

Parentheses of Scripture

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A parenthesis is described as "a word or sentence inserted into a passage to which it is not grammatically essential." The fact of the ordinary laws of grammar being thus by-passed would invest the parenthesis with an importance unique to itself, an axiom which the parentheses of Scripture amply demonstrate. We refer to just a few well-known passages.

Micah 5: 2, although not so shown in the Authorised Version, is in parenthesis (see New Translation), and the context shows this to be so — verse 3 is the judgment of God consequent upon the sin of verse 1, which verse plainly refers to Christ as recorded in the gospels — "they struck Him on the face" (Luke 22: 64, etc.). With what delight would the Spirit of God indite this second verse, truly a scintillating gem against the dark background of rejection and scorn. This blessed One — refused and set at nought by His own nation — is the Eternal God, "Whose goings forth are from of old, from the days of eternity." His coming into Manhood amidst the lowly circumstances of "Bethlehem-Ephratah" was the beginning of a pathway of suffering and death and yet of triumph and victory, and He, the risen Lord, shall yet be established and acknowledged as the "Ruler in Israel." Eternal in His Person, eternal in His love, He shall reign supreme in the splendour of the world-to-come and shall be the Object too of eternal praise and worship.

In Acts 10 Peter, speaking to Cornelius, insists upon these rights of Christ — "The word which God sent unto the children of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ;" and then we have the short but delightfully expressive parenthesis — "He is Lord of all." The apostle had heard the voice "from the excellent glory" telling the Father's delight in Christ; he had been an eyewitness "of His majesty" and he, so to speak, interrupts his discourse to Cornelius in order to express his heartfelt appreciation of the universal supremacy of his Lord. Blessed indeed to find our own affections in full accord with Peter's word — "He is Lord of all."

The parentheses of Romans 1: 2 and (in the New Translation) verse 3, magnify the glories of our Lord in His Manhood and in His Deity — the glorious subject of the "gospel of God" — the One ever in the mind of God as the Fulfiller of every promise emanating from His heart for the blessing of men; and the One, who in the power of resurrection would remove death and all its consequences from God's creation. It is the Son of God giving effect to every desire of God, establishing through death and resurrection (the power of which was seen in every step of His holