the present scene, marked by tribulations and endurance, to that future world of glory where all will be in accord with the mind and heart of God. It is most important that *hope* should be wrought in the souls of believers; it brings in the brightness of the coming day. Peter would lead us to conclude that hope is to be so manifestly characteristic of the saints that it causes people to ask questions! "Be always prepared to give an answer to every one that asks you to give an account of the hope that is in you", 1 Peter 3: 15. This suggests that there would be such a brightness of hope about the Christian that it would have to be accounted for to men of the world. How happy would it be if people saw such evidence of *hope* in us that they questioned us about it! Hope makes what is still future a present reality. All that is connected with God's world, as to its public display, is a matter of hope. But it is hope that does not make ashamed. The hopes that men entertain as to the future of things in the world make ashamed, because they are doomed to disappointment. The Christian has not his portion in this world, nor can he produce tangible evidence of the favour of God. He is subject to be taunted that he has no advantage over others; it may appear sometimes that in God's providence he is less benefited, or even more afflicted, than other men. He has his portion in an unseen and future world, and he is not ashamed to have his hope centred there, because he has something of the most wonderful character to go on with now — something of which the men of the world know nothing, and of which he can give them no material evidence. "Hope does not make ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which has been given to us".

Believers have the Holy Spirit given to them. We have seen that the "blessedness" of the justified man is in the Spirit, and the Spirit is the Seal of the righteousness of faith, though the Spirit is not named in chapter 4. I think this might intimate that one might have some of the gain of the Spirit without any definite recognition of His presence. But now, in chapter 5, the Holy Spirit is definitely spoken of as given to believers; He is recognised. It is an important moment in the history of the believer when he recognises the fact that the Holy Spirit has been given to him. This might be at some time subsequent to the gift of the Spirit. In the typical history of Exodus the

children of Israel singing the redemption song of chapter 15 represent believers who have the Spirit, but there is no direct type of the Holy Spirit until the water which flowed from the smitten rock in chapter 17. I believe this to represent the time when the believer is brought to the definite recognition of the Spirit as given. And that wondrous Gift is seen to be the result of the smiting of Christ, He has borne the stroke of judgment due to the man that sinned — the man after the flesh — that God might give to us His Holy Spirit to be the Source of spiritual vitality, so that we might have inward divine refreshment in the very scene of tribulations and endurance. And this is recognised now by the believer.

What an amazing fruit of God's grace, and of redemption accomplished! The Holy Spirit given to us! This is far too great a gift to be the result of anything less than the love of God, and the infinite value of the death of Christ. And this Gift is given that the love of God may be shed abroad in our hearts. It does not satisfy the blessed God that we should know His righteousness, His grace, His power; He would have us to know the very spring of all in His own heart; and this could only be in our hearts by His Holy Spirit being given to us. Only a divine Person could pour out into the hearts of believers the love of God. God would be known in His love in the hearts of men. Nothing could be greater than this.

The Holy Spirit would direct us to the death of Christ as the great and blessed witness of God's love. In chapter 3 we see how God has been glorified in respect of sin by the blood on the Mercy-seat, so that He can in righteousness be favourable to sinful men. In chapter 4 it is the death of Christ as delivered for our offences, His guilt-bearing. But in the verses now before us that death is seen in the witness which it bears to the love of God. They speak of the penalty of death its borne by One who came under it in the love of God.

The thought of "we being still without strength" is brought in to show the helplessness of man, his inability to move Godward. But God has moved manward in the most wonderful way. His own Anointed One, the precious Object of His choice and delight, has died for the ungodly. It was pure love on God's part that He should do so. Can we think of all that Christ was to God, in the fragrance and power of what He was as God's Anointed, without having a sense of what God has given up in love when that Blessed One came under the penalty of death for the ungodly?

Verse 7 brings out the character of surrender which would be involved in one man dying for another. It would be considered amongst men the supreme sacrifice that could be made. A man's life is very precious to him, and the life of Christ was unspeakably precious to Him and to God. He said, "My God, take

me not away in the midst of my days". The value of His life to God is emphasised in Romans 5: 6 - 8. But He died for the ungodly — for us — and God commends *His* love to us in that supreme sacrifice, that amazing surrender. The love of God was concentrated in that wondrous act, the death of Christ, but for nearly two thousand years it has been diffused in millions of hearts by the Holy Spirit. God has made the utmost sacrifice possible that we might know His love. The coming in of the penalty of death declared the utter ruin of the creature, but God has made that penalty the eternal witness of His love. The love of God expressed in the death of Christ is the most amazing thing in the universe; it can never be fathomed; and it is now being poured out into the hearts of believers by the Holy Spirit. Think of the greatness of its expression in the death of Christ, and also of the greatness of it being shed abroad by the Holy Spirit given! God's wondrous thought is that His love should become the life of stir hearts so that it might circulate through our whole moral being, Natural life is in the blood, but the very essence of spiritual life is the love of God known in the heart by the Holy Spirit.

The Lord Jesus Christ is not spoken of in terms in this chapter as the Mediator of the new covenant, but the truth of that Mediatorship underlies the teaching here. The truth is stated here in its great outlines. If a man is going to build a house, the first thing he does is to stake out the ground. Romans is like the staking out of the ground; other epistles give details of the structure. There is room within the great outline of this epistle for all the features of divine grace that are developed in 2 Corinthians, and in other epistles.

Having the love of God shed abroad in our hearts, and having been justified in the power of the blood of Christ, we have a wonderful outlook. That outlook is salvation in two aspects: "We shall be saved by him from wrath", and "we shall be saved in the power of his life". Salvation had been mentioned in the introduction to this epistle (chapter 1: 16), but we come to it now for the first time in the teaching of the epistle. Justified persons, knowing the love of God, are assured that they will be saved by Christ from wrath. There *is* "wrath to come" in a future "day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God", but believers will be saved from it "by him". Jesus is, as another scripture expresses it, "our deliverer from the coming wrath", 1 Thessalonians 1: 10. We shall not be saved from coming wrath merely by the course of events, however blessed those events may be, but by a Person who is pledged in faithfulness to preserve us from every infliction of wrath. It lies in the power of that Person to secure for the saints who compose the assembly complete immunity from all that is coming on the world of the ungodly. They have been already justified in the power of His blood, and Paul says, "Much rather therefore ... we shall be saved by him from wrath". His personal interest and

power are engaged to secure this. Indeed, as we know from 1 Thessalonians 4 and Revelation 3: 10, He will remove the saints of the assembly from the scene where the wrath will fall, before a seal is opened, or a trumpet sounded, or a bowl poured out. But the point here is that it is *Himself* who does it. Such is His tender interest and faithful love, in regard to the justified, that they will be saved *by Him* from wrath.

Another aspect of salvation is brought before us in verse 10. This verse contemplates believers as having been reconciled, and adds, "much rather, having been reconciled, we shall be saved in the power of his life". This brings us to the consideration of a great blessing of the glad tidings which is here presented to us for the first time in the epistle, namely reconciliation. God would have us to know what it is to be reconciled to Him. "Being enemies, we have been reconciled to God through the death of his Son". This brings before us our condition by nature from a point of view which has not been previously considered in the epistle. We have seen already that men did not think good to have God in their knowledge, they found pleasure in doing evil, they did not fear to break God's law when they had it, they were universally found guilty before Him, But now we find that there was positive antagonism to God in men. "And you, who once were alienated and enemies in mind by wicked works", Colossians 1: 21. We have been justified from the offences we were guilty of, but as enemies we have been reconciled. It is in each case something effected by God. Justification clears us from all imputation of guilt, but reconciliation is in regard of the state of enmity and alienation from God which characterised us all by nature. God has taken account of that, as well as of our sins, and He has undertaken to effect reconciliation. He has undertaken to adjust the whole position to His own satisfaction, and He has done it through the death of His Son. We know from Colossians 1 that the Fulness of the Godhead was pleased to dwell in Christ, and to effect reconciliation by Him, "in the body of his flesh through death". This is a statement of wondrous character, such as can hardly be found elsewhere, or in relation to any other subject. The Fulness of the Godhead — the Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit — has undertaken this great work. It has been effected by the Son of the Father's love: "we have been reconciled to God through the death of his Son". God would magnify before our hearts the wondrous value and effect of that death. Reconciliation is not something effected *by* us, for it contemplates us as "being enemies". Nor is it effected *in* us, for it is "through the death of his Son". It is the delight of God to have us suitable to Himself, and in nearness, "through the death of his Son". The whole state of enmity has been removed through that death; believers are set apart from all cause of disapproval on God's part, from every feature of unsuitability to Him, so that we might have a

place with God which is the answer to "the death of his Son". The whole condition of enmity which was before God has been taken up by One who knew every necessity of divine love — for it was "his Son" — and He died to secure that we should be reconciled. The reconciliation is absolute and immeasurable and is to be received by faith.

It has often been pointed out that reconciliation is only spoken of in epistles addressed to Gentiles, and it seems to correspond in great measure with what is spoken of to Jewish believers as sanctification. "By which will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all... For by one offering he has perfected in perpetuity the sanctified", Hebrews 10: 10, 14. "Wherefore also Jesus, that he might sanctify the people by his own blood, suffered without the gate", Hebrews 13: 12. Believers are set apart to have a place with God according to the value of the death of Christ, which puts everything on a new footing, and adjusts everything to God's satisfaction. God has made up the breach — or removed the distance, as it has been said — to His own satisfaction. We could only be with God for His pleasure "through the death of his Son", in which the whole state of enmity was dealt with, and through which things are on an entirely new footing — distance, alienation, and unsuitability all removed. We are reconciled in view of being presented "holy and unblamable and irreproachable" (Colossians 1: 22) before the Fulness of the Godhead.

The death of God's Son ensures the effectuation of divine pleasure.

"Having been now justified ... we have been reconciled to God". These are positive statements — true of God's called saints who have obeyed the glad tidings — and they must be taken in their own fulness. God has justified us, and He has reconciled us. We contributed nothing to either of these two great blessings. How it magnifies God before our adoring hearts! He has shone out through our Lord Jesus Christ in the effulgence of what He is in grace, and in such a way that faith can boast in God. Not merely in this or that blessing, but in God the Source of all.

"Much rather, having been reconciled, we shall be saved in the power of his life". What an outlook is here! Saved in the power of the life of the Son of God! He lives to the eternal pleasure of God. "The Son of God, Jesus Christ ... did not become yea and nay, but yea *is* in him", 2 Corinthians 1: 19. The substantiation of all the pleasure of God is in His Son, and to be saved in the power of His life would involve deliverance from everything that would hinder us from living to the pleasure of God. I feel how little I know of the reality of it, but I appreciate and delight in the thought of it. This is the outlook before believers; God would not propose anything less to us than being saved in the

power of His life. It says, "we shall be saved"; God would have us to look for it, to expect it all the way through. What God had in His mind in sending forth His Son was that sonship might be brought in, and the Son of God lives to save us from everything that is unsuitable to sons of God. If we have been reconciled through the death of His Son, "much rather, having been reconciled, we shall be saved in the power of his life". Who can measure the extent of this? I think it includes all that is the fruit of the priestly intercession of Christ, for it is as the Son of God that He is "a priest for ever according to the order of Melchisedec". "Whence also he is able to save completely those who approach by him to God, always living to intercede for them", Hebrews 5: 5, 6; chapter 7: 25. He is sympathetic with infirmity, and succours His saints in all their weakness here, and He can sustain them above every pressure so that they may be free in spirit to enjoy the privileges connected with the divine calling. Indeed, to be saved in the power of the life of the Son of God would be to be completely freed from every carnal, legal, or natural influence so as to be entirely for the pleasure of God. Paul walked in the good of that salvation; he could say, "But in that I now live in flesh, I live by faith, the faith of the Son of God, who has loved me and given himself for me", Galatians 2: 20. There is complete provision in Him. We may have known little of it as yet, but God would encourage us as to what we may look for in the path we have entered on as reconciled to Him. It, is a path in which we may confidently look for salvation from every phase of the enemy's power which we may have to encounter, and from every feature of weakness in ourselves. What a triumphant outlook! "We shall be saved in the power of his life".

Thus we come to a wonderful climax. "And not only that, but we are making our boast in God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom now we have received the reconciliation". This is new covenant blessing, entered into through the Mediator. It is what God is for men, known to believers, so that they make their boast in Him. "I will be their God ... for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith Jehovah", Jeremiah 31: 33, 34. The Mediatorship of the Lord Jesus Christ — the administration of divine grace through Him — is wondrous. There is the full light of divine glory shining without a veil in Him, and it is all infinitely favourable to men. Every ray of that glory becomes a ground of holy boasting to the believer; there is absolute stability in it, absolute blessedness. Joseph could say, "Tell my father of all my glory in Egypt, and of all that ye have seen", Genesis 45: 13. Joseph's glory in Egypt was typical of the glorious administration of the Lord Jesus Christ. How subduing is the sense of His greatness! Under His administration we come into peace, favour, the gift of the Spirit, the love of God, reconciliation, and are able to make our boast in God.

Nothing can dim the shining of the light of God revealed in grace. Unbelief may shut it out of man's heart, but nothing can dim the shining; it is radiant in our Lord Jesus Christ. And through Him we have received the reconciliation; we have received it through the ministry of it under the administration of our Lord Jesus Christ. We take in the thought of God's delight to have us suitable to Himself and in nearness; we are on that ground with Him. It is the divine result of God coming out to put things on a footing that is agreeable to Himself.

These two great subjects of reconciliation and the knowledge of God in the love revealed in the new covenant are continuously brought before us in the Lord's supper. "This is my body, which is for you", ever speaks to us of the fact that we are on the footing of Christ's body having been given for us in death. And "This cup is the new covenant in my blood" brings in the wondrous way in which God is known to us. It is to be noticed that in connection with the cup the Lord refers to the frequency of the remembrance: "*as often* as ye shall drink it". How pleasurable it was to Him to contemplate the frequent recurrence of the saints doing that which brings the love of God before them!

What an impression the disciples must have had — after they received the Holy Spirit — of how God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing trespasses! In the Gospels we see how God has come out to men in a Man, according to what He is in Himself and according to Christ, and that He delighted to be known as having thus come out. Who can measure the greatness of any single incident in the Gospels? His saints and servants have been delighting in, and speaking of, the seventh, tenth, and fifteenth chapters of Luke for nearly two thousand years, but they can never fathom the depths that are there! At the present moment God is having to say to men on the footing of Christ and His death. It is not a time of condemnation but of reconciliation. But if men do not receive the reconciliation they will inevitably perish.

We learn Christ first as the Administrator of divine grace, the Mediator between God and men. It is of great importance to be established in the knowledge of God as made known to us in grace through our Lord Jesus Christ. We are then prepared to learn Him as the divinely appointed Head, who holds a place in relation to men of which Adam is the figure. Up to this point in the epistle the great subject has been the presentation of God to us through the Lord Jesus. But now our attention is called to the illustrious place which Christ holds as the one Man. Adam is the figure of Him, but He is infinitely greater than Adam, and the place and blessing which come in by Him

far exceed the evil which came in by Adam. We are all familiar with the evil; we have to learn the blessing by grace.

The consideration of Adam helps us to apprehend the place which Christ has as a Fountain Head from whom flows a mighty and far-reaching stream of divine beneficence and favour. We are all witnesses of how much can come in by one man. The principle of lawlessness entered into the world by one man — the principle of the creature doing its own will. It might seem a very little thing to disobey God in one small act, but it introduced a principle which was destructive of all the relations that rightly subsisted between the creature and the Creator. And the introduction of that principle has affected everybody in the world. It resulted in all those who derived their being naturally from that one man carrying on the principle which he introduced. They all sinned, and death passed upon all men.

There was one offence, but it had tremendous consequences; it had its bearing towards all men to condemnation. It was said lately that a clever man had discovered the death germ! The principle of lawlessness is the true death germ, and it has shown itself to be capable of multiplying to a terrible extent.

It has infected all men with its deadly virus, We all have to acknowledge that we have been infected by that principle; it has worked in every one of us.

Now God has considered the introduction of that principle, and all its effects, and He has moved in grace to bring in something of an altogether different character, that in the very scene where evil has come in and been so widespread good might come in and triumph. He has introduced another One Man in whom the principles of obedience and righteousness have come in in such a way that all men can get the benefit of them. Everything that came in by the first man has been taken into account by God. He has given attention to the deadly principle introduced by the one man Adam, and to its workings in all that man's race, and He has met it by bringing in life on the line of obedience and righteousness by the one Man Jesus Christ.

The blessed and far-reaching consequences of the coming in of Christ are towards all men, and they are known in vital power by those who receive the abundance of grace, and of the free gift of righteousness. There has been one great act of righteousness accomplished by One Man, and it is towards all men. Its bearing is as wide as that of Adam's one offence. *That* was towards all men to condemnation; *this* is towards all men for justification of life. The scripture was quoted in chapter 1, "But the just shall live by faith". One begins to live morally in relation to God as having the consciousness of being justified. The condemnation is the sentence of death which has passed upon all men, but justification of life is that men may be cleared of every charge so

as to live in righteous relation to God. The one great act of righteousness, accomplished by Jesus Christ, is so wide in its bearing that it makes possible that all men should be delivered from the death penalty, and should *live* as justified. Instead of being condemned, they may live in relation to God as justified persons.

The thought of *life* is brought in here for the first time in the epistle. We read of some who "reign in life", then "justification of life", and, finally, in the last verse of the chapter, "eternal life". Indeed this chapter indicates to us the entrance of the way of life. Just as sin and death go together, so do righteousness and life, and the two latter are bound up with "the one man Jesus Christ". Through the one righteousness God can relieve men of condemnation so that they may live in relation to God as justified. The one righteousness is greater than the one offence by so much as Christ is greater than Adam. The only Head now is Christ. The one great act which has its results now towards all men is that act of righteousness accomplished by Christ when He died and bore the judgment of sin. He has maintained all that was due to God in relation to what came in by the first one man. God would magnify before our hearts that one great act of righteousness, because in doing so He magnifies the Person who accomplished it, and His own favour and grace, which were expressed in that Person and by that act.

God has brought in a Head for men who is in perfect accord with all His own thoughts. Christ is morally entitled to take the pre-eminent place with all men, for He has brought in righteousness and life, and no other man could ever do that. There have been great men in the world, but not one of them has ever had the renown of bringing in righteousness and life;

they have got ascendancy on quite different grounds from these. They could not even secure righteousness and life for themselves, for they were all sinful men and under death. But what a contrast in God's one Man!

Verses 13 - 17 are a parenthesis. Sin was in the world long before the law, but it was not put to account, for there was no breaking of a definite rule laid down by God. After the law was given sin became positive disobedience which God took account of. But death reigned from Adam to Moses; the many who stood in relation to Adam died, though they had not, like him, transgressed a positive command.

Now there is an act of favour on God's part. Will it also have a wide bearing? Is there to be an extended effect from an offence on the part of the creature, and no extended effect from a great act of favour on the part of God? To suppose such a thing would be to imply that the evil of the creature is more powerful and effective than the good that is in the blessed God. If evil has

widespread effects — and none can deny this — much rather shall the grace of God, and the free gift in grace! Paul puts the question, “Shall not?” It is as much as to say, After what you know of God, are you not sure that if He brings in an act of favour, His grace and free gift, it must abound over the effect of evil, it must go out to many?

All turns now on the one Man Jesus Christ, and the immensity of what God has brought in by Him. Certain penal consequences reached many by the offence of one, but now it is “the gift”, “the act of favour”, “the free gift in grace”. It is the beneficence of the heart of God going out to His creature. How could it be less in its scope than the creature’s sin? Paul varies the terms he uses to bring out the marvellous character of the grace of God by the One Man. All this is Paul’s glad tidings. God is glorifying Himself now in the way of grace, and doing it on principles that have stability, viz., obedience and righteousness. We have seen that an innocent order of things can be morally corrupted and overturned; but a system of blessing founded on obedience and righteousness cannot be overturned. No power of evil can touch what is founded on Christ; and, blessed be God, the principles introduced in Christ have now begun to operate vitally in all God’s called ones. The principle of obedience is in their hearts, for they have received the glad tidings by “obedience of faith”. Peter speaks of the saints as “children of obedience”; they are begotten of that principle. And the principle of righteousness is there also, for they have repented and judged themselves. The second “many” in verses 15 and 19 are those called of God.

Through what one person did, judgment came in and condemnation, but “the act of favour” regarded many offences only with a view to justification. What an “act of favour”! That “act of favour” is the bringing in of God’s One Man, and all that has been accomplished by Him on God’s behalf for men.

There is “abundance of grace, and of the free gift of righteousness”. It is now a question of what is in the One Man Jesus Christ, and, on our part, of receiving. Man is simply the receiver, but it is such a receiving as secures the blessed result that those who do so “reign in life by the one Jesus Christ”. This is the wonderful result of receiving what comes from God through His One Man. The saints are set in the supremacy of life, made to be dominant over all the evil that is here, they are made overcomers. If I carry out my own will, that is degradation; it is not reigning in life. If I yield to movements of the flesh, that is not reigning in life. We see how death reigns; how universal is that reign; it thoroughly subdues the will and pride of man; it brings everything down. Now the saints are to reign in a power of life that is superior to all the influences of lawlessness. That is the effect of really giving the One

Man Jesus Christ His place, and the principles which God has introduced in Him. It transfers us into an entirely new system morally. We have seen a deadly principle brought in by one man, and great principles of life brought in by Another, and we have been transferred by infinite grace from Adam to Christ.

Notice the word "shall" in verse 17. It is not spoken of exactly as realised, but as the blessed end proposed by grace. The realisation of it involves the deliverance which is unfolded in chapters 6, 7, and 8. It does not say that every believer does reign in life, but the end which divine grace has in view is that we should do so. Is it not blessed to think of giving such place to the One Man Jesus Christ as to be made superior to all the forces of lawlessness that are here? The One Man is a Fountain Head from whom flows such an abundance of grace that those who receive it reign in life by Him. In the world to come the saints are going to reign *with* Him; they will be dominant then; but they are to be morally dominant now *by* Him. James speaks of the "crown of life", and I think the possession of that crown is anticipated by those who get the gain of vital relation with the One Man Jesus Christ. Instead of being in subjection to the influences of evil, the believer is here set in view of being in supremacy over them. It is a blessed and stimulating outlook to anticipate that, even while here in mortal conditions, we may morally "reign in life by the one Jesus Christ".

"By the disobedience of the one man the many had been constituted sinners". The principle of disobedience infected the whole race that stood in relation to the one man by whom it came in; the same principle worked in them, and constituted them sinners. But now another principle has been brought in — that of obedience — and by that principle the many who stand in moral relation to the Obedient One will be constituted righteous. It is as coming under the influence of the principle of obedience as manifested in God's One Man that we are constituted righteous. This is an advance upon having righteousness reckoned to us; it refers to what God's called ones become constitutionally. We have come under a Head marked by obedience, for it is not one obedience, but "the obedience of the one". He was marked by obedience from the beginning to the end — from His coming into the world, saying, "Lo, I come to do thy will", right on to the last cry, "It is finished", on the cross. He was the ever-obedient One, and God has brought His called ones under the influence of Christ that they may take character from His obedience and thus be constituted righteous.

Peter tells the elect sojourners of the dispersion that they were sanctified "unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ". It is to that we

are set apart. As having come under that principle we are constituted righteous. But as in relation to reigning in life, so here also, it is not said absolutely that believers are constituted righteous, but "the many will be constituted righteous". As coming under the influence of the One Man, the principle of obedience begins to work in God's called ones, and to be, in an ever-increasing measure, characteristic of them, and in this way they are constituted righteous.

Sin has reigned in the power of death; the principle of lawlessness dominating man has brought in death. But grace reigns through righteousness to eternal life. It is through the principle of righteousness being established in the souls of believers that grace reigns to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. Righteousness involves self-judgment, and the setting aside practically of our own will. The sway of grace in the soul ever works in this direction, and the blessed end in view is eternal life. It is an end to be reached now, under the present and powerful reign of grace; it is the objective which divine grace has ever in view. Paul usually speaks of eternal life as a goal to be reached, something to be sought and laid hold of, something to be reaped as a result of a certain sowing, the end of a certain course.

These three things — believers reigning in life, being constituted righteous, and grace reigning in them through righteousness to eternal life — show the complete triumph of God in relation to all that had been the ruin of the creature. He has met the reign of death by making it possible for His saints to reign in life; where many have been constituted sinners He has shown that He can bring about that many shall be constituted righteous; and where sin reigned in the power of death He has brought in the reign of grace through righteousness, and eternal life thereby. And He has brought it all about by "the one man Jesus Christ".

ROMANS 6

Romans 6

It is of the greatest importance that all who believe on the Lord Jesus Christ should take up the truth of this chapter, not merely as a matter of doctrine, but as taught of God to know it in moral reality, Nothing could be more serious or practical than the raising of the question, "Should we continue in sin that grace may abound?" Paul had been speaking of the over-abounding of grace where sin abounded, and that might suggest to a carnal mind that if we continued in sin grace will go on abounding, But he meets this by stating at once in the most definite way the relation in which the believer stands to sin: "We who have died to sin, how shall we still live in it?" He does not pause to explain how it came about, but he assumes as an undeniable fact that "we" — believers — have died to sin. This is, indeed, the only relation to sin which can be contemplated for God's called ones who live in relation to Him as justified, and who, as having received the abundance of grace, and of the free gift of righteousness, reign in life by the One Jesus Christ. Such persons "have died to sin". This is not reached on the line of demand, for I do not think you will find that it is ever enjoined upon us that we ought to die to sin. It is grace that brings us to it under the influence of Christ.

The "faith of Jesus Christ" has brought One into the vision of our souls who ever did God's will and not His own. He came into the world into which sin had entered — that deadly principle of the creature being insubject to God, and doing its own will — and He came into it, and went through it, and went out of it, entirely on the principle of obedience. In Christ we have learned One infinitely greater than Adam, and the principles of obedience and righteousness which He has brought in are greater than the principles of lawlessness which entered by Adam. The principles of obedience and righteousness have been introduced, as we have seen in chapter 5, in pure divine grace, so that as having the faith of Jesus Christ we might live before God as justified persons and reign in life by Him. Grace has introduced a new and divine Head, so that as coming under the influence of His obedience we might be constituted righteous. All turns upon Christ having become to us "fairer than the sons of men".

The principles of righteousness and obedience are foreign to us as children of Adam, but we have learned them in Christ, not merely in their intrinsic moral perfection, but as the way by which justification, peace, salvation, and every blessing have come to us through the great favour of God. This makes these

great principles, as known and valued in their perfection in Christ, very powerful and influential in our hearts.

Philip announced the glad tidings of Jesus to the eunuch, that He had come vicariously into the place of the lawless man, and had glorified God in bearing the judgment due to that man and his sins, and that His life had been taken from the earth. The effect upon the eunuch was that he wanted to be baptised.

If all blessing had come through the death of Jesus he would be henceforth publicly identified with that death, and with the One whose life had been taken from the earth. He could no longer live on the principle that has entered into and dominates the world; he would be at once and for ever severed from it by baptism unto death.

The principle that has come in by God's One Man, and through which all our blessing has come, is of such a character that it cannot possibly go along with the principle that came in by Adam. To live on the one principle means death to the other. A man cannot be a loyal subject and a rebel at one and the same time. The whole truth of this epistle is dependent for its application on "obedience of faith". (See chapter 1: 5; chapter 16: 26.) But this means complete moral severance from that principle of lawlessness which came in by Adam. I can have no blessing or life in relation to God save on the principle of obedience, but this involves death to sin. It has been truly said that we need life in order to be able to die. It would be impossible if there were not power in the believer. Hence the importance of chapter 5 as bringing in the wealth of Christ and the gift of the Spirit. The believer in the gain of chapter 5 is sitting under the shadow of Christ with rapture, and finding His fruit sweet. He is baptised in the cloud as under the blessed favour of God, and the Holy Spirit is in his heart shedding the love of God abroad there. There is power in the believer through his vital connection with Christ which enables him to die to sin, so that it is true of Christians, as such, that they "have died to sin". Chapter 6 answers to being baptised in the sea, as chapter 5 answers to being under the cloud (see 1 Corinthians 10: 1, 2).

If my knowledge of God in grace, and all the blessings of His glad tidings, come through Christ as the obedient One, how attractive does He become to my heart! Is it not fitting that I should say to Him, as Ruth said to Naomi, "Do not intreat me to leave thee, to return from following after thee; for whither thou goest I will go, and where thou lodgest I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God; where thou diest will I die, and there will I be buried". It is the attractiveness of Christ, known in the heart by the Spirit, that is motive power for this energetic movement of holy decision.

The first move in the soul is self-judgment brought about in the light of grace. I find that my own will has been carrying me on the road to destruction; it has well-nigh brought me to perdition. But, to my amazement, I find that the will of God contains nothing but blessing for me through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus. That turns me to God in repentance. Then I find that He blesses me through the Lord Jesus Christ in the magnificent style set forth in chapter 5. The One I have sinned against is shining upon me in supreme grace through the Lord Jesus Christ. His thought is to bless me, to bestow upon me the greatest and lasting joy! When I realize that, it breaks down my self-willed distrust of Him; I am thankful to come into the "obedience of faith". The Lord Jesus Christ is now magnified before my heart; I begin to appreciate and love obedience as seen in Him, for all my blessing has come through it. As appreciating obedience as seen in Christ Jesus I am morally separated in my affections from that principle of insubject will which fills the world, and gives character to its politics, its pleasures, and even its religion. It is as this becomes true in us vitally that we can be said to "have died to sin". It is the only relation to sin which Scripture regards as proper to the Christian.

Baptism is brought in to show that we were committed to this at the very outset of our Christian profession. We have been baptised unto the death of Christ Jesus, buried with Him by baptism unto death. The life of the world, as such, is sin; it is dominated by the principle which came in by one man, and has infected all his race. But a buried man has done with the life of the world; he has disappeared completely from the sphere in which he once moved. There is no doubt that Christ has died and been buried, and our very profession as baptised persons is that we have been buried with Him. There was nothing in common between the world and Christ; the principle of *its* being was lawlessness; the principle of *His* was obedience. Death and burial mark the place which He has in relation to such an order of things; they mark His absolute and eternal separation from it.

But, if He has no place in the world of sin, the glory of the Father has embraced and raised Him. It is a remarkable expression as coming in here. It suggests the infinite satisfaction and pleasure with which the Father raised Him, that He might be the Object of the Father's complacency entirely outside the sphere of sin and death. But this is spoken of here as being in view of *our* walking in newness of life. It suggests a new world morally. The glory of the world is that men do their own will there without regard to the rights of God. Christ has died to *that* world, and we have been buried with Him by baptism unto death, that we might live morally in a new world which takes character from everything which the glory of the Father has approved in Him by raising Him from among the dead.

But, in order to live morally in that new world we have to learn what it means to have "become identified [the word is literally 'grown up with'] with him in the likeness of his death". Christ has passed by death out of the whole scene of man's will and glory. Having grown up with Him in the likeness of His death seems to suggest that we come into correspondence with His death by moral growth. It is not the work of a moment. The death of Christ was the full expression of absolute obedience, and it, was the breaking of every link actually with the scene where sin was. Not that there had ever been in His case any moral link with it, but He was actually here in the life of flesh and blood in the scene where sin was, though personally wholly apart from sin. It is now our privilege, and true characteristic as Christians, to have "become grown up with him in the likeness of his death". "Grown up" in correspondence with the obedience that was expressed there, And with the separation from the whole sphere of man's will and glory which was evidenced in that wondrous death.

Becoming "grown up with him" is a matter of the affections. It seems to suggest that, believers, as having learned what comes out, in chapters 3, 4 and 5 of this epistle, have their affections so wrapped round Christ that they are thoroughly identified with Him. They have grown up morally to the acceptance of the fact that *His* relation to sin, and the sphere of its activities, must be theirs. We can only go out of the sphere where sin has its place by dying to it, either actually in our own death, or morally as identified with Christ's death. We have referred to Ruth saying, "Where thou diest will I die, and there will I be buried". It is only a Ruth who can rightly enter into Romans 6; it can only be understood by an affectionate heart. We all know what it is to be deeply affected by the death of a loved one! But if there is One who has become everything to us the effect of His death must transcend the effect of every other death! Mary Magdalene would have well understood Romans 6; she had become thoroughly attached to Him. If you think of ivy growing up with, and around, an oak tree, if the tree falls, the ivy comes down too. What a blessed thing for our hearts to be so attached to Christ that if He goes in death there is nothing for us but to go in death too! Intense affection for the Lord would be ever prompting us to say to ourselves, "He has died here". We shall never get morally outside the sphere of sin save in the power of affection for Christ. We do not then need to analyse exactly how much right or wrong there is in different things which obtain in man's world; it suffices to know that there is no place for Christ in it. We have not been baptised to a Christ received and honoured in the world, but to One who has died here. And "if we are become grown up with him in the likeness of his death, so also we shall be of his resurrection". Correspondence with His death will ensure

correspondence with His resurrection. He was raised because there was everything in Him that was suitable for resurrection. And if we are brought into moral correspondence with His death there will be that about *us* which will be suitable for resurrection to God's pleasure. God would have us to think much of the death of Christ; our baptism speaks of it, and every time we eat the Lord's supper we contemplate it afresh, and announce His death until He come,

"Knowing this, that our old man has been crucified with him". We are learning now to speak in Christian language; it is good when we can speak, as divinely taught, of "our old man". It shows that there is some consciousness of that being our former self, but that it is now disallowed and discarded. We read in another connection that "that which grows old and aged is near disappearing". It belongs to the past rather than the present. "Our old man" is all that we were morally as of the stock of Adam; sin was embodied in that man — the principle of lawlessness — hence he was offensive to God. But we know now through the glad tidings "that our old man has been crucified with him". That man has been fully shown up as only deserving public condemnation of the most intense character; he has been crucified with Christ. And this is known to us now as divine light through the glad tidings that we may have the comfort of it. For it is a great comfort to every soul that has been distressed by learning the character of that man to know that he has been publicly dealt with according to his just deserts. His history has been terminated under the eye of God and man by crucifixion with Christ.

There is solemn instruction in this, too, for those who may not have realised the dreadful character of their old man. For it is made known to them that, however lightly they think of their natural state as of the stock of Adam, it was such as could only be absolutely rejected by God, and brought under His curse and condemnation in the most public way.

"For it is written, Cursed is every one hanged upon a tree" It is in the crucifixion of *Christ* that this judgment has passed upon "our old man", so that his history has terminated in a public judicial act which is probably of all forms of execution the one most revolting and terrible to man. But the complete rejection and judgment by God of that man is *made known to us* in the way of grace, for our old man has been crucified *with Christ*. Christ was found publicly in the place of condemnation and curse, but He was there vicariously as representing before God the man who deserved nothing but curse and condemnation, And when He was crucified our old man was crucified with Him.

This is made known to us, not merely for our comfort, or even that we may be instructed in the true character of "our old man", and the completeness of his rejection by God, but with a very practical object in view. It is "that the body of sin might be annulled, that we should no longer serve sin". The totality of sin lies in "our old man", and if we know that he has been crucified with Christ it leads to the annulling of the whole body of lawlessness which resides in that man. It ceases to be the effective and dominant force that it once was. It is seen as absolutely rejected and condemned by God, for the man has been crucified in whom it was embodied. It thus ceases to have any place, with those who are taught of God, as a principle to be acknowledged or served. It is "annulled, that we should no longer serve sin". That principle which is so active in the world is to become void of effect in the believer. The principle of the creature doing its own will clothes itself often in very deceptive forms; it is made as attractive as possible by the god of this world; and men generally view it in a very favourable light. But God would have it to be "annulled" for every one of His called saints; He would have them to view it as a principle definitely judged by Him, and therefore to be no longer served by them.

"For he that has died is justified from sin". This is an abstract statement, applicable to any dead man. He has no longer an active will of his own; he can no longer be charged with being a lawless man. But in the case of Christians they have died *with Christ*. It is for them a question of their identification with Christ — of having died with Him in order to live with Him. It turns on what He has become to us. Are we attracted by the thought of living with Him? He lives as a risen Man completely outside the sphere of sin and the power of death. Living with Him goes on to the full result in actual resurrection, but I think what is in the mind of the apostle here is that we are to be "of his resurrection", and to "live with him" morally as outside the sphere and power of sin and death. It does not go so far as "risen with Christ" in Colossians, but we walk in newness of life here. Instead of continuing in sin, we live with Christ morally as having come into obedience to God. "Christ having been raised up from among the dead dies no more: death has dominion over him no more. For in that he has died, he has died to sin once for all; but in that he lives, he lives to God".

It is of the greatest moment that we should see the relation in which Christ stands to things, because that determines our relation to them. We must distinguish between Christ dying *for* sin and *to* sin.

One is atonement — the blessed Saviour bearing the judgment of sin; but the other speaks of His having completely done with it "once for all". There is no question of there ever being any sin in Him. We know well that He was "the

holy one of God"; "in him sin is not"; and He "knew not sin". But He was in the world into which sin had entered, and He had to say to it, and feel the grief of it; and finally He took it up to make atonement for it. No one ever felt the ravages of sin and death as He did. How truly was He the "Man of sorrows"! He felt, too, the character of sin as directed against Himself. "The reproaches of them that reproach thee have fallen upon me". But He has passed by death out of that condition; "he has died to sin once For all"; and He lives to God now outside the whole sphere in which the will of the fallen creature is active. All that He knew and felt when here enables Him to sympathise with the sorrow and suffering that are here. But He has died to sin once for all so as to have no more to do with it personally. Divine purpose had in view that men should live to God for His pleasure as having entirely done with sin. And the way of this is patterned in the Second Man, for He lives eternally to God as having died to sin. And we are now privileged to take up this wondrous reckoning. "So also ye, reckon yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus".

We have seen the blessed way in which God has reckoned in chapter 4; now it is for us to reckon. His reckoning was not unreal; righteousness being reckoned to us is one of the great realities of the moral universe. Now our reckoning is also to be a spiritual reality. Of course things are absolute on God's side in a way they are not on our side. But we are privileged to take up this reckoning as a spiritual reality in our affections. Have we affection enough for the Lord to enable us to do it? *He* came into contact with sin on the line of obedience, and His contact with it personally and sacrificially cost Him unspeakable sorrow and suffering, but it was all undergone in love to His God and Father, and in love to us. The principle of disobedience cost Him everything that love could suffer. If that does not move our hearts, one doubts whether anything will. Now He has died to sin that we might in our affections take account of ourselves as dead to sin. My impression is that this is a matter of *love*. "Knowing" in verse 6 is a matter of *faith*, but it is only *love* that can "reckon" as in verse 11.

Ruth had been a Moabitess, but she began to reckon in an entirely new way when she said to Naomi, "Whither thou goest I will go, and where thou lodgest I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God; where thou diest will I die, and there will I be buried". She clave to her mother-in-law in her affections. Nothing but *love* could have prompted such an utterance.

Then Ittai in his day knew something of love's reckoning. He had been a Philistine — a man of Gath — and David said, "Why dost thou also go with us?"

... For thou art a foreigner, and besides, thou hast, emigrated to the place where thou dwellest... Return and take back thy brethren". But Ittai answered, "As Jehovah liveth, and as my lord the king liveth, surely in what place my lord the king shall be, whether in death or life, even there also will thy servant be", 2 Samuel 15: 19 - 22.

Mephibosheth, too, illustrates how love would reckon. And in his case it was purely in his affections that he went with David. Owing to his infirmities he could not *actually* go over with David, but the best part of him went — his heart went. So long as we are in mortal bodies we cannot *actually* go out of the place where rebellion is active, but we can go out in our affections. Mephibosheth "neither washed his feet, nor trimmed his beard, nor washed his clothes, from the day the king departed until the day he came again in peace". His whole behaviour and manner of life showed how his heart, reckoned. No one who observed him could doubt that his affections were with David.

Now if Christ has died to sin — and that is an undoubted fact — it is our privilege, if we have love enough for Him to do it, to reckon ourselves "dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus". Love must ever be the propelling motive. Even the obedience of Christ flowed out of love. "That the world may know that I love the Father, and as the Father has commanded me, thus I do", John 14: 31.

If we love God — and believers are described in this epistle as "those who love God" — we shall delight in the thought of being alive to Him in Christ Jesus. This gives us the first apprehension of the soul, in the presentation of the truth in this epistle, of what it is to be "in Christ Jesus". "In Christ Jesus" is one of those wonderful statements in Scripture which we first touch in vital power at a certain point, and our apprehensions of it may not be very great at first, but we find there is in it a power to expand to any extent to embrace the great thoughts of divine favour and purpose. It brings before us the risen and heavenly Man in whom all divine purpose centres. Eternal life is in Him, according to the last verse of this chapter. Indeed, "in Christ Jesus" opens up a vista that stretches right on into eternal glory.

Now is it not blessed to be able to take account of oneself as "alive to God in Christ Jesus"? Alive to God in the Man of His good pleasure! Not alive to the principle of doing my own will, but alive to God, as having touched in my apprehensions a life completely outside all that came in by Adam. The thought of living to God is very attractive to the one who knows His grace and loves Him. And He tells me to take account of myself as alive to Him in Christ Jesus.

The practical outcome of this reckoning is that sin is not to be suffered to reign in our mortal bodies. It reigns in the world, but it is not to reign in the

bodies of believers. There is a piece of territory secured for God even in the mortal condition. Young believers often ask what they can do in the way of service. Well, the first thing in the service of God is to hold our mortal bodies as outside the reign of sin. If we obey those lusts which move in the line of the fallen creature's will the reign of sin will go on. But this is not to be.

Paul uses the word "yield" several times at this point. There are two distinct, sets of influences acting; to which are we going to yield? And this brings us to the detail of things, as to what we do with our "members". One important member is the eye; what am I doing with my eyes? They are to be yielded as instruments of righteousness to God. That is not going to the pictures, or reading novels! Then what about our ears? Are they to be used to listen to all the siren voices of the world, through what is broadcasted by wireless, or otherwise? How sad if a professed believer says things with his mouth which are untrue, or unkind; or if he speaks evil of a fellow-believer! Then, what do I write with my hand? Am I always working what is honest? Or do I let my feet carry me into places where a Christian ought not to go? Our members are the "instruments" of all our activities, and they are to be "instruments of righteousness to God". *Yielded* to the precious influences of grace. The whole being yielded first to God as alive from among the dead, and then the members in detail! We are not under law, which imposes a rule of conduct, but supplies no motive; we are under grace which has brought in the most blessed and influential motives possible.

There is no such thing as being uncontrolled. The only question is, Which control am I under? Am I a bondman of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness? If I am a bondman of obedience I shall do what is right, and there will be no cloud, between my soul and God. I have known a person says, "I am not going to be in bondage about what books I shall read"! But suppose the reading of certain books takes one away practically from the enjoyment of the love of God, and robs one of present spiritual wealth in Christ, and of the comforting ministry of the Holy Spirit, is not that terrible bondage? What do we mean when we talk about bondage? There is great liberty and happiness in being yielded as a bondman of obedience unto righteousness, and it leads to holiness (verses 19, 22). As we move in obedience on the line of righteousness we become holy. There is nothing more important than holiness:

without it no man shall see the Lord. It is inward separatedness from all that has a moral taint, so that there is that about the saint which repels evil. As holiness is perfected there would be immunity even from evil thoughts.

I suppose every one of us can look back and see things in our history of which we are now ashamed. In doing our own will we had to prove that the end of it was death. Believers are addressed here as those who "have obeyed from the heart the form of teaching into which ye were instructed". I suppose baptism is "the form of teaching"; it speaks of death and burial to the whole sphere in which the will of the fallen creature is active. No one could obey from the heart unless he had come under the powerful influence of grace, as leaving the knowledge of Christ and of the love of God sealed in his affections by the Holy Spirit. The exercise of one's own will never yields any fruit that is satisfying, and the moment is sure to come when God's called one will be ashamed of it. To be ashamed of something in our past shows, at any rate, that we have moved away from it morally.

As believers on the Lord Jesus Christ, and having the Spirit, we have got, our freedom from sin, and have become bondmen to God. Now our fruit is unto holiness, and the end eternal life. There are two lines on which it is possible to move. On the line of sin the wages of death will be earned; but on the line of obedience there will be righteousness, and fruit unto holiness, and we shall move in the direction of eternal life. God's great act of favour to men is to bring in eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. Paul presents this great act of favour as an end to be reached by pursuing the moral course which is indicated in this chapter. John speaks largely of eternal life as a *gift*; and it is ever this. Paul is in full agreement with John, for he calls it, "the act of favour of God". But Paul presents it as a *goal* to be reached. Canaan was the gift of God to Israel before they left Egypt. They might have said without question that it was *theirs* by God's act of favour. But they had to take the journey by which alone it could be reached. This epistle does not contemplate believers as in the present enjoyment of eternal life, but as pursuing that moral course which leads to it. In other words, they are not yet in Canaan, but they are on the way to it; and they have it clearly in view as God's act of favour in Christ Jesus.

The truth of this chapter largely turns upon three words — "knowing" (verse 6), "reckon" (verse 11), and "yield" (verses 13, 16, 19.) *Knowing* is by faith, *reckoning* is by love, and *yielding* can only be in the power of the Spirit.

ROMANS 7

Romans 7

Chapters 5 and 6 have shown us the terrible principle which *man* introduced into the world, and the relation of the believer to that principle; he has died to sin. But there is another thing which has been introduced into the world by *God* — though about two thousand five hundred years later than the introduction of sin — and that is the law, and we have to learn in what relation the believer stands to the law. This is perhaps to many more difficult to understand,

for this is a question of a rule which God Himself brought in, and which has divine authority and power in every conscience of men to whom it comes. It is of the greatest importance that it should be known in what relation the Christian stands to the law. Our Christian liberty depends on our knowing this.

Israel received the law by the disposition of angels, but they did not keep it. Paul brings the guilt of this on their consciences in the early chapters of this epistle. In chapter 2 he speaks of those who rested in the law, and boasted in it, who had the form of knowledge and of truth in the law, but who dishonoured God by breaking it. He said in chapter 3 that “by law is knowledge of sin”. The coming in of the law was a very great event — one of the greatest events in the history of the world — for it brought in a divine standard of what man ought to be for God’s pleasure. And in making known what God required, it gave man a sense of how righteous and holy God was. But the more distinctly this made itself felt as a requirement on God’s part to which man must answer the more was the inability felt to do so.

Now in chapter 7 the apostle speaks “to those knowing law”, and he lays down the principle “that law rules over a man as long as he lives”. He uses the figure of a married woman to illustrate the fact that there was a definite, divinely-formed bond between the law and those under it which nothing but death could annul. The relations between the law and those under it were not voluntary ones so as to be taken up or laid down at pleasure. God had proposed to be in covenant relations with His people on certain grounds and they accepted the proposal; they definitely committed themselves to those relations.

A bond was formed which nothing but death could dissolve. But in Romans 7 we are taught this great truth, that for those who were under the law death has taken place, and the bond has been dissolved, Not that the law has died, but “ye also have been made dead to the law by the body of the Christ”. Christ

came under law, that He might redeem those under law, but law has no application to a dead man. When the dead body of Christ hung upon the cross, the law had no more application to Him; He had passed out of the sphere of its jurisdiction. We "have been made dead to the law by the body of the Christ". We have not to do now with a Christ under law, but a Christ who has died to the law.

But, this is not to leave us unattached or lawless; it is that we may be "to another, who has been raised up from among the dead, in order that we might bear fruit to God". There is still a divine bond, but it is not with the law, but with a risen Christ. What a sweet thought to the believer! I am in divine bond and relationship with a risen and living Christ! Not a code of rules, but a living Person! "Newness of spirit" seems to convey that the result of knowing this is to give a new spirit to the believer. "Oldness of letter" is that you have a statement of what you should do or be, but it puts no spring into you. There is no breathing of life about it. What a difference when you find that you have a bond with a Person who is ever active to make you know how He loves you, and to give you His companionship and support! Ruth with Naomi illustrates chapter 6, but Ruth with Boaz illustrates chapter 7. There was a nearer kinsman than Boaz, who was quite willing to take up the inheritance, but he was not prepared to take Ruth into his affections. What we need is a Boaz — a mighty Man of wealth ready to put Himself and all His resources at our service because He has affection for us. Christ as the risen One is the true Boaz. Not a husband like the law who claims but gives no support, but One whose love delights to be to us all that we need in companionship and support so that we may bring forth fruit to God! Does not the thought of it put "newness of spirit" into us? What a blessed picture of mutual confidence we see in the relations of Boaz and Ruth! She confided in him, and she became possessed of his confidence and his affections. The woman in John 4 had had several husbands, but they had all failed to satisfy her heart; but one day she came in contact with a wondrous heavenly Stranger who spoke to her in terms of affection, and she went back into the city which had witnessed her shame to bring forth fruit to God. What a sense she had of the wealth that was there in Him! Not only had He told her all things that she ever did, but He was the One of whom she said, "When *he* comes he will tell us all things". She went back to the city full of the sense of who *He* was, and of what was there in *Him*. She was now to Another, and how pleasurable was her fruit to God!

We "have been made dead to the law by the body of the Christ". God has thus liberated those who were under the law, and all believers on the Lord Jesus Christ are entitled to recognise that this is their relation to the law. We are now to be to Another, who has been raised up from among the dead. We are

to be regulated and supported by a living Person, and all fruit for God comes in now as a result of this. What a blessed thing to know that we are not in relation to that which claims and demands but gives no support! We are now in relation to Christ the risen and living One, who delights to make known to us how He loves and cares for us, and how He can furnish us with all the support that our weakness needs, so that we may truly bear fruit to God. What is merely in letter gives no power. One may learn from the epistles what a Christian ought to be, but power to *be* it lies in being to Another. This wonderful spiritual bond with Christ enables us to "serve in newness of spirit". There may be outward correctness in a legal way, but the true spring and power of liberty in serving God lies in the consciousness that we are set in relation to One who loves us, and delights to give us His companionship and support.

This precious truth is stated before those exercises are detailed through which we learn experimentally our own weakness. When people refer to "the seventh of Romans", as they often do, they generally mean the latter part of the chapter. But God has given us at the beginning of the chapter what is really the present truth. He has told us that we have been made dead to the law by the body of Christ, that we might be to Another. We are set in relation to One who is pledged in love to support us. It is not now a demand to which there is no strength to answer, but a Person in whom all the wealth of divine grace is embodied, and in whom there is a full supply of all that weakness needs for its support. It is not, merely that He is a storehouse of supply, but it is all made available in personal love. Our sources of supply and strength are realised in conscious nearness to One who loves us. How all hardness and legality would go from our spirits if we kept the company of Christ! With what certainty would our hearts be assured that we could count on Him for everything! Every true husband loves to support his wife and supply all she needs, but he also loves to give her what is nearer to his heart even than his support — his personal affection and companionship. What a new spirit is formed in one who companies with Christ! The greater the conscious weakness the more is He clung to and counted on. The more trying the circumstances one may be called upon to pass through the more is companionship in them valued, and what companionship can be compared with that of Christ? It is the consciousness of this that sets our spirits free from all legality. We live in another region altogether.

It is at this point in the epistle that we come for the first time to the thought of the love of Christ. We have had the blessedness of Christ as the Mercy-seat and the Mediator, and the One through whose death the love of God has been made known to us. That is on the divine side. But when the thought of Christ

as Husband is suggested to us, as it is here, it brings Him to our side, and we come to learn experimentally the personal love of Christ. The love of God and the love of Christ are the most profound and blessed things conceivable, and, thank God! they are our eternal portion.

What a blessed bond of known affections are we brought into! Paul could speak of being constrained — held — by the love of Christ. John tells us how he was in the bosom, and leaned on the breast, of Jesus. May it take hold of our hearts that He loves our confidence, and would draw us into the embrace of His love, that He may give us His confidence as well as His unfailing support in every weakness!

This is the way in which divine love would free our hearts, not only from the law as formally known, but from every element of that legality which is so rooted in the natural heart and mind of man.

We have to learn our own weakness, and we also have to learn how the law acts upon us as in the flesh, rousing into activity those “passions of sins” which might otherwise have remained latent. But how blessed it is to lay firmly hold of the thought of divine grace, that we have been made dead to the law by the body of Christ that we might be to Another — to find in the love and support of Christ the full supply of all that our weakness needs; so that, instead of the passions of sins working in our members to bring forth fruit unto death, we are able to bear fruit to God.

We have spoken before of the soul learning to speak in what may be called Christian language. We have another striking example of this in verse 5: “For when we were in the flesh”. This is a statement to be well weighed, for it intimates how believers — as having the Spirit, and being divinely taught — have learned that they are now no longer “in the flesh”. It is assumed to be known. No explanation is given of how we have arrived at, it, for Scripture takes for granted of believers that they have the Spirit and are taught of God, and that they are no longer “in the flesh”. Things are put into definite shape for us in the statements of Scripture, and this is a great spiritual help, but they are really known in soul-consciousness by the work of God. What a completely changed apprehension of where we are is involved in this simple remark, introduced, as one might say, quite casually as a statement expected to be well understood by those addressed! It is important to recognise that certain things are assumed to be true of Christians as having become the subjects of divine calling and teaching, and as having the Spirit. For example, we are never told to put off the old man, or to put on the new; it is assumed that Christians have done it. So here Paul says, “when we were in the flesh”, assuming it to be a well-known thing that we are no longer there. It is,

indeed, a most blessed thing to be able, as divinely taught, to take Christian ground, and to disown that which was our former state — to look back upon it as that which pertained to the time past of our history, but as that out of which we have now passed through infinite grace.

“For when we were in the flesh the passions of sins, which were by the law, wrought in our members to bring forth fruit to death”. There is in the flesh the tendency to do wrong; the law does not produce that. The diseased and depraved condition is there; but the prohibition makes the tendency into a passion. The knowledge that a thing is forbidden intensifies the desire for it, and the energy that rises in the flesh to pursue it. Nothing could show what the flesh is more plainly than that. A divine prohibition only lends strength to a tendency to evil so that it becomes an uncontrollable passion. The fruit of such a working as that is to death. If there is not fruit to God there will be fruit to death, and there can be nothing else while we are “in the flesh”.

The law is not sin; it makes sin known. A man would not have conscience of lust, or desire, if the law had not said, “Thou shalt not desire”. No man naturally would have a conscience about a desire. He might have a conscience about taking what was his neighbour’s, but not about desiring it. But the law says, “Thou shalt not desire”. All lust is a desire for something which your neighbour has to which you have no right. It does not apply to the region of spiritual things, for whatever your neighbour has in that region it is permitted to you to have. Grace has made it yours also, and in becoming possessed of it you do not rob him, you enrich him. But that is the region of the Spirit, “not in the flesh”.

Sin was there, even in that good man Saul of Tarsus, but it had not made its power felt until the commandment gave it a point of attack. A man’s conscience can take account of words spoken and acts done, but it would never naturally come on a man’s conscience that desire was sin. So he says, “without law sin was dead. But *I* was alive without law once”. He was then a very self-complacent man; he had not the slightest idea that there was anything wrong about him, and outwardly there was not. But when the law came and said, “Thou shalt not desire”, all Saul’s self-complacency died. He became conscious of a principle within him that *did* desire and *would* desire. He says, it “wrought in me every lust”. No wrong action, but “every lust” — every kind of desire for things he had no divine right to. What, a discovery for an excellent man like Saul to make! I daresay there are those who, like Saul, have no consciousness of any movement of sin. But when the commandment, “Thou shalt not desire”, came in power to him, sin burst into life, he found all its energy in his soul, and he died. “I died” shows how he uses death in a

moral sense; his self-complacent life ended. The commandment was itself to death *to him*. "Sin ... deceived me" is a remarkable expression. It seems to say that sin used a weapon he did not expect, and killed him. He had, no doubt, like those he addressed in chapter 2, boasted and rested in the law, but sin used it to kill him.

There is nothing wrong with the law; it is holy, just, and good. It was not the law that wrought death, but sin that worked out death by the law. Sin was there, but it did not appear to be sin until the commandment came; then it became exceeding sinful in the estimation of the soul. Not until I see how exceeding sinful sin is do I hate it. I see it is directly opposed to all that is in God's mind in regard to me. This supposes the awakening of divine sensibilities in the soul; it implies that the man is "born anew".

When Paul says, "We know that the law is spiritual", I think it is the Christian "*we*". We Christians recognise that the law is spiritual; it must be so if it is of God. It must require that a man shall be right in his spirit, in his affections, and not merely in his outward conduct. It applies itself to the source and spring of man's moral being, his deepest inwardness. We Christians, as knowing God, know that it is so.

But then the soul, with its awakened exercises Godward, has to confess, "but *I* am fleshly, sold under sin". He finds that he has lost all right or power to be free; sin holds him as one sold into captivity. But he no longer owns now as being pleasurable or satisfactory to him even the things which he is practically doing. There is the consciousness of a will to do what is right and good. Now if there is a will in the direction of what is pleasing to God, it shows that a very important change and rectification has taken place; it proves that *the man is born anew*. If his will is brought into line with what is pleasing to God the man is morally changed; he is, as Paul would say, "washed", 1 Corinthians 6: 11. He has undergone a process of moral cleansing so that his estimate of things is according to God; he consents to the law that it is right. When a man sees the sinfulness of sin in its inner workings of desire, and hates it so as truly to wish to be free from it, and consents to what is right, it is evident that, a new "I" has come into being. He is no longer finding delight or settled gratification in what is evil, though there is still with him an activity of what is evil. It is at this point that an exercised soul learns to distinguish between himself and the sin that dwells in him (verse 17). He finds that though he has a will towards what is right he has no power. All this is very experimental; it is a careful analysis of the inward history of a soul exercised in the presence of divine light. It is described by one who has been through it, but he has no thought of leaving us there. Neither Christ nor the Spirit is present to soul-consciousness from

verse 7 to verse 21. He is telling us of the road he has travelled, and it is rather a rough road, but he does not stop until he has shown that it ends in a large and wealthy place.

Certain laws are spoken of here. First he says, "I find then the law upon *me* who wills to practise what is right, that with *me* evil is there". He finds evil there, not casually or intermittently, but as a fixed principle. Then he says, "I delight in the law of God according to the inward man". There is a fixed principle which is of God — all that expresses His pleasure in regard to man. It does not change or vary. It was set forth in the law; it is known to the Christian as being perfectly set forth in Christ. There is now delight in it "according to the inward man". There is now the consciousness in integrity before God that in the true inwardness of his moral being he delights in what is of God.

But then he sees another law in his members — the law of sin is there. The members bring in the practical side — the actual working parts of the man — and he finds that the eye, the ear, the tongue, the hands and feet, all his members, have a fixed principle which comes into activity in them — a principle contrary to God which is stronger than the law of his mind. The members here are the totality of the man, apart from his mind and his inward man. As to his mind there is a fixed principle there which he speaks of as "the law of my mind". How often we see persons conscious of much weakness and failure in themselves, but who cannot give up or turn away from what is of God! They avail themselves of opportunities to keep in touch with what is spiritual; they value meetings and ministry; they read the Scriptures and they pray, and they go on with this steadily and persistently. All this is evidence that what stands in relation to God has become the law — the fixed principle — of their minds. We can recognise this fixed principle in all those who fear God, and it is well to regard the people of God in relation to that law. I learn first to recognise it as "the law of my mind", and then I can recognise it as the law of other minds. I take no right or divine account of one who fears God until I identify him with the law of his mind rather than with the law of sin in his members. I then become sympathetic with his exercises — with what he is morally as the subject of God's working.

The fixed principle of sin is in the members, but it is the pleasure of God to free us from its power. Until His deliverance is known one is in captivity, always defeated by the law in the members which wars against the law of the mind. Hence the pitiful cry, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me out of this body of death?" His will is right; according to the inward man he delights in what is of God; the fixed principle of his mind is toward righteousness and

holiness, but he is a wretched man because he has no power. He is imprisoned in a "body of death". He does not say now, Who shall justify me? or, Who shall reconcile me? but, Who shall deliver me? Our deliverance must be as entirely of God as our justification or our reconciliation. The believer must, pass by a divine deliverance out of the flesh into the Spirit; he must learn that he is of an entirely new order of man — that he is in Christ Jesus, where an entirely new law begins to operate. The law of sin and death is there in the flesh, but the delivered man is free from it. Paul could say definitely that, "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ, Jesus" had set him free from the law of sin and death. If one man has been set free, it proves that there is a divine deliverance from captivity to the law of sin, and it is for each one of us to be exercised that we are set free also.

The Holy Spirit is spoken of in chapter 5 as shedding abroad the love of God in our hearts, but at the beginning of chapter 8 He is the Spirit of life in a new order of Man. The believer learns in chapter 6 to reckon himself alive to God in Christ Jesus, but now he is spoken of as having the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus, It is a wonderful thing to know what it is to be "in Christ Jesus". We have seen at the end of chapter 6 that God's great act of favour is to give us eternal life in Christ Jesus. Here it is not eternal life, but life in Christ Jesus as liberating power. The most powerful law of all is "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus". This is not the flesh corrected, adjusted, or sanctified, but power brought in by the Spirit so that the believer may be liberated so as to be for the pleasure of God in his responsible life here. It is not risen or heavenly life that is in view, but a life down here in which the righteous requirement of the law is fulfilled.

When the lesson of our own helplessness has been really learned, and we look for a divine Hand to lift us clean out of the captivity in which we are held, there is an immediate answer. The blessed God, through Jesus Christ our Lord, is known in delivering grace, and the soul breaks forth in thanksgiving. The flesh would, indeed, still serve sin's law, showing clearly that there is no change in the flesh, but the delivered believer now serves with his mind God's law, and has power to walk in freedom in what is pleasing to God. There is another fixed principle in operation now, and that is "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus". God has brought in this new fixed principle in His grace "through Jesus Christ our Lord". It is administered to us through that blessed Person, and is an essential part of the true grace of God in which we stand. The grace of which Jesus Christ our Lord is the Mediator and Administrator is so great in its wealth that it meets divinely every part of our need. It includes all that liberating power which lies in the Holy Spirit as "the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus". It is for every believer to avail himself of the grace of God in this

respect, and to realise the deliverance which that grace has provided. Only thus can God be glorified, and the believer set free to walk according to Spirit in liberty before Him.

ROMANS 8

Romans 8

It is neither for our comfort, nor for God's pleasure that we should be "wretched" men, under a continual sense of condemnation. No doubt many persons in whom there is a work of God are more or less in bondage, but this is not pleasurable to God; He would encourage us to move into liberty. We have been told in chapter 6: 11 to reckon ourselves "alive to God in Christ Jesus". God's called and justified saints are entitled to take account of themselves as alive to Him in the anointed Man of His purpose and good pleasure. None of us are alive to God as in Adam, or as in the flesh, or as in sin; Paul bids us to take account of ourselves as alive to God in Christ Jesus. What is involved in this will continually expand before us; we do not at first understand all that it means; but grace entitles us to reckon ourselves to be alive to God in the Man of His good pleasure. There is no other way of being "alive to God" save as "in Christ Jesus". As a believer I have learned to rejoice in what has come in for God's pleasure in Christ; and to know that it has come in that I might have part in it. I can be alive to God in Christ Jesus, entirely apart morally from all that came in by Adam — alive to God in the appreciation of what subsists before Him for His pleasure in Christ Jesus, His anointed One. We are privileged to identify ourselves in mind and affection with it all.

Then at the end of chapter 6 we learn that "the act of favour of God" is "eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord". This is in contrast with all that we had earned by sin; it is purely of God, His supreme favour to us in Christ Jesus. That favour does not stop short of eternal life — life beyond the reach of sin and death — in Christ Jesus our Lord. It is in the last Adam, life of a spiritual order — the climax of blessing brought in where sin and death had been. God would educate us spiritually to the apprehension of His favour and blessing as being in another Man, and through grace we are in that Man. God has, through redemption and by His own gracious working, brought about that we are "in Christ Jesus". To every one who has believed the glad tidings it can be said, "But of him are ye in Christ Jesus", 1 Corinthians 1: 30.

Our present chapter begins, "There is then now no condemnation to those in Christ Jesus". As being "in Christ Jesus" we are outside the range of condemnation. To be "in Christ Jesus" involves much more than this; we know from other scriptures that it brings in sonship and the whole blessed purpose of God. But it is not carried here beyond the thought of "no condemnation", for the early part of this chapter does not go beyond the responsible life. Our apostle is showing us that in Christ Jesus we get away from condemnation as

having power to live in freedom from the law of sin and death. The first, verse is a general statement as to "those in Christ Jesus": they are not the subjects of condemnation; they are under God's favour and blessing, and they have power to live for His pleasure. To be in Christ Jesus carries with it that we have the Holy Spirit as "the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus", and that brings in a law — a fixed principle — in which there is liberating power. Paul is able to tell us that the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus had set him free from the law of sin and death. If it set him free it can set any man free. He does not say "us" but "me", because this liberation must be known experimentally, by each one. But the power is there that can do it for every believer. When God breathed into the nostrils of Adam the breath of life, Adam had power to live naturally — he became a living soul. The Spirit of life in Christ Jesus is a new and spiritual breath of life, giving power to live in freedom from the law of sin and death. There is the greatest encouragement in this. Paul testifies to us that he had been set free; he had proved that there was a liberating power, and that it was an effectual one. It is as much available for us as it was for him; it is for us to prove it likewise.

Apart from the Spirit there would be no power to live, or to be *vital*ly in Christ Jesus, but God has given us that new and wondrous breath of life so that we might now be capable of living morally as in Christ Jesus; features which belong to that order of man can now appear in us, unhindered by "the law of sin and death". Paul writes to Timothy of those "who desire to live piously in Christ Jesus". The Christian, desiring to live thus, is never without power; he is never really the helpless man of Romans 7. He may fail to use the power he has, and this is, in one sense, more lamentable than not having the power. It is to be feared that many Christians settle down to a life of outward propriety not very different in its features from that of a good moral man in the world. But to live piously in Christ Jesus we need the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus, and the continual operation of its blessed "law".

If we are to live in an order of life which is entirely different in all its features from the life which we had in Adam, there must be power to do so, and the power is given. There is very little excuse for us if we have the power and do not use it. The Lord breathing into His disciples in John 20 goes beyond what we get here, but it may serve to illustrate what is here. Here the Spirit of life is a liberating power so that one is set free from the power of sin and death; but in John 20 the inbreathing gives qualification to be sent forth by the Son of God as the Father sent Him forth. It has in view the whole mission and testimony with which He would entrust His own during the time of His departure from the world. He qualifies His disciples to represent Him here, and to carry on His testimony. "The Spirit of life in Christ Jesus" is an allusion, I

think, to God breathing the breath of life into Adam. It gives power to live in the responsible life here in relation to a new Head, and in freedom from what came in by Adam. One man, at any rate, has proved this to be a reality, for Paul says, it "has set me free". The same power is adequate to set every other believer free.

The law was incompetent to help in this matter; it did not bring in power; it could neither set the flesh right nor set it aside. But the law being "weak through the flesh", and unable to do what was needed, has given place to a wondrous action of divine love: "God, having sent his own Son". Perhaps we have overlooked some of the sweet and holy preciousness of this! God sent *His own Son*! How near this matter lay to the heart of God! *His own Son* should take it up; He would send Him "in likeness of flesh of sin" so that love might have its holy way even in relation to that dreadful order of being. He was sent that "flesh of sin" might come before God for condemnation, but as brought there by an action of love on God's part. He was sent "for sin"; God took up the question of our sinful state as in flesh, and He dealt with it in a sacrificial way. He caused the judgment, of it to come upon One who was personally quite exempt from it. Sin, as having its seat and power in the flesh of man, was condemned. Should we not be deeply affected by the love that did it? It was the holy and unsparing condemnation of our flesh, but it came about in a most, wondrous act of divine love to usward.

The Son of Man being lifted up was the anti-type of the brazen serpent lifted up by Moses. In that type the sin of man is traced back, as it were, to its source in the serpent, and judged as having its origin there; the very root of it is exposed and judged. But in Romans 8: 3 sin is regarded as characterising the flesh of man; it has come fully into evidence there, even to the point of delivering up and murdering the Just One. The full extent of what sin is has come out in man. Its origin was in the serpent, but it has manifested in human flesh the lengths to which it would go. And that is *my* flesh and *yours*! What could God do but condemn it? But how deeply does the way He has condemned it touch our hearts! He has sent *His own Son* "in likeness of flesh of sin, and for sin". He "has condemned sin in the flesh" absolutely, but He has done it by an action of love,

so that He might be free to give us the Spirit as power to walk morally apart from the flesh. As we walk "according to Spirit" the righteous requirement of the law is fulfilled in us; we love God; and we love our neighbour, and work no ill to him, we are ready to serve him in love.

God has condemned sin in the flesh, and His Spirit is in accord with that; and if I walk according to Spirit I shall be in accord with it. I shall not give place to

that which God has condemned. In giving the Spirit, God has set up the believer in a power according to which he can walk apart from movements of the flesh. The flesh and the Spirit are antagonistic. "But I say, walk in the Spirit, and ye shall no way fulfil flesh's lust. For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these things are opposed one to the other, that ye should not do those things which ye desire", Galatians 5: 16, 17. The flesh is there, but the believer is under no obligation to walk according to flesh; he is privileged to walk according to Spirit. The time comes when a fledged bird puts its power to the test, and finds that it can fly. It is a line moment in the history of the young believer when he recognises that God has given him the Spirit, and that now — being set to refuse the flesh and to walk according to Spirit — he has power to do so. Have we really put this matter to the test?

We cannot walk "according to Spirit" without exercise and purpose of heart. The well of which Jehovah spoke to Moses (Numbers 21) was typical of the Spirit, and we are told that it was a "well which princes digged, which the nobles of the people hollowed out at the word of the lawgiver with their staves". "The word of the lawgiver" would suggest that the authority of the Lord is owned, His right to command us is fully admitted. It is on the line of subjection and obedience that the gain of the Spirit is secured. The flesh is ever insubject; it will not obey "the word of the lawgiver", and God has nothing for it but condemnation. It is as having come under Christ as Lord that we can walk according to Spirit. The Well has to be digged, all cleared away that would hinder its springing up, or that would hinder free access to it. Spiritual *nobility* attaches to those who are diligent in such activity. Where there is subjection to the Lord, and purpose of heart to go in the way of His commandments, believers can be spoken of as "according to Spirit", and they mind the things of the Spirit.

God's called and justified ones are characteristically "according to Spirit", and this comes into evidence by their minding the things of the Spirit. There are just the two orders of things morally — the things of the flesh and the things of the Spirit — and every Christian knows the difference between them. The works of the flesh and the fruit of the Spirit are defined in Galatians 5: 19 - 23.

The mind of the flesh is death; it is always opposed to God and insubject. Where there is subjection to God you may be sure that is not the flesh; subjection and obedience are the mind of the Spirit, and have we not proved that that mind is life and peace!

"But ye are not in flesh but in Spirit, if indeed God's Spirit dwell in you". Such is the result of the indwelling of God's Spirit; we are no longer in flesh but in

Spirit. Nothing could be of greater importance, from a practical point of view, than that believers should know this. As indwelt by God's Spirit we are in an entirely new state characteristically. In the time past we were in the flesh, and there was nothing active in us morally but what was of the flesh. But now something has taken place which has completely changed this, and brought in what is in perfect contrast with the flesh. As believers on the Lord Jesus Christ — justified and reconciled — we have God's Spirit dwelling in us, and it is that immense spiritual reality which makes the difference. Persons with God's Spirit dwelling in them could not be "in the flesh", for that is the state and characteristic of the fallen man — the child of Adam. One who is justified by God "through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus" stands in relation to a new Head, and receives the Spirit as in that relation, and is no longer in the flesh but in Spirit. If this is not understood there is no true apprehension of what has come about through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus. It should be pondered and prayed over until it is known as a definite reality in the soul. The basis of all true Christian experience and progress lies in this, that in virtue of God's Spirit indwelling, we "are not in flesh but in Spirit".

It is to be noted that the word "dwell" is used here. It suggests the thought of a settled abode, an inhabited house. It is not only that the Spirit is given or received, that He is the seal or the anointing, but He *dwells*. There are three previous passages in this epistle where the same word is used: "sin that dwells in me" (chapter 7: 17), "in my flesh good does not dwell" (chapter 7: 18), "the sin that dwells in me" (chapter 7: 20). We have learned experimentally what those scriptures mean! But now God's Spirit dwells in us, and this that we may know experimentally the gain of it; it implies that all is on a new footing. In the Old Testament we read of men walking with God, and of God appearing to men and visiting them, but no word of God dwelling until Exodus 15. It is on the ground of *redemption* that God spoke of dwelling amongst His people, and if His Spirit dwells in us it is the most blessed evidence that we are before God on entirely new ground. The death of Christ having taken place, sin in the flesh having been condemned, and God having called us and led us through the moral exercises which have been outlined in the early chapters of this epistle, we have become ashamed of the things which formerly characterised us. We have learned, under the teaching of grace, to come into harmony with God, and judge what is of the flesh, and to know that we have blessing from God through our Lord Jesus Christ and in Christ. It is as thus blessed of God in wondrous grace that we are indwelt by His Spirit, and we are not in flesh but in Spirit. God's Spirit has taken up His settled abode in us in virtue of those conditions which have been brought about on the ground of the death of Christ. God's calling and work in us having also prepared us, through moral

exercise, to appreciate His grace, and to apprehend its character and actings through and in Christ. God's Spirit dwelling in us does not stand connected with any change or improvement in the flesh, but with conditions brought about entirely by God in His grace, and the Spirit never deviates from the line of God's grace in Christ. He would never lead us to think of ourselves other than as according to what we are by grace through Christ and in Christ. He would never lead us to regard ourselves as in the flesh; He would ever have us to think of that as a former state; He would maintain us in self-judgment, and in the refusal of the flesh.

Then we have mention of the Spirit in another way. "But if any one has not the Spirit of Christ *he* is not of him". This is the Spirit of a Man — of God's Anointed Man; it is what characterised Him. It was in the prophets of old as a prophetic Spirit, and it manifested itself in many ways in the Old Testament saints, particularly in the Psalms. But its full manifestation was in Christ personally; He was the true Meat-offering mingled with oil and anointed with oil. We can now know the Holy Spirit as the Spirit of a Man; we delight to think of the holiness, the purity, the faithfulness, the gentleness, the meekness and lowliness, and every other feature of moral excellence which blended in the Spirit of Christ. How it exalts our thought of Christian blessing, and — one may add — of Christian character, to know that saints are of Christ as having the Spirit of Christ! Jehovah said of Caleb that he had "another spirit in him", and the generation of faith are marked off by having the Spirit of Christ. No one is of Christ who has not His Spirit, and one mark of those who have the Spirit of Christ is that they feel exceedingly uncomfortable if they manifest any other spirit. The more I learn of the Spirit of Christ as seen in Him, the more I learn to judge all that is contrary to it in myself. But it is a blessed fact that each one who is of Christ has His .. Spirit so as to be characterised by it; the possession of that Spirit marks off the believer from those who are of Adam. There is no evidence that one is of Christ save having His Spirit. One might be zealous in outward Christian activities, or even in contending for what is right, without having the Spirit of Christ.

But nothing is really maintained for the pleasure of God apart from the Spirit of Christ, "who, when reviled, reviled not again; when suffering, threatened not". Even if we have to deal with positive adversaries, persons opposing the truth, they have to be met in the Spirit of Christ. "And a bondman of the Lord ought not to contend, but be gentle towards all; apt to teach; forbearing; in meekness setting right those who oppose, if God perhaps may sometime give them repentance to acknowledgement of the truth", 2 Timothy 2: 24, 25. Is not that a beautiful spirit? All the exhortations as to meekness, lowliness, forbearance, kindness, etc., show the character of the Spirit of Christ, and

Christians have that Spirit, so that their hearts condemn them if they do not manifest it. We have to be faithful with ourselves as to this. There is not much in being faithful with others if I am not first faithful with myself. If I have the Spirit of Christ — and every true Christian has — it is to give me character. I continually remind myself that I am of Christ and have His Spirit; I cannot, as a saint, be happy to allow, or to act in, any other spirit. It is sometimes the case that we are not at all happy about the spirit which we have manifested, but the pride and will of the flesh will not allow us to own to others what we really feel in our own hearts. Grace should be sought and obtained to overcome the flesh in this matter. It would greatly further mutual confidence and fellowship if we were ready to acknowledge to others what we really feel. If we have the Spirit of Christ, why should it not come out and be manifested? The Christian is sometimes better inside than he is on the surface. He has inward sensibilities by the Spirit of Christ, but allows the pride of the flesh to hinder him from giving expression to them. It is a great moral victory when we overcome, and allow the Spirit of Christ *which is there* to come into evidence. There is territory then possessed and held for God, and the brotherly element is promoted amongst the saints; Christ comes into view in those who are of Him.

This gives Christ a place in us morally. "But if Christ be in you, the body is dead on account of sin, but the Spirit life on account of righteousness". I suppose the disciples were called Christians in the first place (Acts 11: 26) because Christ was seen in them; it might have been a term of reproach affixed to them by the world, but at any rate it indicated that there was something of Christ in them. And this is true of all who have the Spirit. Then it follows that "the body is dead on account of sin"; the body of the believer is not to move any longer in a moral sense according to the life which naturally attaches to it; if it did it would only result in sin. Lower down we read of putting to death the deeds of the body; all fleshly self-gratifications come under that head. The body is not to be the source of moral action now; it is "dead on account of sin, but the Spirit life on account of righteousness". Instead of the body being the source of impulse, it is now the Spirit. Nothing could show more forcibly the extraordinary place which the Spirit has as characterising the believer. The Spirit is life. This is life as the source or energy of all movement in a moral sense. All movements of righteousness in the believer have their origin and vital strength in the Spirit.

We must not hurry over these statements, for they set forth the very essence of what constitutes practical Christian life. Christ having come in by the Spirit,

the body can be held as dead; it is dead as a source of impulse to moral action, for if it were alive in that sense it would only lead to sin. There is a new Source of impulse and energy in the believer, and all movement which originates in that Source has the character of righteousness. How completely is the believer identified as to the very spring of his moral being with the Spirit! People speak sometimes of the “higher” Christian life, but there is no truly Christian life *lower* than “the Spirit life on account of righteousness”. May we know what it is to walk in the practical and experimental power of the Spirit as life!

This is the great epistle of righteousness. It makes known to us the righteousness of God, shows how righteousness is reckoned to those who believe, tells us of Christ’s one righteousness, and of how the many will be constituted righteous. It declares to us how grace reigns through righteousness to eternal life. It admonishes us to yield our members instruments of righteousness to God; it addresses us as “bondmen to righteousness”. And now in the verse we are considering it tells us that the Spirit is life on account of righteousness. This is righteousness in a practical sense; movements which originate and have their strength in the Spirit.

Verse 11 connects the thought of resurrection power with the Spirit. He is “The Spirit of him that has raised up Jesus from among the dead”. What a pledge is the dwelling in us of such a Person that we shall be completely freed from the power of death! The raising of *Jesus* was God’s answer to what He *was personally*; such features as were seen in Jesus could not possibly be left by God in death. The immensity of divine power was seen in God raising Him. The Spirit of the One who did *that* dwells in the believer now.

When he passes on to speak of the result in regard to us, he says, “he that has raised up *Christ* from among the dead”. He thinks of Him now as Head and Pattern of the whole company who live to God. They are in Christ, and if *He* has been raised their mortal bodies will be quickened; they must all live in His order of life even as to their bodies, He does not say here, as we might, perhaps, have expected, that He who has raised Christ will also raise us. He says that elsewhere (2 Corinthians 4: 14), but *here* he does not speak of our resurrection, but of the quickening of our mortal bodies. He views the saints, not as having died and been buried and needing to be raised, but as living on the earth in mortal bodies, and having their mortal bodies quickened. The One who raised Christ will quicken the mortal bodies of the saints. If the Lord were to come this minute, these mortal bodies would be quickened on account of God’s Spirit which dwells in us, and we should be upon the earth — perhaps for a brief moment, but actually here — with quickened bodies. This scripture

does not look beyond that, and it will be "on account of his Spirit which dwells in you"; it will be on account of that which is true now in the believer. A mighty divine Power will operate on the mortal body and quicken it, but it will be on account of God's Spirit indwelling the saints. I think Paul puts it in this way because he has in mind that the *actual* quickening of the mortal body is to be anticipated *morally* by the saints. In virtue of the Spirit dwelling in us these mortal bodies can even now be vessels of divine pleasure, vehicles for the expression of the will of God, members of Christ. They can be morally quickened so as to be "a *living* sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God". The mortal body becomes thus a wonderful vessel, as many scriptures would confirm, for the pleasure of God. And a power is already resident in the believer on account of which his body can be quickened, and placed eternally beyond the reach of death.

In the light of all this we realise, surely, that we are under no obligation to the flesh; if we live according to flesh we are about to die. "But if, by the Spirit, ye put to death the deeds of the body, ye shall live". "The deeds of the body" are the things which would be suggested by the body looked at as identified with the flesh — self-gratifications connected with the body. But the believer has now power, by the Spirit, to put all such deeds to death, and as he does so he lives. The body may be a vessel for fleshly activities or for spiritual activities; naturally it is the former; it has possibilities and tendencies which have to be put to death. The Christian is able to do this by the Spirit; he *uses* the divine power which is at his disposal to nullify what is fleshly in connection with his body, and he *lives*. He lives according to God, as holding his body as the vessel of the Spirit and not of the flesh. This is worked out in a practical way, by the grace of God, through exercise, dependence, and prayer.

Down to this point the Spirit has been chiefly viewed in our chapter as in contrast with the flesh, and as giving power to live morally apart from the flesh. Now we come to the positive side — to the blessed relationship *with God* in the consciousness of which the Spirit would set us in holy liberty. "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God". The refusal of the flesh, the putting to death of the deeds of the body, Christ being in those who have His Spirit, all speak of holy power and dignity in the saints. Those led by the Spirit of God are sons of God: they are invested with a character and dignity such as the Lord set before His disciples when He said, "that ye may be the sons of your Father who is in the heavens", Matthew 5: 45. Free from all legality, for "if ye are led by the Spirit, ye are not under law" (Galatians 5: 18), they walk in the consciousness of being sons of God. It is the position and dignity which the saints have down here as led by the Spirit. It is not only that we receive sonship as a gift of divine love, according to

Galatians 4: 5, but that, as led by the Spirit, we move here as sons of God. What a contrast to what we were as in the flesh, sons of disobedience! As led by the Spirit we have the moral features of sons of God.

"For ye have not received a spirit of bondage again for fear, but ye have received a spirit of sonship, whereby we cry, Abba, Father". This is not exactly the Holy Spirit personally, though it could not be apart from His indwelling. But it is the spirit which characterises the sons of God in their attitude Godward in contrast with "a spirit of bondage". They have received "a spirit of sonship"; they are in liberty with God; they are conscious of His favour and love; they are moving, as led by His Spirit, apart from all that is fleshly; there is no spirit of bondage to engender fear; all their relations with God are taken up in a spirit of sonship; they cry, Abba, Father.

"Abba" is literally a Chaldee word meaning "Father", but it has been divinely consecrated to express something which is otherwise inexpressible. It was used by the adorable Son of God in speaking to His Father when His soul was full of grief even unto death in Gethsemane. Who can tell the depth of holy reverence and affection which is expressed as uttered by Him? Mark, giving us the record of it in words inspired by God, treats the word "Abba" as untranslatable. And Paul, in telling us that it is the cry of the Spirit of God's Son in our hearts (Galatians 4: 6), and that, by the Spirit of sonship, *we* cry, Abba, Father (Romans 8: 15), makes no attempt to give us a Greek equivalent. Our translators, with spiritual intuition and a wisdom given of God, have followed the example of Mark and Paul, and have left the word untranslated. One would regard it as expressive, not only of the consciousness of relationship, but of the affections which are proper to the relationship. Its meaning is therefore only known in the heart that has these affections. The saints have received a spirit of sonship that they might be animated by the affections Godward which are proper to His sons, and that they might express them in holy liberty. It is not what the Spirit does here, but what *we* do as having received a spirit of sonship. We are freed with God from every element of bondage. Satan would seek to bind the sons and daughters of Abraham; he bound one of them for eighteen years, but it was not pleasing to God that she should be bound, and the Lord loosed her bonds, and gave her a true Sabbath; Luke 13: 10 - 17. Where a spirit of sonship is there are no bonds. All movements of flesh tend to bondage, but as we follow the leading of the Spirit we preserve the character of sons of God, and there is nothing to interfere with the liberty with God in which we are as having received a spirit of sonship.

Then our spirits become such that "the Spirit itself bears witness with our spirit, that we are children of God". We appreciate what is of God, it is sweet and delightful to us; we respond affectionately to His love, we have sensibilities and motives which show that we are begotten of Him. We are not only conscious of this in our own spirits, but the Spirit bears witness with our spirit, that we are children of God. He delights to confirm the consciousness of it in our spirits.

As children we are heirs also In Galatians 4 it is the one who is "son" who is "heir also through God", because Paul is showing them that God has given us the place of *sons* in contrast with that of *bondmen*, and it is as such that we inherit. He is emphasising the grace that gives the position and dignity of sons, and therewith the inheritance. But in Romans 8 it is as "children" that we are heirs — those born into the family of God, and having kindred nature with Him. Such are constituted "heirs of God"; they are destined to come into possession of His wealth, to be "Christ's joint-heirs". As we move along through this epistle we are continually coming upon fresh and wondrous disclosures of what God has purposed for man, and also of the place which Christ holds in relation to all that God has before Him for His pleasure. Here we learn for the first time that there is such a thing as the inheritance, and that the children of God are the heirs, but that they inherit as being "Christ's joint-heirs". Christ is the divinely established Heir of all things; He is going to come into possession of all things so as to hold all for the delight of God: and the children of God are His joint-heirs; they have that place in

"Love that gives not as the world, but shares
All it possesses with its loved co-heirs". (249:2)

But there are two sides to the participation with Christ; suffering with Him precedes being glorified with Him. The present is the suffering time; Christ is disinherited here, and His joint-heirs must not expect that they will be glorified here. We have truly a wonderful place as indwelt by God's Spirit, and as sons and children of God, but along with this we have the privilege of suffering with Christ. No one ever felt "the sufferings of this present time" as He did. Everything here was in contrariety to God, so that what was of God and for God was always in reproach and rejection. Then, on the other hand, the consequences of sin in the government of God being untold suffering, He who passed through this scene with perfect and holy sensibilities and sympathies, could not be other than a Sufferer. He felt the condition of men, the misery of God's afflicted creatures, the pangs of a groaning creation, and as children of God we feel this too — we suffer with Him. Suffering *with* Him depends on our having sensibilities and sympathies like His. And the suggestion of this is a

beautiful finishing touch to the picture presented to us here of what the brethren are as set up in the Spirit. They are "according to Spirit", they have the Spirit of Christ, Christ is in them, the Spirit is life, they are sons and children and heirs of God. And lastly, they are seen, not only as having Christ's place of suffering here, but as being in that place with ability to suffer with Him, because they have the same kind of feelings and sympathies as He had; not indeed of the same measure, but of the same kind. It is not here suffering *for* Him, or *for* righteousness' sake, or *for* the testimony, but suffering *with* Him. It is a precious thought that Christians are viewed as having sensibilities which qualify them to suffer *with* Christ.

If we suffer with Him we shall also be glorified with Him. He suffered because all His thoughts and feelings were in harmony with God, and He was continually in contact with a scene, and with circumstances, where all was contrary to the mind of God. He could not but suffer in the circumstances of this world, but He will be glorified where He suffered. Sufferings and glory are linked together. Everything that was in Christ that led to His suffering here was such as to prove Him suitable to be glorified by God. Whatever is suitable for God to glorify must suffer in this present time. We cannot be sons and children of God without suffering; all the sensibilities of The divine nature are such as to make suffering inevitable in the present time of sin's confusion, and of all that accompanies it in the government of God. But the One who suffered here is going to be glorified here, and the joint-heirs who suffer with Him will also be glorified with Him.

The thought of this leads to another of the blessed reckonings of this epistle: "For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the coming glory to be revealed to us". The coming glory is going to be revealed in the very scene where the sufferings of the children of God have been, We shall see glory here; it will be revealed to us; it will be brought into the creature scene where vanity and the bondage of corruption have so long held sway. The inheritance of which we are Christ's joint-heirs is the wide creation, which is going to be "set free from the bondage of corruption into the liberty of the glory of the children of God". The liberation of the whole creature scene will depend on "the revelation of the sons of God". They have come into evidence as sons of God by being led by the Spirit of God, but this is a kind of distinction which has not given them any honour in the world. Their true glory is hidden from the eyes of men. God has been doing a wonderful work for long centuries in the souls of men, bringing to pass that they have become His sons and children morally and in nature. This is the present result of divine working, a masterpiece of divine skill. Oftentimes a sculptor works for years, developing in stone some design of beauty, and

perfecting it in all its details, but comparatively few know of it or can appreciate its excellence. But there comes a day when it is publicly unveiled, and all can see it, and do honour to the one whose wise and patient skill has brought about such a result. It is going to be like that in the ways of God. There is going to be a day of public unveiling of all that He has been doing for thousands of years in the souls of men! His sons are going to be revealed; they are going to shine forth in glory when the Lord comes again, And when they are revealed, the inheritance will be relieved of every encumbrance; it will be set free from all the bondage in which it is today. The apostle tells us that "the creature" anxiously, or constantly, looks out with expectation for the revelation of the sons of God. "The creature" cannot be content with things as they are. It is presented as knowing enough of its Creator to be assured that its present condition is not pleasurable to Him, and to expect His deliverance. "The creature" covers the whole range of what has been affected, and made subject to vanity, by reason of the sin of man. Every living thing in that creation has been affected, and I have heard that there is not a flower or a blade of grass that does not reveal under the microscope some blemish. There is much there that speaks of the creative wisdom and power of God, but along with it the mark of vanity. The whole scene of nature is going to evidence how God can liberate it. It is viewed in this remarkable passage as having the expectation and hope of complete liberation from bondage. By reason of what man is it has become subject to vanity and bondage; by reason of what God is it expects and hopes for complete emancipation. The inheritance waits for its release from thralldom when Christ and His joint-heirs are revealed from heaven. The manifestation of the children of God in glory will bring liberty to the whole creation, which until now "groans together and travails in pain together".

The children of God, though they have "the first-fruits of the Spirit", are still linked by their mortal bodies with the groaning creation. So that we also "groan in ourselves, awaiting sonship, that is the redemption of our body". We are in sympathy with the groaning creation, so that its groan and its expectations and hope are voiced intelligently by a company of persons who have "the firstfruits of the Spirit". It is remarkable how everything that is suitable to God is brought into expression in His children. They voice in His ear, not only a spirit of sonship in the cry, "Abba, Father", but also the groans of a creation subject to vanity. They are representative before God of His whole creation, as being part of it, and creation's expectation and hope take intelligent form in them. No other part of the creation holds the hope of deliverance intelligently, but the children of God do, and in this matter they represent the whole creation, so that "the creature" does expect and hope

intelligently, and knows the way and character of its deliverance. We, as part of the groaning creation, await sonship, the redemption of our body. The first wave of liberating power which rolls out into the domain of groaning creation will rescue the bodies of the saints from mortality and corruptibility. This will be the earnest and the pledge of the deliverance of the wide creation. "The revelation of the sons of God" will manifest that the time has come for the creature to be set free. The power that can, and will, free creation will be seen first in them. The kind of liberty which the creature will enjoy will be set forth in "the glory of the children of God". That is creature liberty seen in its fullest and most glorious expression. When it is seen publicly in us the time will have come for creation to be freed.

We have our part in creature hope, and that is the character of hope in Romans 8: 24, 25. It is the hope which believers have as the intelligent part of God's creation, and as knowing how creation is going to be set free from the bondage of corruption. We have been saved in hope; we do not see the creature emancipated; we have not the realisation of the creature being freed even in *our* bodies, great as is the spiritual favour and blessing which has been shown us. But we *hope*, and we expect in patience.

And this condition of things gives occasion for another to be added to the many activities of the Spirit which have come before us. "And in like manner the Spirit joins also its help to our weakness; for we do not know what we should pray for as is fitting, but the Spirit itself makes intercession with groanings which cannot be uttered. But he who searches the hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because he intercedes for saints according to God". In the circumstances where we are still linked with a groaning creation we often do not know what we should pray for as is fitting. We are made to feel our creature weakness in a way that brings it home to us most convincingly. But "the Spirit joins also its help to our weakness" and "makes intercession with groanings which cannot be uttered". The Spirit is intelligent as to what is fitting, whatever the circumstances may be, and identifies Himself in an intercessory way with the present true needs of saints "according to God". It is a question here of "groanings"; that is, the voicing of exercises which are produced by the present condition and circumstances of "the creature". It is part of spirituality to feel the pressure of all that has come upon "the creature", and that suitable desires and sensibilities should be in the hearts of saints with reference to things which in themselves are not matters of joy but of grief. When the Son of God was here He felt all the conditions more deeply than any other could. Hence we read of His groaning (Mark 7: 34; chapter 8: 12), and of His being deeply moved in spirit (John 11: 33, 38). Now the Holy Spirit is here with perfect, divine sensibilities as to all that has

come into God's creation. How touching it is to know that the Spirit has come into our hearts to help us, so that there may be what is "according to God", even with reference to creature weaknesses, sufferings, and exercises in the heart which are really unutterable! Even the Spirit does not put His intercession into *words*; it is "with groanings which cannot be uttered". It is the deepest and most inward feelings which divine sensitiveness can produce, in presence of the griefs of a groaning creation, that are here contemplated. The human heart, in itself, is incapable of uttering "as is fitting" what is "according to God" in such circumstances. But the Spirit can do it perfectly, and God searches the hearts of His saints to discover there "the mind of the Spirit". God has provided in this way that there shall be in the hearts of His saints an intercession which is perfectly according to Himself in relation to the creature condition, and all its attendant griefs, in which they are found. He searches our hearts, according to this scripture, not to find imperfections there, but to find "the mind of the Spirit". That mind is there in all those indwelt by the Spirit.

We do not know in detail how things will work out in connection with divine purpose. Naturally I should like good health, comfortable circumstances, and nothing to try me! But how would that work out in view of God's purpose, and my being glorified as one of Christ's joint-heirs? All God's ways with His children here have in view that He is going to bring us forth in glory with Christ, as Christ's brethren and joint-heirs, to exercise liberating influence in a scene of vanity and the bondage of corruption. God never loses sight of that, and His Spirit always has it before Him; He intercedes "according to God".

God created man in His image, after His likeness, and said, "Let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the heavens, and over the cattle, and over the whole earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth on the earth", Genesis 1: 26. The whole earth was to be under the dominion of man as in God's image and after His likeness. That was the purpose of God in regard to this created scene — a purpose not to be reached in connection with Adam, but in connection with Christ and His joint-heirs. Romans 8 shows the effect of the breakdown of the first man on the whole creation that was his inheritance, but it also shows how God is going to set it free under the blessed, liberating power of Christ and His joint-heirs. The purpose of God, as brought before us in Romans, is to secure a company of sons who can be revealed in glory for the liberation of the groaning creation. They will be revealed as "conformed to the image of his Son, so that he should be the firstborn among many brethren". "The glory of the children of God" will shine forth in the creature scene and will set it free from the bondage of corruption. It is the recovery, through infinite, divine grace and love, of God's

original purpose as set forth in Genesis 1. The thought of "image" is connected with sons — "the image of his Son" — and I think that "likeness" is suggested in children. When the sons and children shine forth, "the creature" that was made subject to vanity will be freed, and held as the inheritance. The wealth of God, of which Christ is Heir, and of which we are Christ's joint-heirs, is the purpose and power of His love to remove from creation every trace of vanity and bondage, and to bring in the liberty of glory. Romans does not speak of our going to heaven, or of our having a place there. Indeed, heaven is only mentioned twice in this epistle (chapter 1: 18; chapter 10: 6). For God's eternal purpose in Christ Jesus to give us a place in heaven we must go to Ephesians. Romans is the epistle of recovery, showing how God has acted, and will act, to recover man for His pleasure in Christ, and also to set free the whole creation which had been brought under bondage through man's sin. We know from other scriptures that the saints will have a heavenly place and blessedness in companionship with the Son of God, but Romans 8 brings before us the liberating effect of this manifestation in the present created scene. It is the revelation to the creature of the sons and children as glorified that is set before us as the end which God's purpose has in view.

God's sons and children love Him — the whole epistle shows how He has acted to secure this — and they are "called according to purpose". God purposed from the outset to have those foreknown by Himself, and He predestinated them to be conformed to the image of His Son, so that He should be the Firstborn among many brethren. God never deviates from this purpose; He called us with this in view; and as He controls all things, "we *do* know that all things work together for good to those who love God". No event or circumstance can possibly happen apart from His ordering or permission — all who know Him to be *GOD* are well assured of this — and, as His purpose is ever before Him, He makes all things further it. There is not a suffering connected with the present state of "the creature" which does not work for good to those who love God. It must be so because He is *GOD*. If we do not know what to pray for as is fitting, we *do* know that all things work together for good to those who love God. He had a purpose when He called us; He will never be turned aside from it; the "all things" connected with our creature condition became subservient to it. They tend to develop, through exercises which are often humbling and painful, those sensibilities and sympathies which are suitable to the children of God. They ever contribute something, by their effect on our spirits, to that working which will eventually bring to pass what God has marked us out for. He is going to introduce us into the created scene where all is now subject to vanity as "conformed to the image of his Son, so that he should be the firstborn among many brethren". He is "bringing many

sons to glory", but He is leading them to glory by way of suffering here. Hence it became Him to "make perfect the leader of their salvation through sufferings", Hebrews 2: 10.

God has fitted "the sufferings of this present time" into His plan. He will compensate His saints for those sufferings by revealing the coming glory to them, and He will give them to see — He would give us to see now — that the glory of which He speaks stands in relation to the sufferings. Peter has called our attention to the way in which prophets of old "sought out and reached out; searching what, or what manner, of time, the Spirit of Christ which was in them pointed out, testifying before of the sufferings which belonged to Christ, and the glories after these", 1 Peter 1: 10, 11. Christ has been pre-eminently the Sufferer; He is coming again to be glorified in the scene where He suffered. Of the saints as Christ's joint-heirs Paul says, "If indeed we suffer with him, that we may also be glorified with him". The many brethren are co-sufferers with Christ; they will be co-glorified. The moral features of His brethren are being developed in circumstances of suffering now; they will be fully manifested in conditions of glory. God's Son will be the Firstborn among many brethren, all conformed to His image. Gideon said to Zebah and Zalmunna, "What sort of men were they that ye slew at Tabor? And they answered, As thou art so were they; each one resembled the sons of a king. And he said, They were my brethren, the sons of my mother", Judges 8: 18, 19. The Son of God is to be the Firstborn of a glorious company of many brethren, all like Him, so as to come forth for the liberation of all creation from vanity and bondage. This is the purpose according to which we have been called.

Foreknown, predestinated, called, justified, glorified! No creature power can break that chain of five golden links, for it is purely of God. Every called one has his name "written from the founding of the world in the book of life of the slain Lamb", Revelation 13: 8. That stands connected with the history of the world. When the world was founded God had redemption in view, and with that in view He inscribed names in the book of life. He knew that sin would come in, and vanity, corruption, death; but His purpose was through redemption to secure sons, so that in result He might deliver the whole creature scene which He was founding from vanity and corruption.

In Ephesians we read that the saints were chosen in Christ "*before* the world's foundation", Ephesians 1: 4. That is eternal and heavenly purpose, but "*from* the founding of the world" has in view that scene in which the created man, Adam, was placed as head. God's sovereignty in love secures a company of

sons, many brethren for His Son, that they may come in bringing liberty into the creation viewed as the inheritance of God and of His heirs.

In having the Spirit we have the firstfruits of the purpose of divine love; He is "the Spirit of glory" as well as "the Spirit of God", 1 Peter 4: 14. In having the Spirit the saints have the firstfruits of glory; they may be said to be morally glorified; in a brief moment they will be publicly manifested as the sons of God, the brethren of Christ, and their manifestation will emancipate creation.

Now, "What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who against us?" All leads to the triumphant conclusion that God is for His called ones. Whether we think of the past, the present, or the future, God is for us. He has taken us up by sovereign choice in the purpose of His love, but He could only secure us at infinite cost to Himself. "He who, yea, has not spared his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not also with him grant us all things?" What a touching disclosure of the heart, of God! The purpose which God had before Him could only be accomplished through the delivering up of His own Son to bear the judgment due to us. He has shown most unmistakably that He is for us: He has not spared His own Son. God had infinite pleasure in Him as Man here; the voice out of heaven said, "Thou art my beloved Son, in thee I have found my delight". He was the peculiar possession of God's love — "his own Son". No creature will ever know what it was to God to deliver Him up to the wickedness of men, and to be made sin, and to come under judgment and death. If God has thus done the greatest possible act of love, because He is for us, "How shall he not also with him grant us all things?" The "all things" are things which have value in the estimation of God; He is a limitless Giver; see 1 Corinthians 3: 21 - 23. The joint-heirs will share the inheritance with Christ. They are "God's elect"; He has chosen each of them individually; He can challenge the universe to bring an accusation against them; He has justified them. It is striking how all is put here on the ground of justification, of the death, resurrection, and intercession of Christ. The answer to every question of condemnation is, "Christ who has died, but rather has been also raised up; who is also at the right hand of God; who also intercedes for us". Christ has died and been raised up, and is now a living One at the right hand of God, and we are the subjects of His active and affectionate interest there.

We see our Saviour and Lord in a new character now. He lives on high to intercede for us; He is our Priest. When Paul asks, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" he is thinking of the love of Christ as Priest at the right hand of God. In "this present time" there may be tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, danger, or sword. But none of these things

can separate the saints from the love of Christ. We are always in the thoughts of His love "according to God"; that is, according to the place we have by God's purpose and calling. Christ intercedes for us, not as creatures marked by sin and failure, but as the precious stones of the breastplate: each saint having his own distinctive lustre and beauty according to divine purpose, and set in gold, which would signify how we are set in the love of God. The knowledge of how Christ intercedes for us would teach us how to intercede for one another. The object of His intercession is that we may "more than conquer through him that has loved us"; that all that belongs to "the sufferings of this present time" may be an occasion of conquest, yea, *more* than conquest. Not only is the enemy driven from the field, but the very scene where all was adverse is held in the positive power of what is of God. There is present triumph "through him that has loved us".

The experience of the love of Christ in tribulation or distress puts a very distinctive impression of Him upon the heart. I have a blank sovereign which has never been minted; it is gold, but it does not bear the features of the king. It needs pressure to put the king's image there. I believe that the time of trial is the time when a distinctive impression of Christ and His love is put upon the believer. God would put the impression of Christ on every bit of His treasure which is "hid in the field" of this world. Romans gives us the "treasure", Ephesians the "pearl". We more than conquer when the pressure results in the features of Christ appearing distinctively in us.

Then Christ is not only seen here as the blessed living Priest, active in the intercession of love, but the chapter closes by bringing Him before us as the Ark of the covenant. "The love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord". The covenant now is the revelation of God in love, and it is bound up with the fact that there is a Man who is in every way suited to that love. The love of God is known in its blessedness and fulness in Him; it rests complacently there; it is so secured as never to be interfered with, or touched, by any creature power. We see a glorious Man at the right hand of God, beyond death, outside all creature circumstances, and the love of God is *in that Man*. It is known there, eternally preserved there, the One in whom it is changeless as its blessed Source in the heart of God Himself, for He is, though truly Man, "over all, God blessed for ever". But the love of God is in a *Man*, that it may be the portion of *men* now and eternally. It, is known as enshrined in Christ Jesus our Lord as the Ark of the covenant. In that precious and holy Vessel its fulness is adequately held; it will never diminish or decay; it is untouchable by any creature; it is incorruptible and immutable. We are indissolubly bound up with it by divine purpose, calling, and working. And God would have each believer to be consciously persuaded even as Paul was: "For I am persuaded that

neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall able to separate us from the love of God, which is Christ Jesus our Lord".

ROMANS 9

Romans 9

The intelligent reader of this epistle, whether Jew or Gentile, who had followed the teaching of Paul to the point reached in chapter 8, would find arising in his mind the questions, But what about Israel! What about the ancient promises and God's faithfulness to them? The apostle now turns to speak of this, and in a most affecting way he tells us of his great grief, and of the uninterrupted pain in his heart for his kinsmen according to flesh. Their condition, and the present ways of God with them, were not to him merely of interest as connected with the unfolding of dispensational truth. He was truly in the Spirit of Christ; it was an intense grief to him to think of their missing the great favour and blessing of which he had been writing. He had wished, in a similar way to Moses, that he could be a curse from the Christ for them. His love for them had exceeded anything that was natural to man; it was a flame kindled from the love of Jehovah and of His Christ for the people of His choice. Israel was in his heart according to the illustrious place which she held according to promise, and in the ways of God: "Whose is the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the law-giving, and the service, and the promises; whose are the fathers; and of whom, as according to flesh, is the Christ; who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen".

It is good for us, as believers from among the Gentiles, to remember that all these things pertain to Israel. We come at the present time into the gain and blessedness of them, for none of these things have lapsed, but they really belong to Israel, and will yet be known and enjoyed by Israel. God's called ones of the Gentiles have the value of them now, but they are really divine wealth which God has conferred upon Israel, and which cannot be alienated from Israel.

But then, the apostle reasons, there is a difference between "Israel" in a divine or spiritual sense, and those who are "of Israel" in a natural way. It is not "the children of the flesh" that are "the children of God"; those who are "reckoned as seed" in a divine sense are "the children of the promise". They come in, as Isaac did, not on the line of nature, but on the line of promise. The true seed are the subject of promise; that is, they come in directly from God, the product of His favour. How instructive is this for the Gentile as well as the Israelite! Nothing that is merely of nature is "reckoned as seed". "It is needful that ye should be born anew", John 3: 7. Notice the emphatic "ye" in the Lord's word to Nicodemus; it shuts out all hope of blessing by natural descent even from Abraham.

Then Paul insists on divine sovereignty — a principle of the utmost importance. Rebecca's children were not yet born, they had not done anything, either good or worthless, when it was said to her, "The greater shall serve the less". This was pure sovereignty; it was "That the purpose of God according to election might abide, not of works, but of him that calls". The whole of the epistle is addressed to those whom God has called (chapter 1: 7), and in chapter 8 the saints are definitely spoken of as "God's elect", and His calling is seen to be the outcome of His foreknowledge and predestination. Shall we then quarrel with the truth of God's sovereignty? Surely not; we will rather greatly rejoice in it, for it is, as verses 15, 16, show us, a sovereignty of mercy. Every believer has much cause to be thankful for God's sovereignty; apart from it we should all have been lost eternally. There is no more beautiful or affecting designation of believers than the one contained in this chapter — "vessels of mercy"! All the natural tendencies of our hearts would have carried us away from God, and kept us away from Him, just as Israel went after the golden calf. If we have learned in any measure the instability that is in ourselves, it makes us thankful for divine sovereignty. There is no stability save as we become connected with the source of all stability in the blessed God Himself. Where would Israel have been in Exodus 32 and 33, but for the sovereignty of mercy? Just where we should all have been — consumed by the anger of God! But in sovereignty he shows mercy and feels compassion.

The most powerful and persistent adversary of God and His people can only fulfil in wickedness what God permits, and may prove the sovereignty of God in a terrible way, his evil course bringing upon him judicial hardening so that God's power is shown in him in the way of judgment. Such it was with Pharaoh. How calculated is this to strike terror into any who go on in high-handed opposition to God! His power is sovereign, and if men persist in wickedness they may find themselves singled out to be examples in the universe of the power of God in judgment. How terrible is the thought! Is it not enough to bring the proudest Pharaoh to his knees as a penitent? God in sovereignty may show mercy or may harden. Let every sinful creature then make haste to submit to Him! He never hardened a repentant sinner; He always has mercy for such; He sets forth Christ Jesus as a Mercy-seat for them.

If men will rebel against God's sovereignty, and say, "Why does he yet find fault! for who resists his purpose?" Paul has a brief answer: "Aye, but thou, O man, who art thou that answerest again to God?" It is for man, the creature, to submit himself to God. None of the reasonings of men can alter the fact that God is God, and being God He is sovereign. The only hope for a sinful creature is to submit himself to God, to own his condition, to place himself

before God as a subject of mercy, to receive the glad tidings which are going forth, as sent by a Saviour God, "for obedience of faith among all the nations".

Paul puts everything here on the ground of sovereignty, whether it be the wrath and power of God coming upon "vessels of wrath, fitted for destruction", or the making known the riches of His glory "upon vessels of mercy, which he had before prepared for glory". But when he speaks of the vessels of wrath he does not fail to tell us that God "endured with much long-suffering". *He* did not fit them for destruction; that was the result of their own persistent evil, which He "endured with much long-suffering". God is never in a hurry to judge evil; He gives time for repentance; He waits until the evil is full-blown. He said to Abram, "The iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full" (Genesis 15: 16); He "endured with much long-suffering" for four hundred years longer. And Peter tells us that "the long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noe while the ark was preparing", 1 Peter 3: 20. When His wrath and power in the judgment of persistent evil are known, it will be manifest that there is no unrighteousness with God. His sovereignty in judgment is a righteous sovereignty, and it only comes in at the end of "much long-suffering".

But, on the other hand, God is minded to "make known the riches of his glory upon vessels of mercy, which he had before prepared for glory, us, whom he has also called, not only from amongst the Jews, but also from amongst the nations". This is the purpose of His sovereign love. We have seen in chapter 8 that His sons and children are going to be revealed in glory for the setting free of creation from vanity and bondage. But here they are spoken of as "vessels of mercy" to enhance the pure sovereignty of their calling, and of the divine working by which they are "prepared for glory". The preparation is going on now, on the line of those moral exercises and divine teachings which have come before us in the earlier chapters of this epistle, and it will result in the saints being set forth in the wide creation as the display of the riches of God's glory. But this will give no praise to the creature; the vessels in which the glory is displayed will simply be, in themselves, "vessels of mercy". They will be there, whether from amongst the Jews or the nations, as "called" in the sovereignty of mercy. A remnant of Israel alone would not have been a large enough vessel to hold the riches of God's glory; those of the nations had to come in also.

The prophet Hosea is quoted to show that it was after God had said to Israel, "Ye are not my people", that He would call them, "My people". They will become His people on the ground of sovereign mercy alone, after having forfeited all claim and title to be so. When God said, "Ye are not my people", He put them in the same place as the nations, and it is as being in that place

that He will bless them sovereignly. "There shall they be called Sons of the living God". But this opens the door for the nations also to be blessed, who were manifestly not God's people; if God is pleased to call them in the sovereignty of His mercy, *they* can be called "Sons of the living God".

Hosea (meaning, Deliverance) is a touching book as bringing out the faithful affections of Jehovah towards a most unfaithful people, and showing how, after all their failure, He will secure them for Himself on the line of His own faithfulness and sovereignty. His heart was pained to have to say, "Not my people", "not beloved", but such was their unfaithfulness that He had to say it. Israel according to the flesh was that; not one whit better than the nations. But Israel by the calling of God will yet be "My people", "Beloved", "Sons of the living God". If Israel gets this place purely by the calling of God in mercy, those from amongst the nations can have it by God's calling also, as Paul has already shown in this epistle. If all is on the ground of sovereignty, God can call whom He pleases, Jew or Gentile.

As regards Israel, it was clear from the prophetic word that only a remnant would be saved; if the Lord had not left a "seed" the nation would have been as Sodom and Gomorrah. "And it shall come to pass in that day that the remnant of Israel ... shall rely upon Jehovah, the Holy One of Israel, in truth. The remnant shall return, the remnant of Jacob, unto the mighty God. For though thy people Israel be as the sand of the sea, only a remnant of them shall return", Isaiah 10: 20 - 22. God would secure a remnant, and judge all evil in His people at large. This explained the position as regards Israel. A remnant from among them was being secured, but of the nation at large he can only say that "Israel, pursuing after a law of righteousness, has not attained to that law. Wherefore? Because it was not on the principle of faith, but as of works". Instead of Christ being to them "a sanctuary", He became a "stone of stumbling and rock of offence" (see Isaiah 8: 14). Still it had remained true that He was laid "for foundation in Zion a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner-stone, a sure foundation", Isaiah 28: 16. The apostle brings together the two scriptures, for, though he was speaking at the moment of Christ as the stumbling stone according to Isaiah 8, his heart would not allow him to forget His preciousness as the sure Foundation according to Isaiah 26. Nor does he fail to add, "and he that believes on him shall not be ashamed".

But while Israel the nation stumbles over Christ, and seeks righteousness as of works, "They of the nations, who did not follow after righteousness, have attained righteousness, but the righteousness that is on the principle of faith". The former part of the epistle has shown how it has become available for them.

ROMANS 10

Romans 10

The truth of God's sovereignty had no hardening or narrowing effect upon Paul. Indeed, his great object was to show how that sovereignty acts in the way of mercy and compassion, securing a people and sons for God from amongst a world of fallen sinners. "Our Saviour God ... desires that all men should be saved", and the Man Christ Jesus — the blessed Mediator of God and men — "gave himself a ransom for all", 1 Timothy 2: 4 - 6. Paul was imbued with the same spirit — the true spirit of the dispensation — and his heart delighted in the thought of there being salvation for Israel. Though they had despised and rejected Christ, stumbled at the stumbling stone, his supplication was for their salvation. That is the kind of spirit with which God would imbue His sons. We are in the midst of a great profession which is in much the same state as Israel was, but we are there to be exponents of grace.

It is well to acknowledge any "zeal for God" which there is, even if "not according to knowledge". But it is very sad for people who have the epistle to the Romans in their Bibles to be "ignorant of God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own righteousness"! The truth is that such, like Israel, "have not submitted to the righteousness of God". It is not a question now of DOING, but SUBMITTING and BELIEVING. "For Christ is the end of law for righteousness to every one that, believes".

God has brought in His righteousness on quite a different principle from that of law. Law applies itself to me, who am already a fallen and sinful creature, and it has no power to make me other than what I am. The most it can do for me is to give me the knowledge of sin. But God has brought in Christ — another Man altogether — and if we have Him before us we have no thought of the law as a means of attaining righteousness. Earlier in the epistle the apostle has shown us that we are "justified freely by his grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus" (chapter 3: 24); and that "to him who does not work, but believes on him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is reckoned as righteousness" (chapter 4: 5). It is now for the believer simply a question of CHRIST. It is not "righteousness which is of the law", but the "righteousness of faith". The two kinds of righteousness are as diverse one from another as possible.

There can be no mistake as to "the righteousness which is of the law". Moses has laid down in writing what it is: "The man who has practised those things shall live by them". But on that ground all for man is utterly hopeless, for man

is a sinner; he does not practise the things which the law enjoins. But there is another kind of righteousness, even "the righteousness of faith"; and it becomes available when all hope of law-righteousness is lost. The scriptures quoted here from Deuteronomy 30 are most striking in reference to this. For the people are contemplated there as driven out, and scattered among the nations, by Jehovah on account of their sins. But there, by His mercy, they hearken to His voice, and return to Him in heart; and then they find that His word is very near to them. They have not to do any impossible things; they have simply to give place to the word which God puts in their heart. Now Paul tells us that the word which God puts in their hearts is "the word of faith", and it has reference, not to any works of man, but to Christ.

"Do not say in thine heart: Who shall ascend to the heavens? that is, to bring Christ down; or, Who shall descend into the abyss? that is, to bring up Christ from among the dead". When God works in the latter day of Israel's history to turn the long captivity of His people, and to gather them again, and bring them into the land which their fathers possessed, He will put in their hearts the truth in regard to CHRIST. They will know how He has come down from heaven to die, and that God has raised Him from among the dead. This has no connection with law-righteousness; it is the mighty intervention of God in love and power, sending Christ down from heaven to be His salvation, and raising Him from among the dead when everything had been done that His glory required.

God presents CHRIST to us as ending all thought of getting righteousness by law. Many souls are unestablished as to this; they lack the blessed sense of repose which comes of seeing that righteousness is now simply a question of Christ. If it is CHRIST there is no defect, no imperfection, no shortcoming of any kind, nothing of which to be ashamed. It is a blessed Person whose origin was heaven, and who has descended into the abyss of death, and been raised by God from among the dead. We had no hand in this at all: it was all accomplished outside us by Christ and by God. His coming down was no work of ours, neither was His being raised from among the dead. It is in this way that righteousness has been made available for sinners entirely destitute of it in themselves. It is altogether of God from first to last.

It is impossible to mix the two principles. Law-righteousness depends on me and on what I do, Faith-righteousness depends on Christ and what He has done. God will yet put "the word of faith" in the heart of Israel, and that word will speak only of Christ. God is causing "the word of faith" to be preached today, and is thus bringing it to be in the mouth and in the heart of every believer. "The word of faith" says nothing of righteousness by works; it says,

"That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth Jesus as Lord, and shalt believe in thine heart that God has raised him from among the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart is believed to righteousness; and with the mouth confession made to salvation".

What God does in His grace for us, and what He will do for Israel in a coming day, is to bring the word very near to us, "in thy mouth and in thy heart". But the word is concerning "Jesus as Lord"; He puts that "word" as a confession in the mouth of every one of His called ones. It may seem a simple thing, but salvation lies in it. "Thy mouth" refers to the place which you take publicly; you are known in this world as a confessor of Jesus as Lord.

I do not think confessing Jesus as Lord means telling Christians that you have believed on the Lord Jesus. Confession is not, if we may so say, on Sunday evening after the preaching, but on Monday morning when you go back to school, or to office or works. It is truly a good thing to tell the preacher or Christian friends that you have trusted the Saviour. That is confiding the secret of your heart to sympathetic ears. But confession properly is in the presence of those who are not sympathetic. It involves reproach in a scene where the Lord and His rights are disowned. A loyal subject of the rejected King cannot expect to be in honour amongst those who are unsubject to Him. The confessor's heart has become a sanctuary for the Lord, and therefore he confesses Him in the scene of His rejection. I remember F.E.R. being asked in a large meeting if there was any definite thing which believers should be prepared to stand for at all costs, and if so, what was it. He answered, The Lordship of Christ. The vital point of all testimony in this hostile scene, which has thrown off subjection to Christ, is that we should confess Jesus as Lord. It is what the enemy is specially set against with each of us.

It is confessing JESUS as Lord, That Man is supreme. It raises the question whether we are subdued to Him. Do we really admire and honour the qualities and character seen in Jesus? Is He supreme with us, or do we adhere practically to the features of man after the flesh? To confess JESUS as Lord is to run counter to all that men generally esteem and cultivate. Philippians 2 gives us some of His features, and shows us what God thinks of Him. He is in the highest place in the universe of God, and He will undoubtedly support those who confess Him here, and they will be approved of God. A "confession" is generally an answer to a challenge; it was so when Christ Jesus "witnessed before Pontius Pilate the good confession", 1 Timothy 6: 13. As having come under the Lordship of Christ in grace and blessing, one begins to take an entirely new course, and it leads to questions being asked. We shall not be challenged if we are steering a course as near to the world as possible. But do

we believe that all the moral features of the world are displeasing to God, and that it is really an honour to be a peculiar people here, as carrying the marks of God's world? If we were more definitely separate from the world we should be more often challenged. A brother told me recently that he had been praying for opportunity to confess the Lord more than he had done, and the general strike came along and gave him what he desired, and he said that he had a great sense of divine support in confessing the Lord in the face of a good deal of opposition.

Peter supposes that hope will shine so brightly in believers that people will ask what is the source of it; 1 Peter 3: 15. When the Lord the Christ is sanctified in the heart it makes the Christian radiant with hope, and people ask questions. Then is the time for the "mouth" to confess the truth, that Jesus has become Lord to us. It means a definite separation from the world, which does not and will not own or confess Him as Lord. It means that we publicly take sides with God, as having availed ourselves of the wondrous and blessed administration of grace which He has put in the hands of Jesus as Lord.

A confessor of Jesus as Lord is freed from the influences which govern men in the world — influences which are really the enemy's power over men's souls — and he comes under the protective power of the One whom he confesses. Hence it is that with the mouth confession is made to salvation. If a Christian finds himself falling under the power of the world it is well for him to be exercised about his "mouth". Let him remember that God has put a "word" in his mouth, and that word is the confession of Jesus as Lord. As he allows that "word" to come out of his mouth, he will find that it means reproach and rejection here, but that it carries with it the power of God's salvation.

When Jesus is confessed as Lord it means that He has become Lord to us. There is something behind the confession to support it. Souls are sometimes pressed to confess what has not yet become true to their faith, but this is very injurious, and only tends to put them in a false position. How could I confess boldly and clearly Jesus as Lord if He were not Lord to me? The blessed reality that Jesus is Lord is known in the heart; then it is confessed definitely and publicly here; and salvation is found thereby. There is immense power in the spiritual confession of Jesus as Lord; it arrests the conscience of the one to whom He is confessed, for *he* knows in the depths of his soul that Jesus ought to be Lord to him also. There is the power of a divine salvation with the confessor of Jesus as Lord. Every young believer may be assured that when he says simply in the sense of grace, "Jesus has become Lord to me", he is taking ground in this world which will ensure the support of divine power.

The "word of faith" is "in thy heart"; it is there as faith's blessed assurance "that God has raised him from among the dead". It is not believing something about ourselves, but believing what God has done to Jesus our Lord, after that blessed One had died for us and borne our sins. God has raised Him from among the dead, and we believe it that we may get righteousness that way, and not by any works of ours. "With the heart is believed to righteousness". And Paul beautifully adds, "For the scripture says, No one believing on him shall be ashamed".

In the third chapter he had said, "For there is no difference; for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God". Jew or Gentile, all had sinned; all might be justified freely by grace. Now he says again, "For there is no difference of Jew and Greek; for the same Lord of all is rich towards all that call upon him". Jesus is the universal Lord for the administration of all divine wealth in grace, But men have to put on the link with Him from their side by calling upon Him. We call upon Him when we hear how rich He is; when we hear what wealth of grace and blessing is in Him. "For every one whosoever, who shall call on the name of the Lord, shall be saved". That is the position at the present time. How infinite the grace of it!

But then it is not left to men, if we may so say, to find out for themselves what a rich Lord there is to call upon. Certainly they would not call on One in whom they did not believe. But in order to believe on Him they must hear of Him, and they cannot hear without a preacher, and a preacher is of no value unless God has sent him. So God has sent preachers to make known to men what a rich Lord there is, so that they may hear of Him, and believe on Him, and call upon Him. It does not suffice here to believe on Him; there must be the personal calling upon Him; it is the calling upon Him that definitely links one with all the power of God's salvation that is in Him. It is, as before said, a definite putting on of the link from our side; it is how we avail ourselves of Him for salvation. Christians are characteristically "those that call upon the Lord".

Speaking of the sent preachers leads Paul to apply to them words spoken prophetically of Christ. He changes the "him" of Isaiah 52: 7 into "them"! How beautiful were HIS feet! Their feet are beautiful also, for they move from place to place announcing glad tidings of peace, and of good things that are altogether of God. They tell how God reigns in grace, and of the rich Lord who is exalted that He may be called upon by "every one whosoever". It should be a matter of exercise to us all that we may be marked by beautiful feet.

But, alas! all do not obey the glad tidings. Esaias, as a representative preacher, has to say, "Lord, who has believed our report?" And this gives occasion for a

statement of great importance. "So faith then is by a report: but the report by God's word". Faith is not something that springs up in the heart of man apart from what he hears, or apart from what he hears being "God's word". People often tell us that they have "faith" about things which have never come to them as a divine report. They succeed in persuading themselves that certain thoughts of their own, or of other persons, can be relied on; they have arrived at certain inward convictions, and think that these are "faith". But faith is "by a report" — a definite communication made concerning matters which would never come within man's knowledge if they were not reported to him. And this report is "by God's word"; it is God speaking to men in grace that they may know Him, and have a direct and personal link with Him through what is reported to them. No mind of man could ever have conceived such thoughts in regard of God as are presented to us in the glad tidings. God made known to His sinful creatures in grace, righteousness, power and love, through redemption, and through the Lord Jesus Christ as a risen and glorified Man! That is the "report", and it is "by God's word"; there is such a report because it has pleased God to speak to men thus with regard to Himself. Where the report is believed, God is known in the heart according to the revelation He has made of Himself, and this is faith.

The report is now as universal as the testimony of the heavens in Psalm 19. Indeed, that Psalm has its answer now in Christ being set in the heavens as the true Sun of the moral universe. Things cannot be limited now to Israel; Messiah according to flesh might be peculiarly *theirs*, and in a sense limited to them; but the Messiah rejected and crucified by His own Israel, and set as a glorified Man at the right hand of God in heaven, could not be limited in any way. The sun shines for every creature under heaven, and Christ is the true Sun shining now from the heavens where God has set Him. And the divine voice goes out now "into all the earth, and their words to the extremities of the habitable world". In the wisdom and sovereignty of God's ways the testimony of His grace may be more in one part of the world than another, but the scope of His grace is towards all; it cannot be restricted. That encourages us to speak freely to people about Christ.

"But I say, Has not Israel known?" Yes, indeed! God had been faithful to His Israel. He had given the long-promised One to be in their midst; going about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil. They had had Immanuel with them in gracious power. But they had rejected Him, and now they were being provoked to jealousy through God blessing the Gentiles. God was being found by those who did not seek Him; He was becoming manifest to those not inquiring after Him. All this was, indeed, known to Israel, but it did not affect them in any gracious way. The prophetic word of Isaiah was

true! "All the day long I have stretched out my hands unto a people disobeying and opposing".

ROMANS 11

Romans 11

This chapter is of great importance in relation to the knowledge of God and of His ways. Paul himself, and many others, were witnesses that God had not cast away His people Israel. It was true that Israel had proved to be "a people disobeying and opposing", but nevertheless God had secured from among them "a remnant according to election of grace". It had been so even in the dark days of Elijah. That greatly honoured servant of Jehovah felt that he had been left alone. A man of personal fidelity is sometimes apt to, get occupied with his own faithfulness, and not to take sufficient account of what God may be doing in HIS faithfulness and mercy. The sovereignty of God is often regarded as if it were a narrowing up and restriction of blessing, but Paul is showing how it has secured blessing where otherwise there would be none. It had reached out to *seven thousand* when Elijah thought there was only *one*. It had secured a remnant even from such a perverse and disobedient people as Israel. And it was now active far beyond the bounds of Israel, "to the extremities of the habitable world".

Israel, going on in self-righteousness in spite of every divine testimony to their sinfulness, and having despised and rejected Him who was God's salvation for them, and in whom all God's promises were substantiated, were now judicially unable to see or to hear; their table was a snare, a gin, and a fall-trap. Psalm 69: 22, 23, is God's judgment upon them because of their utter lack of appreciation of Christ. For nineteen centuries Israel has been feeding on vain hopes, on expectations which have either utterly failed, or have become connected with material gain in a way that has carried them more and more into complete infidelity.

Consequent upon Israel's rejection of Christ and of the testimony of the Holy Spirit, the ways of God had opened out towards the nations. "By their fall there is salvation to the nations to provoke them to jealousy". God would have Israel to know that His salvation was going out through and in Christ to the nations that they might be moved to jealousy. He would have them to feel jealous when they saw that the blessing of God, which might have been theirs, was being enjoyed by the nations. Thus the present time of blessing for the Gentiles is a wonderful appeal on God's part to unbelieving Israel. It is as though God were continually saying to them, They are enjoying My favour; why should not you enjoy it, who really had the first claim to it according to My ancient promises?

The normal course of things, according to the prophetic word, would have been for the nations to be blessed through Israel as God's people enjoying His favour. But, instead of that, in the present ways of God their fall has been the world's wealth, and their loss the wealth of the nations. But this in no wise sets aside God's plan to bless the Gentile nations in a future day in connection with the full blessing of Israel. Hence the apostle asks, "How much rather their fulness?" It is today the time of Israel's fall and loss, for they have missed the wealth of God's blessing in Christ, but that wealth has come by the glad tidings to the world and the nations. Israel will yet have "their fulness" according to many glorious prophetic scriptures, and the nations will be wealthy then in the richness of millennial blessing, subordinate to Israel as the head under Messiah's beneficent reign. But before that day of Israel's wealth and glory, so fully described in Old Testament prophecies, there has come in a peculiar interval marked by the fall, loss, and casting away of Israel nationally, and the salvation and wealth of God in grace going out to the nations.

Paul glorifies his ministry as "apostle of nations", but he tells us that his object in doing so was "if by any means I shall provoke to jealousy them which are my flesh and shall save some from among them". He clings with affectionate desire to Israel; there is an intense yearning in his soul that some from among them should be saved. He never forgets the distinguished place which Israel will have when received by God according to His promises to the fathers. He reasons, "For if their casting away be the world's reconciliation, what their reception but life from among the dead?" In the light of all that will be theirs in a coming day, he longs to save some from among them now. And he speaks to us, who are of the nations, that we may know that there is something abnormal about this present interval.

It is a peculiar dealing of God that the main streams of His blessing should be flowing amongst the nations, and that Israel, to whom so much pertained according to divine gift and calling, should be publicly marked by fall, loss, and casting away. He says, "If their casting away be the world's reconciliation". What a statement is this of the present position of things! Israel cast away for the moment, and the world in reconciliation! Not one bit of what attaches to Israel according to divine gift and promise can be seen in them nationally. They are, at the present time, cast away from it all. And the world is in reconciliation. That is, the whole world is under the eye of God from the standpoint of Christ and His death. He has "died for all", He "gave himself a ransom for all", and "he is the propitiation for our sins; but not for ours alone, but also for the whole world". If men are not personally reconciled to God, it is not because reconciliation is not available, but because they will not have it. It is not here what account *men* take of Christ and His death, but what account

God takes of it. All the wealth and blessedness of that Person and what He has accomplished in propitiation is before God at this moment for the world, and for every creature in it. The world is in God's view now in relation to Christ and His death, and the scope of the gospel is towards all men, that, as enlightened by the glad tidings, they may come by faith into the good of what is there provisionally for them. It is a time of "wealth" for the world, and for the nations, a time of reconciliation for the world, for Christ has become available in all the precious and divine value of His death. If men despise or slight what is available their blood will indeed be on their own heads.

Paul does not forget, nor will he suffer us — who are of the nations — to forget, that the casting away of Israel is not to be permanent. How could it be, in face of innumerable prophecies in the Old Testament of Israel's future exaltation? So he says, "For if their casting away be the world's reconciliation, what their reception but life from among the dead?" He has in mind, no doubt, such scriptures as Ezekiel 37; Isaiah 60; chapter 25: 8; chapter 26: 19; chapter 27: 6, 7; Jeremiah 33: 7 - 9. Israel will yet be received as definitely and publicly as they are now cast away; and in the meantime every converted Jew is, like Paul, a proof that God in His election of grace is mindful of Israel, securing a remnant of them right through until that day when "all Israel shall be saved". Of course the remnant of Israel is at the present time merged in the assembly, and participates in assembly blessing and privilege.

Then verse 16 is a wholesome reminder of what marked the beginning of God's ways, when He made sovereign choice of Abraham and called him out to have divine promises. "Now if the firstfruit be holy, the lump also; and if the root be holy, the branches also". The promises given to Abraham were holy promises, for they had reference to Christ, and to all that God would bring to pass by Him and in Him. They were altogether apart from the failure and imperfection of man. And they were held by Abraham, not in a natural way, but in faith which had learned that all that was of the flesh and nature was in the weakness of death. Abraham was in a distinct way the firstfruit of divine promise. Not that he was the first individual who had faith, but he was called out from a world where God was unknown, to be the depository of divine promises and to be the father of the faith family. The features of that family were plainly delineated in him of whom it is expressly said that he "believed God". He became characterised by the promises which he believed, and they were holy promises as being of God and giving the knowledge of God. The promises and the faith that cherished them were holy. Such was "the firstfruit" and such must "the lump" be also; if such "the root", such also must be "the branches".

Hence, as some of the natural branches were proved not to have faith, they had been broken out; and the Gentile had been grafted in so as to become "a fellow-partaker of the root and of the fatness of the olive tree". We of the nations have come in to enjoy the good of all those promises of God, fulfilled in Christ, in regard to which the greater part of the natural branches have been unbelieving. We owe all to divine promise, which pertained to Israel as the seed of Abraham, but from which they have been "broken out through unbelief". The consideration of this carries with it a serious warning to us who are of the nations. "Be not high-minded, but fear; if God indeed has not spared the natural branches; lest it might be he spare not thee either". The Gentile is called to "Behold then the goodness and severity of God: upon them who have fallen, severity; upon thee goodness of God, if thou shalt abide in goodness, since otherwise thou also wilt be cut away". The branches of Israel which had fallen might justly have been charged with many evil works, but it was their *unbelief* which had caused them to be broken out. The Gentile only stands in the goodness of God "through faith". No traditional or successional or sacramental title is of any avail; those of Israel had a better title on such grounds than any Gentiles ever could have, and yet not having faith many were broken out. It is only "through faith" that any stand, either of Israel or the nations. So that it is neither a question of following the religion of our ancestors, nor of what men call good works, but of abiding through faith in THE GOODNESS OF GOD. Gentile branches that have now been grafted into the olive tree of promise are warned that if they do not abide through faith in God's goodness they will also be cut away. This will inevitably take place.

Israel's dangers are ours too. The Gentile is just as likely as the Jew to draw near with his lips while his heart is far from God. And Christendom as a whole has manifested complete lack of appreciation of Christ, so that in the governmental ways of God their table has become a snare. The very things they feed on morally are poisonous, and their eyes are darkened that they cannot see. Where the ministry of Christ is not appreciated men soon turn to what is positively noxious and harmful. We can see it only too plainly around us. And men think it is progress! Their eyes are so blinded that they do not perceive that it is the solemn retributive dealing of God — the judicial consequence of turning away from His presentation of Christ.

But it is still true, as of old, that if there are many who lack appreciation of Christ, and whose eyes are blinded, the ways of God open out to let others in. He is not going to be frustrated; He will have His precious things and His beloved Son appreciated. That which is great and pretentious in Christendom is marked by distance from God, and spiritual blindness. But His ways have opened out to let in a poor and afflicted people. We can only wonder and

worship if God has brought us to repentance and faith. One does not expect now to find those who are great and prominent enjoying the blessing of God. There is wonderful wealth available, but the question is, Are we small enough to get it for ourselves? Our special word of warning is, "Be not high-minded, but fear".

The danger is of being like Laodicea, "rich and increased with goods", but without the true riches. Opportunity is given to every one to be with God on the footing of Christ. Marvellous favour! But Paul is raising serious questions and exercises, and warning the Gentile that he is as liable to miss all as Israel was. To deceive ourselves by a vain confidence, and fleshly boasting, is but the prelude to utter ruin. The subject here is of the ways of God publicly, and of the position in which one may be found in relation to these ways. To have faith, and to abide through faith in the goodness of God, is the only true security. To be an object of mercy, and to be content to be such, is safe ground, for it recognises our true place and glorifies God. On this ground blessing is available for every one, but only broken and contrite hearts get it. God's faithfulness and mercy are known and relied on by the humble and contrite. Such feed on God's faithfulness, as owing all to Him, and on that ground they are safe, and ready to present their bodies a living sacrifice to God. That is our intelligent service: God's compassions claim us for Him.

The nations have followed in the track of unbelieving Israel. They have relied on what is traditional and ceremonial, they have turned to works and law-keeping, they have trusted in the flesh, they have not continued through faith in the goodness of God. And yet how attractive and blessed is that goodness to sinful men! How it brings divine righteousness and salvation near to men, and makes God known as a Saviour-God, One who justifies the ungodly! How appealing are the words of Romans 2: 4! "Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and long-suffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads thee to repentance?" The goodness of God is known through faith, and it leads to repentance. Failing to abide in it, the Gentile profession will be cut away in judgment, and this will give occasion to God to graff Israel in again.

We of the nations who have believed are not left in ignorance of the mystery of God's ways. It is wholesome for us to know it, that we may not be wise in our own conceits. "Blindness in part is happened to Israel" at the present time, but this is in view of the accomplishment of God's present purpose in bringing in "the fulness of the nations". Then "all Israel shall be saved. According as it is written, The deliverer shall come out of Zion; he shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob. And this is the covenant from me to them, when I shall have

taken away their sins". The restoration of Israel from unbelief will be secured by Christ coming as the Deliverer out of Zion; they will then be grafted into their own olive tree again; God will take away their sins, and establish His covenant with them. It is beautifully put here: "And this is the covenant, *from me to them*": showing so plainly that all will be brought to pass from God's side.

"As regards the glad tidings, they are enemies on your account"; they have resented the outgoings of grace to the Gentiles. This has consummated their guilt, according to the intensely solemn words of the apostle in another place: "Who have both slain the Lord Jesus and the prophets, and have driven us out by persecution, and do not please God, and are against all men, forbidding us to speak to the nations that they may be saved, that they may fill up their sins always: but wrath has come upon them to the uttermost", 1 Thessalonians 2: 15, 16. But notwithstanding all this it remains true that "as regards election" they are "beloved on account of the fathers. For the gifts and the calling of God are not subject to repentance". God has not given up Israel, nor will He ever do so. His ways have widened out, consequent upon the rejection of Christ by Israel, to make those of the nations "objects of mercy". We once had not believed in God, but through the unbelief of Israel we "have been objects of mercy". Now Israel is in the sad case of not believing in the mercy shown to the Gentiles. They are not on the line of faith at all, any more than we were when God's mercy reached us. So that when they do come into blessing it will be purely as "objects of mercy", and in the sovereignty of God's election.

So that the conclusion of the whole matter is that on the line of nature there is nothing in man — whether Israel or the nations — but unbelief. It becomes then purely an action of mercy if any are blessed in the knowledge of God through faith. "For God hath shut up together all in unbelief, in order that he might shew mercy to all". That is, whether it be the remnant of Israel who have found participation in present blessing, or whether it be those who make up what is spoken of as "the fulness of the nations", or whether it be all Israel saved in the coming day when the Deliverer comes out of Zion, it is in every case pure sovereign mercy and election on God's part. Each justified and saved one has to realise this. We have all to learn to say from the depths of our souls:-

"Nothing but mercy will do for me;
Nothing but mercy full and free".

The consideration of all this constrains our hearts to break forth in harmony with Paul as he exclaims, "O depth of riches both of the wisdom and

knowledge of God! how unsearchable his judgments, and untraceable his ways! For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counsellor? or who has first given to him, and it shall be rendered to him? For of him, and through him, and for him are all things: to him be glory for ever. Amen". The profound sense in the soul of the sovereignty of God's ways in mercy produces a spirit of worship and adoration, and it also becomes the powerful motive for complete dedication to God as we see in the next chapter.

The value of these three chapters (9, 10, 11) is very great; not only in their dispensational bearing, but as forming our souls in the appreciation of divine compassions, so that these compassions may be the ground on which we are appealed to in chapter 12: 1. The question has to be raised in every soul, Why am I blessed? What caused me to have exercises Godward? How came I to repent and believe, when millions do neither? The answer is that God has shown mercy. No one is in his right place with God, or truly humble and self-distrustful, until he knows this. Without it he cannot be a worshipper, or a man who holds his body as dedicated to God. Any measure of faithfulness there is with us is, as to its origin, purely of God's mercy. Hence Paul speaks of himself as "having received mercy of the Lord to be faithful"; he never lost the sense of mercy. We of the nations who have faith have come in as having no claim or title to blessing whatever; it has been purely the compassion of God. God blessed a remnant of Israel in spite of the state of the nation as a whole; then He made the unbelief of Israel the occasion for mercy to go out to the nations; presently He will take occasion by the unbelief of the nations to resume His dealings in mercy with Israel. As Paul surveys it all he breaks out in this lofty ascription of glory to God.

ROMANS 12

Romans 12

It is very encouraging to see that believers can be addressed and exhorted as they are in this chapter. God would have us to derive from it a stimulating sense of the spiritual abilities which His grace has conferred upon us. The saints are viewed here as having become the intelligent servants of divine pleasure. They are set together as "one body in Christ", so that the will of God may be worked out in them as a united company. We are not exhorted to anything in this chapter that we have not spiritual ability to carry out, or that is not the way of true liberty for us. It can only be worked out in a spirit of complete dedication on the part of those to whom it has become a pleasure to be wholly for God. At the bottom of the exercises of every awakened sinner is the conviction that he has not been for God, and he now realises that it is high time he began to live for God. Every ray of gospel light that comes to him intensifies the desire to be for God until, in the liberty of grace and by the Holy Spirit indwelling, that desire issues in the presentation of his body as a living sacrifice. This is an action of intelligent affection brought about by the knowledge of God in grace, and under a deep sense of His compassion.

Adequate *motive* has been brought in on God's part to secure the presentation of our bodies to Him; He has bestowed *power* by the gift of the Spirit for such a dedication; and His grace has made it possible for our bodies to be presented as holy and acceptable. It tells a wonderful tale of the triumph of grace that our bodies — which were once the vehicle and instrument of fleshly lusts — can now be held as "holy, acceptable to God". Not a maimed or blemished sacrifice — such could not be acceptable — but one which has the character of holiness and acceptability. To present our bodies pleasurable to God as a living sacrifice is the service to which we are called, and it is to be intelligently rendered.

In writing to the Corinthians, who were carnal and self-indulgent, Paul insists on the rights of Christ and of God in regard to the body. He says, "Do ye not know that your bodies are members of Christ? ... Do ye not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit?" He lays it plainly down that they were not their own; they were bought with a price, and were the absolute property of the One who had bought them. Hence he says, "Glorify now then God in your body", 1 Corinthians 6:15; 1 Corinthians 6:19,20.

But in this epistle to the Romans he is bringing out the normal fruit of the knowledge of God in grace and compassion. So he speaks of the bodies of the saints as being, if we may so say, at their own disposal, and he beseeches us

to take advantage of the wondrous opportunity which we have of dedicating them wholly to God. It is, surely, fitting that we should do so, and it is the noblest and most exalted use which we can make of our bodies. They are to be presented to God "a living sacrifice", and as having been presented and accepted they cannot be recalled; they are ever to retain the character of a dedicated gift. The believer, as having thus presented his body, is ever to minister in a living way to the pleasure of God. There is nothing spasmodic or sentimental about this; it is the settled and definite purpose of an "intelligent service".

Thus to serve God necessitates that we do not take this world (or age) as our model. It is a course of things which Scripture calls "the present evil world". It is an age characterised by the activity of man's thoughts and wisdom, by darkness as to God, and, indeed, Satan is spoken of as its god. The same moral features run right through this age; the forms which they take vary, but the moral features are the same. It is the same age as when the Lord was here, and when the apostles wrote. It is marked by men having high thoughts above what they should think, and being wise in their own eyes, and pleasing themselves, with no thought of subjection to God. It is an age which has no divine features, and the believer is not to be conformed to it. On the contrary, he is to be "transformed" — the same word as "transfigured" in the Gospels — by the renewing of his mind.

The Christian has a new way of thinking about everything, because he judges himself, and has God and Christ and the Holy Spirit and the brethren in his thoughts. He thinks altogether differently from the natural man. This epistle presents the mind in different connections. In chapter 1 we read of some who are given up to "a reprobate mind", or "a mind void of moral discernment". The result is that they practise unseemly things. In chapter 7 we have the experience of one who has an exercised mind, though not yet in Christian liberty. But in chapter 12 renewing of mind is spoken of as producing transformation.

This epistle was unquestionably written by divine inspiration, but it is at the same time a wonderful setting forth of how a renewed mind thinks of things. It is as we are brought, through grace and by the Holy Spirit, to think in harmony with what Paul brings before us in this letter, that renewing of mind is brought about. This will not result in conformity to this age, but will transform us into correspondence with the will of God. We shall *prove* how good and acceptable and perfect that will is. It is not merely that it is so abstractly, but it becomes known to us as being so. Transformation is brought about from within; one might be outwardly very separate from the world,

perhaps in a monastery or convent, or wear the plainest garb, and yet in one's thoughts be fully conformed to this age. But a renewed mind takes account of the will of God, and of what He has brought in for His pleasure. He has set all His saints together as one body in Christ, and He has given to each qualification to fill a definite place in that body. It is not exactly here the body of Christ for the display of Christ — though His features do come out in the things mentioned here — but the saints viewed as "one body in Christ" for the display in their mutual relations of "the various grace of God".

The will of God has reference to the place which we have in relation to all other believers, and this is purely a question of grace given. A large measure of grace was given to Paul to say something to every one of us, and he did say it. He illustrates the principle which he is bringing before us; he contributed *his* part — and it was a large one — to the working of things out amongst those who are "one body in Christ". He says to each one of us that we are not to have high thoughts above what we should think, "but to think so as to be wise, as God has dealt to each a measure of faith". All right action must flow from right thinking, and right thinking is determined by the "measure of faith". This is a serious matter for each one of us to consider. God has dealt to each of us a measure of faith, and that faith determines the function which we have to fill as having a divinely appointed office amongst those who are "one body in Christ". No believer can say that God has not dealt to him a measure of faith. We have to find out what it is by thinking soberly about it. To think we can fill a place for which God has not qualified us is only to court humiliation and disaster.

But, on the other hand, it is most important that we should not in our thoughts fall below the measure which is dealt to us. We shall find that that measure is sufficient to give full scope to every spiritual qualification which we possess. It is our great business to find our place in the body, and to contribute our full quota to the well-being of the whole. To act according to our measure of faith would secure perfect unity and co-operation, for no action of faith in one could ever be out of accord with the action of faith in others. We each have our particular office, but all that is of faith in one helps what is of faith in others. We are "each one members one of the other": I am your member, and you are mine. How intimate is our relation to each other, and our interdependence! We are truly indispensable to each other in relation to proving what is "the good and acceptable and perfect will of God". For that will relates to us not as isolated individuals, but as those who are divinely set together in this wonderful organism.

So that the Epistle to the Romans does not leave us unattached, but shows how we are set in relation to the whole company of those who are "one body in Christ". It brings us to assembly relations, and prepares us for what is more fully developed in 1 Corinthians. We shall never move in really spiritual liberty and God will never be suitably served and honoured by us, until we fulfil the functions for which He has given us faith. What you have faith to do you can be with God about, and have Him with you, and it will effectively promote the welfare of the saints as one body in Christ. The fact that there is great general departure from the will of God casts each faithful saint back on what we find in Scripture. The departure does not invalidate faith, and those who have the faith of God's will can walk together according to it, notwithstanding the departure. Of course we suffer by only having a few saints available practically instead of all, but even a few saints can walk together according to the principles of this chapter. J.B.S. used to say, "I have to do without many; I cannot do without any". If only a few are practically available, let us make the best and the most of the few!

We are to *prove* what a blessed thing the will of God is in the way we walk together, and get the mutual gain of each other's contributions. The will of God does not come to us as a legal demand, but as a source of wealth and gain. It confirms and gives scope to every desire that we have as taught by grace. There is something in perfect correspondence with God in every saint as having the Spirit. The mind of the Spirit is there, and God searches the heart to find it. All that I desire to do, as in the Spirit, is in perfect harmony with the will of God. If people regard the will of God as burdensome, or as cutting across what they want to do, it is a clear indication that they are walking according to flesh.

The apostle proceeds to bring out in detail how the will of God works out in the relations of the saints: first in regard to specific gifts, and then in regard to what is general. There are certain "different gifts" — seven being specified — which characterise different members, and then there are a number of things which are to come into activity in all. Any who have a special gift are to be diligent in its exercise, but each of them has also to take up what is general.

Prophecy is given the first place as it is also in 1 Corinthians. It must always be the most important service in the assembly, for it brings to bear upon us the present mind of God. It must never be forgotten that what God has to communicate to us is more important than anything that we can say to Him. Prophecy rebukes and sets aside the fleshly and the natural by bringing in the spiritual. The word of the prophet comes home with arresting power; it makes the saints conscious of what is of God in such a way that they judge what is

not of Him. It is the bringing of divine light in prophetic power to the consciences and hearts of saints in these last days that has led to the judgment of what is unsuitable to God in the Christian profession, and to separation from it. God has brought out His present mind in a wonderful way, and I trust we have all in some measure benefited by it. The one who prophesies is to do it "according to the proportion of faith"; he is not to be governed in the exercise of his gift by impulse, or feelings, or zeal, or by what he knows of Scripture, but by faith. That is, God is distinctly before his soul, and he does not speak beyond what is of present faith. Peter would have prophesying in mind when he says, "If any one speak — as oracles of God" (1 Peter 4: 11). What profound and holy exercise this would give to any who "desire to prophesy"! (1 Corinthians 14: 39).

Then "service" is more general. Phoebe was a servant of the assembly in Cenchrea, showing that sisters can serve the assembly. So far as we can judge there are more sisters than brothers in the body, and it is the will of God that a very large part of the service in the body should be taken up by sisters. Because they are not sent to preach, or permitted to speak in the assembly, they must not conclude that it is not their privilege to serve. Whatever service we have faith to take up, let it be our business diligently to pursue it. It is a pleasure to ask some brothers and sisters to do any little service, because you can see how it pleases them to do it. Something for the good of the brethren! That is enough: they are ready!

"Let us occupy ourselves in service". A very great deal of trouble and sorrow would be avoided if believers engaged themselves more in Christian activities. If there were more service there would be less room for things which lead to envyings, jealousies, evil speakings, and personal differences and misunderstandings. Practically deliverance from what is of the flesh is found as we move in activities which are of the Spirit.

Then teaching and exhorting are always needed; if one has gift and grace to do it, let him go on diligently with it. Giving is to be marked by simplicity — a readiness that does not grudge what is given. Diligence is to mark the one who leads; he is set on finding the way for the saints, and he must not get slack; one who has the place of a leader, but who does not lead, is a positive hindrance to the saints. His tardiness hinders their progress.

Then it is remarkable that the ability to show mercy is spoken of here as a distinct gift of grace. I think it would refer to circumstances arising amongst the brethren which are an opportunity for mercy. If a brother or sister falls amongst robbers and gets wounded, it is a test as to how much we are in the spirit of the Samaritan. He succoured the poor man cheerfully, not stopping

with what just met the urgent need, but being rich in mercy. We see from this scripture that amongst those who are "one body in Christ" there are some specially endowed with the ability to show mercy. It is a gift that might be coveted as among "the greater gifts", for it is very like God's way of acting.

Verses 6 - 8 are "different gifts" — functions which different members exercise — but from verse 9 onwards the things spoken of are general. To pursue the figure of the body we might say that we come now to what is constitutional. Underlying the normal and vigorous activity of the members is a healthy constitution. It is obvious that an impaired constitution will lead to weakness or defective action on the part of the members. These chapters bring out in a wonderful way the capability of the saints, as set free by grace; for such exhortations would not be addressed to persons incapable of answering to them. It is not here members with different functions, but features which are to pervade the whole company of those who are "one body in Christ". Hence I regard them as constitutional. It would be well if we all got a better conception of what is normally characteristic of us as subjects of divine grace and working.

"Let love be unfeigned". A simple, unaffected desire for the good of others would mould the lives and spirits of saints in a wonderful way. It would lead to our being laid out for their good. And no one can stop us on this line. However naughty a person may be, it need not stop me from desiring his good and seeking to promote it. Timothy was a beautiful example, as a man with genuine desire for the good of the saints. But evil is injurious to saints, and therefore unfeigned love must abhor evil, because it is mischievous and destructive. Love is beneficent, and it cannot be complacent while its object is suffering from what is evil. How perfectly is this seen in the Lord Jesus Christ! He loved righteousness, but He hated lawlessness. The consideration of this keeps up continued exercise because of the surroundings in which we find ourselves. The natural man has the knowledge of good and evil, but he does not cleave to good and abhor evil; the saints are to do so.

These chapters are a great help to us as those "who, on account of habit, have their senses exercised for distinguishing both good and evil". I am to abhor evil wherever I see it, in myself or in others; but I must never forget that Christ abhorred evil so much that He took the full judgment of it upon Himself. Hence it is "Jesus Christ *the righteous*" who is the Advocate "if any one sin". He is entitled to be the Advocate because He has borne what was due to the sin. All our exercises in regard to what is evil are taken up in the light of that. If evil appears in a believer, we must never forget that Christ has borne in love the judgment due to it. This preserves a sense of grace in the

soul. We cannot touch anything rightly save as we touch it in harmony with Christ.

If a believer has sinned, and is not right about it, it is possible for *me* to be right about it. I abhor it because Christ has had to suffer for it, but I do so as conscious that I am a debtor to mercy myself. And it is a great relief, if we have had to think of something uncomely in a brother or sister, to be reminded of the good that is there — to see something to which we can cleave.

“As to brotherly love, kindly affectioned towards one another”. Brotherly love would take account of all the conditions and circumstances in which the brethren are found, and would be affectionately concerned about them, as to their families, their health, or their business. “As to honour, each taking the lead in paying it to the other”. It supposes that each saint can be regarded as worthy of honour. It is worth while to take pains to discover the honourable features that are there — those features by which saints contribute to the organism in which they are divinely set. I am not to wait for others to honour me as a contributor, but I am to take the lead in paying honour to them. It is right to honour every believer, for he is called, redeemed, justified, indwelt by the Holy Spirit, and is an essential part of the company who are “one body in Christ”; the purpose of God could not be completed without him.

“Diligent zealotness” would intimate that one has a definite purpose in life. Not merely kind and gracious sentiments, but a fervour of divine warmth in one’s spirit leading to active service. Surely, we all covet more of this, and to be more definitely “serving the Lord”! Much that is sorrowful amongst the people of God arises from slothfulness. There is lack of definite purpose to serve the Lord, and people get engrossed with all kinds of selfish pursuits. “The house of Stephanas” is a good example for us all; they had appointed themselves to the saints for service; 1 Corinthians 16: 15. The Lord greatly values a definite committal of this kind. If then: were more of it, how greatly should we benefit, and time would be redeemed instead of wasted!

“As regards hope, rejoicing”. There is unmixed joy in all that is a matter of hope. But the present is the time of tribulation, and endurance is to mark us there. We do not look to be relieved of pressure, but for support that we may endure. So there is perseverance in prayer. The Lord would have men “to always pray and not faint”. Confidence in God is expressed by continuing in prayer. You have really to say to God about things! Think of the privilege of it! We can pray about everything that stands connected with the will of God; it is the way we get inward support and power to go on. As to particular requests, I believe that often the soul gets the assurance of being heard — the sense of having an audience, as J.B.S. used to say. If a man presents a petition to the

king, and the king says, "Your request is granted", the man goes away satisfied, though it may be some time before he actually gets what he desired. This is a time when exercise, dependence, and confidence have to be maintained continually. So *perseverance* in prayer is most essential. The parable which the Lord spoke in Luke 18 in this connection is very striking. He speaks of a judge who would not avenge a certain widow, but did so in the end "that she may not by perpetually coming completely harass me". We might have hesitated to use such a figure with reference to prayer if the Lord had not done so. He would encourage us to *persevere* in prayer. Sometimes people say, "I have made it a matter of prayer, and now I leave it". To "leave it" might mean sometimes that we are not much in earnest about it!

"Distributing to the necessities of the saints" implies that God does not intend to keep the saints immune from necessities, but that those necessities furnish opportunity for His grace to come out in others. "Given to hospitality" would not be social entertaining of persons we like, but a readiness to receive saints who might have need of care, such as strangers passing through. Gaius stands out as one specially marked by this grace (see 3 John and Romans 16: 23).

It would be helpful for us to let all these exhortations come to our hearts as the voice of the Lord Himself. Paul was a true representative of the Lord; Christ spoke in him; and the recognition of what he writes as being the commandment of the Lord is the test of our spirituality.

"Bless them that persecute you; bless, and curse not". One can understand with what feeling Paul said this, for he had been a persecutor himself. It is well that we should remember what we have been ourselves. (See Titus 3: 3 - 7.) It would preserve a sympathetic feeling in regard to those who are opposed. God did not meet us with curse but with blessing. We should never suffer our hearts to forget the character of the dispensation; there is always a tendency to slip away from the spirit of the new covenant. The first desire of the Son of God for His own in John 17 was that they might be kept in the Father's Name. The revelation of God in infinite grace as the Father is characteristic of the present time. We need to be kept in that Name. Our natural tendencies, and the influences of the religious world, tend to move us away from it. As kept in the Father's Name we should be always in the spirit of blessing, overcoming evil with good. God's government goes on, for He says, "Vengeance belongs to me, I will recompense, saith the Lord", but we are to leave that to Him. His present dispensation towards men is one of grace; He is not cursing but blessing; and this is to be the character of His called and divinely taught ones. If men persecuted Paul, it reminded him surely that *he* had been "a blasphemer and persecutor, and an insolent overbearing man". The

earthquake woke up the jailer, but what broke him down was the spirit of grace and blessing in Paul. He had cast them into the inner prison and secured their feet to the stocks, and yet Paul called out with a loud voice, saying, "Do thyself no harm!" That broke him down, and he said, "Sirs, what must I do that I may be saved?" It was as much as to say, I should like to be such a man as you are.

Sometimes when a wrong has been done there may be a secret desire that the Lord would bring some punishment on the evil-doer. No doubt He will recompense evil in His righteous retributive ways, but that is not what the heart taught by grace cherishes. Grace would lead us to think of the overcoming power of good, and of the irresistible force of divine blessing as known in Christ. We must beware of yielding that mixed stream of blessing and cursing against which James warns us; James 3:8-10.

Then the sympathetic spirit is to mark us generally; rejoicing with those that rejoice, and weeping with those that weep. We are to "have the same respect one for another", looking on our brethren, not according to what they are naturally or socially, but as subjects of divine calling and grace. Not allowing ourselves to be influenced by "high things", but going along with the lowly. The child of Ham (the Ethiopian eunuch), the child of Shem (Saul of Tarsus), and the child of Japheth (Cornelius), would have the same respect one for another, for God had wrought in each of them. All distinctions were merged in the new status which each had acquired as a subject of grace. When the Son of the Highest was here He went along with the lowly; not the kings and great men, but the saints, were to Him "the excellent".

If we are wise in our own eyes we shall have to learn experimentally how foolish we are. Then there is to be no spirit of retaliation, no recompensing evil for evil. That things should be provided "honest before all men" is an important exercise. "Taking care by forethought that there should be what is comely and seemly" (note to New Translation). Much reproach is sometimes occasioned just from lack of forethought as to what the effect of things is likely to be. In the next chapter we are exhorted not to take forethought for the flesh to fulfil its lusts, but there *is* a forethought which is commendable. Every Christian would be exercised and troubled about being in debt; but this would have a wider bearing and would refer to all that is comely in a saint before men. And we must remember that no one is so observed as the Christian, and people have — quite rightly — an entirely different and much higher standard for Christians than for others. So careful consideration is needed that no occasion for reproach should be given.

"If possible, as far as depends on you, living in peace with all men". We cannot ensure that there will be peace on their side, for all men are not "sons of peace". "I am for peace; but when I speak, they are for war", Psalm 120: 7. But we are to see to it that there is nothing contrary to peace on our side.

Then if we have been injured, there is to be no avenging of ourselves. There is, on the contrary, to be a looking out for an opportunity to show "the kindness of God" to an enemy. We could have no greater dignity here than to be set up by grace so as to act like God. It was His original thought. "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness". God would have us to feel ashamed of any action or spirit that is unworthy of Him. If we are wronged we have the privilege of taking it all as from God's hand. The Lord when here was defrauded of every right, but He "gave himself over into the hands of him who judges righteously", 1 Peter 2: 23. In the New Translation there is a beautiful note to this verse: "I think therefore the sense must be 'gave himself up to, suffered all, as accepting all from his hand', gave himself up to take whatever he sent who would in the end righteously judge". The word used has not the sense of committing a wrong to another to vindicate, but that He took everything as from God's hand, and put His trust in God as the One who would, in due time, judge righteously. If I take things from men I may feel very resentful, but if I have grace to accept them as from God my spirit will be kept right. The time of vindication will come, but in the meantime it is ours to accept all wrong and injury as from God. David exemplified this when Shimei cursed him: "So let him curse, for Jehovah has said to him, Curse David! Who shall then say, Why dost thou so? ... Let him alone and let him curse; for Jehovah has bidden him. It may be that Jehovah will look on mine affliction, and that Jehovah will requite me good for my being cursed this day", 2 Samuel 16: 10 - 12.

We are not to be overcome by evil, but to overcome evil with good.

ROMANS 13

Romans 13

It is noticeable that, in divine wisdom, the injunctions of the early part of this chapter have a wide application. It is right for "every soul" to "be subject to the authorities that are above him". The believer finds himself in the sphere where divine government is set up, and he has to respect it, but "every soul" is called upon to recognise that authority is from God. This epistle does not leave out of its view any of the relations that subsist between God and men, and one of those relations is that He has set up authorities and rulers. The institution of government after the flood (Genesis 9) was one of the greatest mercies that God has shown to men. Authority may be abused, and often has been in the hands of man as a fallen creature, but its character is to be a terror to what is evil and to favour what is good. The Christian is to recognise that all authority is from God. This delivers him from the lawless spirit which despises authority. We have the personal testimony of the Lord in this matter, as declaring that Pilate's authority was given to him from above: John 19: 11.

"For there is no authority except from God; and those that exist are set up by God". If one government was overturned, and another set up in its place, faith's estimate of it would be that it was the act of God. God's ways in government are retributive. If governments cease to praise what is good, or to be a terror to evil, they no longer serve the purpose for which they were set up, and God's retributive ways may act in setting them aside. There are moral reasons for what God does in this way. He may scourge a nation by setting up an oppressive rule, or He may use other nations to check wickedness or ambition. And, behind all, God ever has in view His own work and testimony, though often His government works out in unexpected ways. For example, Paul was imprisoned by the authorities, though he was no evil-doer, but he tells us that it turned out rather to the furtherance of the glad tidings. The Lord took a remarkable way to bring out "the most of the brethren" in a fearless and abundant speaking of the word of God. He put the chief preacher in prison! I suppose the courage and confidence of Paul — even as an imprisoned man — stirred up the brethren to be more bold than they otherwise would have been. The action of the authorities was really subservient to the designs of grace. Even persecution has often furthered the testimony of God, so that it came to be a saying that "the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church". But it may be noted that governments have not persecuted generally save as incited to do so by religious leaders. And God has used the cruelties of persecution to bring about a revulsion of feeling in the minds of men, and to secure in that way greater liberty for His people.

God has used things, severe and terrible in themselves, to further His testimony.

The authorities which exist are not viewed in Scripture as having intelligence of a spiritual order. They are represented as "beasts" (Daniel 7); they do not generally perceive what God is doing by their means, though Nebuchadnezzar, and particularly Cyrus, may have been personally conscious that they were directly raised up to do certain things. Cyrus was a very remarkable person, mentioned by name by the prophet Isaiah generations before he was raised up (Isaiah 44: 28; chapter 45: 1). God would set up a government favourable to what He had in His mind with regard to Jerusalem and the temple. It is of much interest to note that the four empires of Daniel 7 — the Babylonish, the Medo-Persian, the Greek, and the Roman — have covered that part of the earth where God's people have been chiefly found, whether the Jews from the time of the captivity, or the Gentiles as visited by grace later. *All* authority has to be owned as being of God, but the authorities which have a distinct place in prophecy, as seen in Daniel 7, are those which exist in the area where God's people and testimony are chiefly found. The Greek empire followed the Medo-Persian, and prepared the way by the diffusion of the Greek language over a wide area, for that extension of the divine testimony which was intimated by Greek being the chosen language of inspiration for the New Testament. Then God had in mind to spread His testimony westward, and He allowed the Greek empire to be succeeded by the Roman. The special sphere of His action in government has corresponded with the special sphere of His acting in grace. All has had in view what God was doing, or going to do, in relation to His testimony. God has *ordained* these things. "So that he that sets himself in opposition to the authority resists the ordinance of God".

Government is God's minister to every one of us for good if we practise what is good, but if we practise evil it will make us suffer, So that with all right-minded persons it is not merely on account of wrath that they are subject — that is, as being afraid of the consequences of insubjection — but on account of conscience. Their consciences approve of the objects which government has in view.

So we pay tribute as to God's officers. In the light of this it is not becoming for a Christian to grumble — as other men often do — about rates and taxes, or put off until the last minute paying what is due. The Christian should not, surely, be amongst the *last* to render what is due to those whom he has been taught to regard as *God's* officers! Indeed he is to "render to all their dues". This is one great feature of practical righteousness. There is, indeed, *one* debt which can never be so discharged that we are free from its claim, but all other

debts are to be paid as they fall due! "Owe no one anything, unless to love one another". This is to mark those who are in subjection to God. God is much dishonoured, and His way evil spoken of by men, when these things are neglected. If a brother or sister has had to incur expenses of illness, or the like, and is not able to pay, it is a fine opportunity for verse 13 of the previous chapter to be acted on by the brethren! God does not exempt His people from misfortunes, and sometimes believers may get involved, through no fault of their own, in liabilities which they cannot meet. I have known believers fail in business, but turn to God in real exercise, and get His help so that they have been able to pay all their creditors in full. It is clear from this chapter that God regards His people as competent to render all that is due, and faith would be concerned to answer to this.

"Love works no ill to its neighbour: love therefore is the whole law". This is a standard of conduct applicable to babes in Christ. It is, as people say, negative; it does not go beyond that we work *no ill*; but this means a good deal.

We own God's government through the existing authorities in the world, but we have also to do with God's direct government as those who are in relation to Him. Peter gives us that side: "The eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and his ears towards their supplications; but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil", 1 Peter 3: 12. As to men in the world, so far as they do what is right in the sight of God, they get a present recompense in His government, but if they do what is wrong the government of God is retributive.

It is important to observe that there are no instructions to believers as to how they should *exercise* authority in the world. Their place is to submit themselves to authorities which exist. They have nothing to do with establishing the authorities; they recognise them as set up by God. We are exhorted to *subject ourselves* to the authorities, and to *pray* for them (1 Timothy 2), but we have no instructions to *vote* for them. To vote is to take the place of deciding what the powers shall be; it is really to join with others in ruling the world. But the Christian is here to confess that all the rights of rule pertain to the Lord Jesus Christ, and to wait in patience for Him to come and take up His rights. And in the meantime to be in subjection to the powers that exist in the ordering of God, and to honour them as God's ministers.

"This also, knowing the time, that it is already time that we should be awaked out of sleep; for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed". None but believers know the time. *We* know that the day is just about to dawn. It is time to awake — to rise to greet the dawning day! "We boast in hope of the

glory of God" (chapter 5: 2), and "we have been saved in hope", chapter 8: 24. The whole epistle has in view that "the day is near"; the morning is about to break on this world by the return of the Lord Jesus Christ. Salvation will be completed then, when all the light and power of God come in, and Satan is bruised under the feet of the saints. The prospect here is not of dying and going to be with Christ, or even of being caught up at the rapture according to 1 Thessalonians 4: 17. It is rather looking out for the day according to 1 Thessalonians 5: 4 - 11. The rapture is in view of our having our part with Christ in the day that is about to dawn. It is time to get up and dress in readiness for the day! The works of darkness are to be cast away; all that belongs morally to the night is to be repudiated, and the armour of light put on. It is a military figure — the church militant in shining armour! All that properly belongs to the day is to be put on as a protective coat of mail. So that the saints, as in that shining armour, are invested with the light of the coming day; they are already "in the day". They act and move on principles that are suitable to the day; they "walk becomingly".

Is there not need for much exercise, dear brethren, that we should walk becomingly as in the day? "The day" means complete emancipation from every phase of the power of evil. That is to characterise the saint: as it were, beforehand. But there is more than freedom from what is evil! The Lord Jesus Christ is to be put on! It is a remarkable exhortation, as bringing in His full title. The believer is to be invested with Him, so that he sets forth here that glorious Person who is the Sun of the coming day. He wears *the Lord* in giving evidence in all his ways that he is in subjection to Him; he puts on *Jesus* as having those precious qualities of obedience, dependence, meekness, and lowliness which marked that blessed One; and he is invested with *Christ* as taking character from the Anointed Man of God's pleasure who is about to bring in publicly all that is for God's delight. All this is not only to be *in* the believer, as cherished in his affections, but it is to be seen *on* him in a practical way for testimony. Paul was a beautiful example of it. Who could help seeing that he was in subjection to the Lord? that the life of Jesus was manifested in his mortal flesh? or that Christ was magnified in his body? It was "no ordinary miracle", but one can understand that there was something morally suggestive in napkins or aprons being brought from his body and put upon the sick, so that diseases left them; Acts 19: 11, 12. One would like to be touched by the garments of one who had put on the Lord Jesus Christ! They would drive away moral diseases and wicked spirits!

"The day is near". We do not look for outward indications. I am afraid many occupy themselves far too much with things that are going on in the world as signs that the Lord's coming is near. The great spiritual indication of it is that

the day is dawning, and the Day Star arising, in the hearts of the saints. The events seen in the world are, after all, only features of the night. But what is going on in the hearts of the saints stands in immediate and spiritual connection with the day. The fact that the day has been dawning in a remarkable way in the hearts of saints during recent years, and the Morning Star arising there, is a far greater indication that "the day is near" than any events that happen in the world. Do not, look for signs of the times! Keep the eyes of your heart fixed on the right hand of God! The first move will be there! The Spirit has come from there to bring the glory of the Coming One nigh — to cause Him to arise as the Morning Star in our hearts.

In the light of "the day", how unbecoming and base it is to be taking forethought for the flesh to fulfil its lusts! Let us not be found doing it! It is no time for such things.

ROMANS 14

Romans 14

We come now to matters which must have been of great practical importance when Jews and Gentiles found themselves together as "one body in Christ". The Jew had been accustomed to the thought of defilement by eating certain things, and there had been days in his year to which he had attached special value as of divine appointment. The Gentile had known no such restrictions, no such days; he was in liberty from it all as knowing grace. The tendency would be for the one in liberty to make little of the one who had scruples, or for the scrupulous man to judge the one in liberty. The wisdom of God adjusts both in this chapter, and the principles laid down are of abiding importance.

The teaching of this chapter is eminently calculated to help the weak brother, leading him to consider his scruples from a new point of view, without entering into any dispute with him as to the right or wrong of his convictions.

One weak in the faith is to be received; we are not to hold him off, or make little of him, because he has scruples about things which we know are of no real importance. His conscience is to be respected; we must be careful about disputes and reasoning; we must go on the line of seeking to strengthen him in the faith rather than on the line of arguing on the differences between us.

But then the one with scruples must not judge the one in liberty; he must remember that God has received his brother, and that he has no title to judge the servant of Another. "To his own master he stands or falls. And he shall be made to stand; for the Lord is able to make him stand". The one who is in the liberty of grace will be made to stand by the Lord. How serious a matter it is to be judging one whom the Lord is making to stand!

The true standard is brought before us here which is to regulate us in every detail of life. We may not all have reached the same point in spiritual intelligence or conscience; some may be weaker in faith than others; but the principle which is to govern all is that each one is to have the Lord before him. There are many things today in regard to which believers have not all the same exercise or conscience, and people sometimes raise the question, Is there no standard to which we should all conform! The universal standard is that each believer is to live as a person who keeps the Lord before him. If we make this the standard, it will work in the direction of liberty and thanksgiving. We are entitled to insist that each believer must have the Lord before him in what he does. Hence, "Let each be fully persuaded in his own mind". That is,

each one has to make sure that he really has the Lord before him in what he does. It is a searching exercise.

One weak in the faith is not a careless man who wants to walk in a loose or worldly way, but a man who is scrupulous, through defective knowledge of grace, about things which are of no real importance. But he has the Lord before him in what he does, whether as to not eating certain things, or as to regarding certain days. His scruples are to be respected. It would be quite a different thing if he sought to make his scruples a standard for the assembly of God. That would be setting up a principle contrary to Christian liberty, and it would have to be refused as decidedly as Paul refused judaising principles at Antioch and in the assemblies of Galatia. It is one thing to consider for the scruples of a brother who is not yet really in Christian liberty; it is quite another to seek to impose such scruples as a rule for God's assembly. Paul would circumcise Timothy as an act of personal liberty, but he stoutly resisted the circumcision of Titus when it was sought to be enforced as essential.

It is a remarkable statement that "none of us lives to himself, and none dies to himself, For both if we should live, it is to the Lord we live; and if we should die, it is to the Lord we die: both if we should live then, and if we should die, we are the Lord's" That is the position in which every believer is set by divine grace. Living or dying we are in relation to the Lord; each one has individually to do with Him; no other principle of living is recognised; "and if we should die, it is to the Lord we die". At every moment of our lives the Lord is the supreme One, and if we are called to die He is still the supreme One. The believer may have to leave his life here, and to pass into another region by dissolution, but the Lord is still supreme. The saint has lived to the Lord — no other kind of living is contemplated for the believer — and now he has a new experience: he dies to the Lord! He is conscious that he is the Lord's; the Lord's personal right and ownership is a reality in life and in death, Our beloved Saviour and Lord passed through the domain of death that He might be supreme even *there*. "For to this end Christ has died and lived again, that he might rule over both dead and living". What a blessed rule that implies! He rules in the supremacy which He has acquired by having gone that way! It is no arbitrary rule of mere authority and power, but rule founded on His having died and lived again. Is not "rule" a very beautiful word from that point of view? The rule of Christ is thus established in the affections of each one who knows Him. It is of the utmost importance that we should be under rule; only thus shall we be divinely regulated in all our ways. Paul spoke of himself as "legitimately subject to Christ" (1 Corinthians 9: 21); he was under Christ's rule. The Lord has rights in respect of me and of my brother. Then I must not judge him if he has more liberty than I have; nor must I make light of him if

he is scrupulous and particular about some things which I have light to know are unimportant.

"The judgment-seat of God" is brought in here, not exactly to exercise our own consciences, but to keep us from judging others. The many warnings against this in Scripture would indicate that it is a thing we are very prone to do. But "each of us shall give an account concerning himself to God". We may be quite sure that everything is going to be investigated and pronounced upon in a divinely perfect way. The matter is really in much better and wiser hands than ours. "Let us no longer therefore judge one another; but judge ye this rather, not to put a stumbling-block or a fall-trap before his brother". Nothing is more withering to Christian vitality than a censorious or judicial spirit; it is altogether contrary to the spirit of Christ; it indicates that one has got away from the truth and spirit of the dispensation. That spirit would lead us, on the other hand, to be very careful not to stumble our brother.

"Nothing is unclean of itself" — that is Paul's persuasion in the Lord Jesus, a truly spiritual persuasion. But something may be unclean to my brother, and my course with regard to it may affect him injuriously. I am not walking according to love if I use my liberty in such a way as to damage him. *Christ has died for him!* Am I not prepared to curtail my liberty a little bit for my brother's good? It is really a question of being in accord with Christ!

As to such matters as eating and drinking we have full liberty, but we must not forget to walk in love. If I use my liberty without regard to how others are affected by it, I am not walking in love. I may have the privilege sometimes of curtailing my own liberty for the good of another. "The kingdom of God is not eating and drinking"; such things are not vital; they are matters in which we may refrain from using our personal liberty if we find that its exercise is not beneficial to our brother.

The important things are "righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit"; we can afford to surrender personal liberty as to eating and drinking in order to further these things. It is in these things that we serve the Christ, and become "acceptable to God and approved of men". No one can condemn me for refraining from using my personal liberty in order to secure the good of another!

The things of peace are to be pursued, and the things of edification. We are to be careful of the work of God in others: it is often a tender plant which may soon be checked. "All things indeed are pure", but a man's conscience may make something evil to him, and I am to think of this. If I embolden a brother to do a thing which he really has a conscience about, I may bring him into bondage and distress instead of helping him. My liberty may tend to destroy

the work of God in him. This puts in a very strong light the tender care which love would take to do everything possible to further the work of God, and nothing to hinder it. Love would consider for the state of a soul which was not really in Christian freedom. We have to see that our liberty, or even our faith, does not damage our weak brother. Nothing can be more delicate or morally beautiful than all this; it educates us as to the divine value to be placed on even a weak brother. The work of God is a moral process in the soul of man, wrought through many exercises, and it is easy to bring in what tends to hinder or destroy it. What fine spiritual discernments and sensibilities grace would form in our hearts! What readiness to surrender, in things spiritually immaterial, our own liberty to do certain things, if that liberty is likely to prove injurious to another, even if it be a sign of weakness and defect in him that it should prove so!

If I have presented my body a living sacrifice to God, surely I am prepared to surrender a little for the brethren! There are things in relation to which we have liberty, but which are unimportant compared with "righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit" — compared with the work of God. I am not to use my liberty in such things to the hindrance of what is supremely important. Peace and edification are to be pursued, the building up of weak souls in the knowledge of God.

The present day is not particularly characterised by legal scruples, or by great tenderness of conscience. It is rather a day of lawlessness and licence. We are, perhaps, more often called upon to seek to bring the conscience into greater activity than to respect its scruples. But the principles of this chapter, wrought in our souls, are of great importance in relation to the spirit in which we walk together as brethren.

Under plea of liberty one may allow what really judges oneself. How many go on with things which they do not feel happy about — things in regard to which their consciences convict them! There is misery in going on with things that one cannot do as of faith. It should be an exercise in all things to be conscious of God's approval.

ROMANS 15

Romans 15

This chapter continues the thought of the beautiful spirit of grace which is to mark the saints in their mutual relations: and which is necessary, not only for their good and edification, but that God may be glorified in their unity before Him in praise. "That ye may with one accord, with one mouth, glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ". To secure this the mutual relations of saints must be according to grace. There may be self-pleasing in using one's liberty; it may be used in a way that does harm to others. We are to consider what will be good for others, to please our neighbour rather than ourselves, that all may tend to what will edify. If we are strong, we are to use our strength to bear the infirmities of the weak, not to despise them or brush them aside by a hard insistence even on the letter of the truth.

We can see how necessary this was in the early days, when Jews and Gentiles were thrown together for the first time in the assembly. The Jew with ceremonial ideas about clean and unclean meats, and with certain legal elements clinging to him which the gospel had not yet dispelled, and the Gentile quite free from these things, and probably in many cases more established with grace. Strength was to be shown by bearing infirmities, and by consideration for one another.

"The weak" would be those who were not in full Christian liberty, persons legal in their view of things which are not really important in the light of present revelation. Their infirmities were to be borne as a charge upon those who were stronger in grace. We are not to please ourselves, but each one of us is to "please his neighbour with a view to what is good, to edification". To apply this principle in our practical relations with one another would greatly help us. Sometimes the assurance that we are right makes us hard, and on that line we may get altogether away from the spirit of grace, and be really pleasing ourselves.

Hence the importance of giving heed to this touching reference to Christ: "For the Christ also did not please himself". An allusion to what Christ was personally is always very appealing to those who love Him. He surely moved in perfect liberty, and if He *had* pleased Himself it would always have been to do what was absolutely right. If ever any one was entitled to please himself it was He. But *He* did not live on that principle. There is nothing more marvellous than that *He* should say, "For I am come down from heaven, not that I should do *my* will, but the will of him that has sent me", John 6: 38. His own will would have been absolutely right and perfect, but He did not come

on the principle of doing His own will at all. We sometimes justify our own will because we feel sure that we will what is right, but Christ was not here on the line of *His* will at all, but to do the will of the Father. Then, in the scripture before us, He “did not please himself”. Are we really in that spirit in our relations with the brethren! Alas! God’s portion is largely diminished by the lack of it.

Everything that comes up tests our spirits. We sometimes think we are standing for doctrines or divine principles, when the truth is that we are being tested as to the spirit we are of. The spirit and inwardness of Christ was not to do His own will, or to please Himself. It is marvellous — and truly humbling — to consider Him!

“The Christ also did not please himself”. He was here to represent God to men so faithfully that all that men had to say against God fell on Him. “The reproaches of them that reproach thee have fallen upon me”. He would be before men identified with all that God was, and bear the reproach of it. The reproach that lay on God in the eye of the Jew was His grace. In Luke 4 they “wondered at the words of grace which were coming out of his mouth”, but when He showed divine grace in concrete expression in the blessing of a Sidonian widow or a Syrian leper they took Him to the top of the hill to cast Him down. The reproach which attached to Him was that He expressed God in grace; He made nothing of the self-righteous pretensions of men; He was a Friend of publicans and sinners. He did not please Himself; He expressed God in grace, and He bore reproach. Such is to be the path of the saint! We are to be identified with the principles on which God is moving in grace; they are to characterise us in all our relations with our brethren. This would secure happy relations between all the saints, even if they have different measures of light and faith, and there would be no hindrance to our “with one accord, with one mouth” glorifying “the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ”. I think there is an intimation in this of saints being together as in assembly. The assembly is not formally mentioned; we must go to 1 Corinthians for that; but for saints with one accord and one mouth to glorify God is an assembly character of things. The mutual relations of the saints, and the attitude of their spirits one toward another, are to be so adjusted according to the spirit of Christ that there is nothing to hinder their united praise to God. It all has in view, not merely the peace and unity of the brethren, but what God will get in their united service of praise.

It is a serious thing to misrepresent God. Moses misrepresented God when he said, “Ye rebels”, and smote the rock, and it lost him the land. If God is to be

rightly represented amongst His people, there must be this spirit of grace that does not think of pleasing self, but of the good of others.

Verse 4 is a helpful word as to the Old Testament being all written for our instruction. Much that is written there, though not apparently addressed to us, is "altogether for our sakes", 1 Corinthians 9: 10. It is that "through endurance and through encouragement of the scriptures we might have hope". The Scriptures keep what is of God before us. It is striking that it is "the God of endurance and of encouragement" who is spoken of here as giving us to be "like-minded one toward another, according to Christ Jesus". What a God of endurance He is! He was bearing with the lack of knowledge and liberty on the part of His Jewish saints, and He would have His Gentile saints to be imbued with the same spirit towards them that He was exercising Himself.

There is encouragement also as well as endurance. He would encourage us to count upon His working in our brethren. The "hope" in verse 4 would be,

I think, in relation to our walking together. We are not to despair of the saints, for they are the subjects of divine working; we are always to be hopeful. See how hopeful Paul was even as to the Galatians! He was greatly grieved about them, and yet he says, "I have confidence as to you in the Lord, that ye will have no other mind", Galatians 5: 10. And he tells us that love "hopes all things". It is as recognising the place which saints have before God "according to Christ Jesus" that we can be hopeful about them. That is, we do not think of them according to the flesh, but according to their place by grace. A weak brother may not know his new status "according to Christ Jesus", but it is the privilege of the strong to know it, and to regard him according to it. To make little of him would show that the strong did not understand his divine value any more than he did himself.

It may be said that there are many defects in the saints! But what are we working for? A natural man could point out defects: a spiritual man feels under obligation to serve in love that they may be removed. That is the spirit of grace, and it is to pervade the company of those who are "one body in Christ". Divine encouragement would come in on that line.

The Scriptures give us the great principles of God's ways in grace, and they show us the features of the spirit of Christ. They encourage us to move in accord with God and with Christ. On that line we may confidently expect divine support. We are to open our affections to one another, not to be repellent. Christ has received us to the glory of God, and it is according to that that we are to "receive ye one another". This contemplates the saints as walking together — as, of course, all saints did at the beginning — according to the truth of the one Christian fellowship; it contemplates the whole company of

those who are "one body in Christ". They were not to hold one another at a distance, but to receive one another in the same affectionate grace with which the Christ had received them.

There are peculiar difficulties in the sorrowful conditions of the last days. Very many of our brethren do not become available to us in a practical way. There may be many believers in the town where we live whom we do not even know! It is a sad witness to the state of departure and ruin, and is to our common grief and shame. But our affections can still be open towards all saints, and we can rejoice if even a few become practically available to us on the principles laid down in 2 Timothy, an epistle which is specifically direction for us in the last days. While keeping our hearts open towards all saints, our associations have now to be adjusted on the principle of withdrawing from iniquity, separating from vessels to dishonour, following righteousness, faith, love, peace, and calling upon the Lord out of a pure heart. In the present state of things we can only receive practically those who become available, but the fact that it says, "receive ye *one another*", makes it possible for even *two* saints to act upon it. Our great exercise should be to walk together as brethren according to the truth, so that no one could say that he had a divine reason for not walking with us. If saints walk together according to the truth, they will rejoice to receive all the brethren who desire to walk with them in the same path, and *all* the brethren ought to be exercised so to walk. What is in view in the scripture before us is that there may be no hindrance to a united note of praise from the saints as come together.

How helpful would the spirit of all this be to the weak brother! He would be strengthened by the grace which he found in his brethren, and his weakness eliminated; he would learn Christian liberty. The spirit of consideration for the good of others, and a willingness to exercise self-restraint, rather than stumble a weak brother, are beautiful features of the grace of God in His people.

We ought to be profoundly moved by the thought of the blessed service of Christ. He has served the circumcision "for the truth of God, to confirm the promises of the fathers". He has done everything to establish the truth of God, and to confirm the promises, so that not one word that God said to Israel might fail of accomplishment. And He has served the Gentiles too, so that there might be a united and harmonious note of praise going up to God from both Jew and Gentile. "For this cause I will confess to thee among the nations, and will sing to thy name. And again he says, Rejoice, nations, with his people. And again, Praise the Lord, all ye nations, and let all the peoples laud him". What a beautiful and divine melody! Christ Himself singing to God's Name among the Gentiles! I understand that the word "sing" in verse 9 is a

word which suggests singing to a musical accompaniment. The blessed Christ of God has served the Gentiles so that their hearts might become the musical accompaniment to His own singing. Now are we going to allow anything in our spirits that will bring a jarring note to spoil that wondrous music? Think of an orchestra of praise so glorious that Christ Himself is its Leader! And am I going to allow something in my spirit some bad feeling, some personal resentment — that will be a jarring note? Let all such things be banished in the power of divine grace!

“Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that ye should abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit”. God is the God of hope, and He would have His people to abound in hope. He is going to carry through without fail every purpose of His love in connection with those whom He has called. The Holy Spirit would give us power to hold it all in our souls as a matter of hope. God is going to carry His work through with all His saints, and is going to secure all that is in His purpose. If we abound in hope, as having before us what God has before Him, it will keep us bright, and sustain us even in the presence of all the weakness and departure that have manifested themselves in the Christian profession. Paul never wrote in a more encouraging strain than in 2 Timothy. When John wrote his Gospel the assemblies were in a sad state, but he wrote about the Son of God, and the Father, and the Comforter, and about the thoughts of divine love in relation to those given by the Father to the Son. He is a blessed example of one filled with all joy and peace in believing, and abounding in hope.

We come in verse 14 to a beautiful setting forth of the normal fruit of the glad tidings. Looking at saints as subjects of divine calling and grace, as the work of God, Paul was persuaded concerning them that they were full of goodness and knowledge. What a contrast with what is said of the natural man in chapter 3! The gospel comes to us as not having one feature of goodness about us, and it works such a miracle that we are filled with goodness and with all knowledge! If this is not realised in us as yet, it is at any rate an alluring prospect.

The goodness with which the saints, viewed normally, are filled, is intelligent goodness. There is the knowledge of good and evil now with complete freedom from the evil, so that nothing but goodness remains in activity! What wondrous knowledge has one who knows spiritually what is taught in this epistle! He knows himself — man — and he knows God as revealed in righteous grace; he knows the Lord Jesus Christ, and the Spirit as indwelling; he knows the brethren as one body in Christ. As thus “filled with all knowledge” there is ability to admonish one another. Every part of the truth

that is spiritually impressed on our hearts and minds is to be put in circulation among the brethren. We always need admonishing; it is a putting in mind of things known — not the teaching of what is unknown. This very letter I take to be a good example of admonishing. Paul does not write as to persons who did not know; he assumes all through that they knew what he was speaking about. But he puts them in mind of what they knew, so that the power of it might work intelligently in their souls to bring forth a result for God. Things are often presented in the apostles' writings, not as assuming that the saints do not know them, but on the ground that they do. We can hopefully admonish one another because the truth of what we speak is known to the brethren, though perhaps it may be in danger of getting dimmed. The tendency of things around us is to dim what is of God in our souls; hence the need of continual admonition. A brother or sister has often called my attention to what I know in a way that has brought it home with freshness to me, and set me a little more in the good of it. There is preservative power in admonishing; we ought to speak more to one another of the things which we know. We are sometimes reserved because we feel that brothers or sisters know very well the thing which we have on our minds. But that is no reason for not saying it to them! It is a wonderful privilege to belong to a community where every one continually brings before us the precious things of God. There is preservative and stimulating power in such activities. God is always giving us impressions; He gives you one and me another, and if we communicate these impressions to each other we shall both benefit. We should not hesitate to speak of things that are on our minds; they are given to us to be put into circulation.

Paul had a special measure of grace given to him; he had an official place as "minister of Christ Jesus to the nations". He was not taking too much upon him in addressing himself thus to the Gentiles. He was serving out in holy dignity all the divine wealth that was in God's Anointed Man, Christ Jesus. But he ever had in mind the result for God, so that he carried out his ministry as "a sacrificial service". What he had before him was that those of the nations should be brought and offered up as in Christ Jesus, sanctified by the Holy Spirit, and thus "acceptable" to God. Paul had something to boast of in Christ Jesus in relation to God. He carried on the message of God's glad tidings as "a sacrificial service" in view of the result for God. It was a holy and priestly character of service. Just as Aaron waved the cleansed and purified Levites before Jehovah as an offering for holy service, Numbers 13, so would Paul bring those of the nations for God's holy service and pleasure. His object was that those of the nations might be an acceptable offering for God. This is the priestly side of gospel service. Paul could say that he served God in his spirit in

the glad tidings of His Son; Romans 1: 9. There is a priestly character about that. Paul's public position was that he was the official administrator of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles, but in his own spirit he was in a priestly attitude, thinking of the result for God. The object of the glad tidings is that there may be a company of persons in Christ Jesus, sanctified by the Holy Spirit, wholly apart morally from the flesh, acceptable to God for His holy service.

As a levitical company we have to carry the tabernacle of testimony, Each Levite had his appointed work, but they were a united band carrying one testimony. Service is, in one sense, an individual matter, but God would impress upon us that all service is to be rendered as part of one united whole. The name Levi means "United". There is no such thing as independency in service. My individual service is part of one great whole. "The planter and the waterer are *one*"; we might say they are two, but God says *one*. The evangelist, the prophet, the pastor and teacher, are *one*; they are unified as being of Levi. Each one has his own line; each Levite has his own bit to carry, but each one carries it with a deep conviction that he is carrying a bit of a united testimony, and that it needs all the other bits to make it complete. Individuality in service has been sometimes pressed to the point of independence, so that servants have become free-lances, each doing what was right in his own eyes, and not regarding the necessity for unity with all the other servants.

As a united band each appreciates what the others are doing, and does not get unduly taken up with his own service. Brethren walking in the Spirit think more highly of others' gifts than they do of their own; it affords genuine pleasure to see another doing what we feel we cannot do ourselves. It is a delight to see service rendered to the saints. Chapter 12 would guard us against being copyists of each other's service, for it reminds us that each has his God-given measure of faith. I only really have divine support as I pursue the line for which God has dealt faith to me. No doubt we are all peculiarly impressed by those who have been made a blessing to us, but it does not follow that their service is to be the pattern of ours. God does not duplicate His servants. He gives a distinct measure of faith to each, and each has to fill up his own measure.

Paul now speaks of his own labours in their widely extended character. Pursuant to his great commission he had laboured over a vast area, and he could say that he had "fully preached the glad tidings of the Christ". He had a wonderful impression in his soul of what subsisted for men in God's Anointed Man, and he had fully preached it over an immense tract of country. There is such an infinite fulness in God's Anointed Man that it is impossible to exhaust

it. However widely it is published, the point can never be reached when the supplies run short. Paul announced Christ, as he tells the Colossians, and admonished and taught every man, to the end that he might present every man perfect in Christ. Every man, everywhere, may be made perfect in Christ! What a glad tidings! Paul's excessive labours had so far hindered him from going to Rome, but his heart now turned thitherward, and even reached out farther west to Spain. His great desire in the service of the glad tidings was to go to those who had not heard of Christ. The true evangelist longs to reach those who know nothing of Christ. Paul did not wish to build on another's foundation; he preferred to begin, if we may so say, with raw material. It might be said that there is not much of that in a country like England now! Well, in spite of a kind of traditional Christianity, it is surprising how little idea people have of Christ as God's Anointed Man. Many people around us have no idea of the true character of God's present approach to men in the glad tidings. They are proper subjects of the evangelist's work; he goes forth having this in his heart, "To whom there was nothing told concerning him, they shall see; and they that have not heard shall understand". It would often be helpful for the preacher to assume that he has at least one in his congregation who is entirely ignorant of the true grace of God, and for him to address himself to that one, that his eyes might be opened to see how the blessed God is presenting Himself to His fallen and sinful creatures in the glad tidings concerning His Son. It was an amazing favour when God sent His Son into the world, His own Anointed One. Then the death of Christ is the most stupendous fact in the history of the world. It would not be too much to say that it is the most stupendous fact in the history of eternity! And now Christ Jesus, the risen and glorified Man — with every thought of divine pleasure and blessing substantiated in Him — is presented to men as God's salvation. So that all men may come into the present favour of God as blessed in that glorious Man for the delight of the heart of God. Is it not surpassingly wonderful!

The apostle does not appeal to the saints at Rome to make a contribution for the poor saints in Jerusalem. He had appealed to those at Corinth, and also to the assemblies in Galatia, his own personal labours amongst them having given him a claim upon their affections. But to those at Rome, where he had not laboured, he does not appeal in the same way, but he tells them how other Gentile assemblies had been "well pleased to make a certain contribution". And he adds, "They have been well pleased indeed, and they are their debtors; for if the nations have participated in their spiritual things, they ought also in fleshly to minister to them". It is a very fine touch, bringing to bear upon the saints at Rome a sense of their obligation in regard to their

Jewish brethren, but doing it with that admirable delicacy which is so characteristic of Paul. Not saying, *You* ought to do so and so, but telling them what others had done, and observing that it was only right that they should do what they had done. God would not have us, as Gentiles, to forget that the spiritual things in which we participate belonged primarily, according to promise, to the Jew. We are "their debtors". It was the Lord Himself who said, "Salvation is of the Jews", John 4: 22. To remember this is a wholesome check upon Gentile pride.

The contribution of the Gentile assemblies to those at Jerusalem had great spiritual importance also from another point of view. It was the truth of the one body in a practical shape. The fact that those of the nations should be contributing to Jews, and that Jews should be thankfully accepting it as the fruit of God's grace to the nations, was a practical sealing of Paul's labours and ministry. It was the evidence in a tangible shape that those of the nations were "joint heirs, and a joint body, and joint partakers of his promise in Christ Jesus by the glad tidings", Ephesians 3: 6. Nothing but the working of grace in the Gentiles could have made them realise what debtors they were to the Jews, and nothing but the same powerful working in the Jews could have made them willing to own the grace which had made those of the nations "joint heirs, and a joint body, and joint partakers of his promise in Christ Jesus by the glad tidings". The difficulty was probably greater on the side of the Jew than it was on the side of the Gentile. Every bit of Jewish pride would rise up against receiving it, so Paul wished the saints to strive with him in prayer that there might be grace in Jerusalem to receive it. A manifestation of grace is not always appreciated. Paul had secured the activity of Gentile affections towards the Jew; now his concern was that Jewish affections should be appreciative. It was perhaps more difficult for the Jew to receive than for the Gentile to give. It meant the recognition by the Jew of the work of God amongst the nations, and that those of the nations could now be their benefactors. Would the Jew gratefully receive the bounty of God from Gentile hands? Paul wished to go to the capital of the Gentile world with the joy in his heart of knowing that the divine bond had been cemented. Hence he asks the saints in Rome to strive together with him in prayers for him to God,

not only that he might be saved from those that did not believe, but also "that my ministry which I have for Jerusalem may be acceptable to the saints".

Anything that contributes to the practical establishment between saints of divine bonds is worth a great deal to secure. The apostle linked up the Roman saints with himself in these truly assembly exercises. It was important, in view of universal assembly conditions, that all feelings of estrangement and

distance between Jewish and Gentile brethren should be removed. And in principle this applies to every divergence and disagreement between saints. Natural influences and personal feelings come in and cause estrangements. They can only be got rid of by the grace of God being bestowed on both parties; He must work on both sides of the breach. Very often sufferings and distresses are permitted — like the poverty at Jerusalem — to prepare the way for differences to be removed, and for the saints to be more closely knit together. We have to endeavour to keep the unity of the Spirit in the uniting bond of peace, but this can only be done “with all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love”, Ephesians 4: 2, 3. The fact is that often we get occupied with what we regard as wrong things done by others, and get into strong feelings about it, when perhaps the Lord has permitted the circumstances just as a test of the state of our own spirits. And if we begin by being faithful with ourselves, we should have to admit that our own spirits were wrong. God always comes in for a self-judged person, and it is on the line of self-judgment that breaches are healed.

“But I know that, coming to you, I shall come in the fulness of the blessing of Christ”. Paul was a divinely prepared vessel of ministry, made competent by God to carry the fulness of the blessing of Christ. His saying that he would come in “the fulness of the blessing of Christ” was a hint that there was more — that he had not put *everything* in his letter to them. It leaves room for Colossians and Ephesians. Paul was minister of the glad tidings and minister of the assembly; the word of God was completed in his ministry, and God wrought in him in power that “the fulness of the blessing of Christ” might come out in ministry, so that the saints might stand in the good of it. To the Corinthians he had to say, “Ye are not straitened in us, but ye are straitened in your affections”, 2 Corinthians 6: 12.

What a privilege the saints had in being permitted to have partnership with Paul in his assembly exercises and service! He beseeches them to pray for him “by our Lord Jesus Christ” — what an appeal is that to those who love Him! — “and by the love of the Spirit” — love from a divine source, counted on as being in the saints as indwelt by the Spirit. Feeling and praying under the influence of such motives, there would be conditions suitable to the God of peace. “And the God of peace be with you all. Amen”.

ROMANS 16

Romans 16

It is interesting to see that we have here an inspired example of a letter of commendation. We ought to be exercised as to being such as could be truly commended. It is good when brethren who write letters of commendation can refer to definite spiritual features in the persons commended. There may be commendable features even in a child — a simplicity of heart that, makes much of the Lord, and that loves His people, and is ready to serve them. How commendable it is when young people are prepared to stand aside from the course of this age — from its pleasures, and from the many things that men think highly of — and to find their happiness in walking with the saints, and in learning more of the preciousness of Christ!

The more spiritual brethren are, the more they will appreciate any characteristics which it might be suitable to mention. Phoebe was “minister of the assembly which is in Cenchrea”; she was marked by active service for the assembly, which would intimate that she had been the ready servant of the whole company. She had been a helper of many, and of Paul himself. Higher commendation could hardly be given to a sister, and yet her qualities were such as every sister might possess. All may in some way serve the assembly and be a help to others. Phoebe was to be received in the Lord worthily of saints, and assisted in whatever matter she had need of the brethren.

It is very striking that, though there is no mention of “the assembly” in the teaching of this epistle, there are five references to “the assembly” or “the assemblies” in this last chapter, intimating that it is all to be taken up in an assembly setting. The twenty-eight brothers and sisters who are expressly named, and the others who are alluded to in more general terms, are saluted as persons who will quite understand Paul’s references to local assemblies.

They were set together at Rome, like all other “assemblies of the nations” (verse 4), to take up locally their mutual relations. These references to “assemblies” clearly imply that the saints in Rome were walking according to the truth and principles of the assembly as found in the first epistle to the Corinthians. No other order could be spiritually recognised anywhere, for that epistle had in view “all that *in every place* call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ”, 1 Corinthians 1: 2, as well as “the assembly of God which is in Corinth”. All assembly truth is universal in its application, for “in the power of one Spirit we have all been baptised into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether bondmen or free, and have all been given to drink of one Spirit”, 1 Corinthians 12: 13. Neither sectarianism nor independency could have place in

such an order of things, for all the local saints were of the local "assembly", and they were all part of a company that was "one body in Christ".

The assemblies are not spoken of in Romans 16 as "the assemblies of God", but as "the assemblies of the nations"; thus, in keeping with the whole truth of the epistle, emphasising the grace which had secured assemblies in so many parts of the Gentile world. They were local companies of Gentiles, set together in assembly order by the grace which had called them.

They are also spoken of in verse 16 as "the assemblies of Christ". It was He, indeed, who had formed them, for He is the true "Former of assemblies" (see note to Ecclesiastes 1: 1 in New Translation), and in any assembly formed by Christ we may be sure there will be a great place for God; His Name and His praise will be there, and all will carry the impress, not of man after the flesh, but of Christ the Anointed of God.

This last chapter of Romans thus links up the truth here presented with that of 1 Corinthians, and also, by the reference to "the revelation of the mystery" in verse 25, with Colossians and Ephesians. The truth is one indivisible whole, and no one part of it, however important in itself, is to be detached from the other parts. They all go together to make up "the unity of the faith".

The number of salutations here has been often commented upon. It seems to suggest that there were a number of men and women at Rome whose names could be suitably connected with this epistle. They would be persons whose lives were not inconsistent with the contents of the epistle. They are like so many living witnesses brought into evidence to make manifest that what Paul has written is not merely abstract doctrine, but that it is something which has found an experimental and practical place and power in actual living men and women. Think of these twenty-eight persons, and others not so expressly named, as being worthy to be saluted in immediate and abiding connection with the truth of this epistle, and this by one who was writing by inspiration of the Holy Spirit! We may be quite sure that they were persons who were not unworthy to have their names put by the Holy Spirit alongside the precious truth of this wonderful letter. We might ask ourselves, as a weighty and searching question, whether the Holy Spirit could take account of us as those whose names might be suitably put alongside theirs?

Prisca and Aquila were marked by such devotion to Paul that all the assemblies of the nations were under obligation to them, and thanked them. And the assembly was at their house; probably the saints came together there. What a home for the assembly! A house of persons so devoted to the testimony that they would stake their own neck for Paul's life!

Then Epaphroditus was distinguished as being "the firstfruits of Asia for Christ". He came forth without any one of his own countrymen to give him a lead. I am sure there is peculiar pleasure for the Lord in one who first gives Him what is due in a town or district. There were going to be at least seven assemblies in Asia, but Epaphroditus was the firstfruits; he had a very distinctive place in that locality.

Maria laboured much for the saints at Rome. Then Andronicus and Junias were old saints, known to the apostles, and had been in Christ before Paul. And, as he mentions one after another, he has a distinctive word for some, only the name for others, but his personal salutations for all. As "one body in Christ" some have a more distinctive place and service than others, even as it was amongst David's mighty men, 1 Chronicles 11, but each may be faithful and devoted in filling his place, so as to be worthy to be saluted with an honour which is from God.

"But I beseech you, brethren, to consider those who create divisions and occasions of falling, contrary to the doctrine which ye have learnt, and turn away from them. For such serve not our Lord Christ, but their own belly, and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the unsuspecting". From the earliest days Satan has had his instruments in the assemblies, seeking to divide those whom God had set in unity, bringing in occasions of falling when God would have His people to stand, and introducing human thoughts contrary to the doctrine which has been learnt under divine teaching. Our attitude in relation to all such persons is to "turn away from them". It was never more important than it is today not to be deceived by good words and fair speeches. There are people and books about, full of good words and fair speeches. You may read page after page, and chapter after chapter, and find nothing but what seems to be sound and scriptural. Then, when suspicion is disarmed, something is slyly brought in "contrary to the doctrine which ye have learnt". Something subversive of the truth as to the Person or the work of Christ, or that turns souls aside from the glad tidings of God to something that is purely of man. There are many insidious errors abroad. It is not good to listen to their advocates, or to read their books. Having the truth in Christ as divinely taught, go on with it! Do not seek to know the evil! "I wish you to be wise as to that which is good, and simple as to evil".

The doxology of the last three verses sums up the good, and ascribes all the glory of it to "the only wise God". He is able to establish us according to Paul's glad tidings and the preaching of Jesus Christ. We have considered this glad tidings as we have passed through this epistle. Now Paul would leave upon our

hearts the serious, and yet encouraging and elevating, thought, that the power of "the only wise God" alone can establish us according to it.

Then there is another thing according to which also the same blessed power can establish us. That is "the revelation of the mystery, as to which silence has been kept in the times of the ages, but which has now been made manifest, and by prophetic scriptures, according to commandment of the eternal God, made known for obedience of faith to all the nations". Paul would leave upon our spirits, by his solemn closing words, a deep impression of "THE MYSTERY". He would awaken the most profound interest of our souls by the thought of what is peculiar to, and distinctive of, the assembly. He would have us to note the fact that silence had been kept as to it in the times of the ages. It was a secret reserved in the wisdom of God for the present time, bringing out by its revelation the utmost depths and heights of divine wisdom and love, and the blessedness of God's eternal purpose which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord. Paul would prepare our hearts, as he closes his present letter, to be intensely interested in what he afterwards wrote in his epistle to the Ephesians. But neither the present epistle, nor that which, we may say, it anticipated, were to be apprehended or known in any human or natural way. Saints would only stand in the good of them as established by the power of God. Whether we think of the glad tidings, or of the mystery, or of the establishment of the saints in both, the glory all belongs to God. The apostle turns adoringly to Him! "Now to him that is able to establish you ... the only wise God, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever. Amen".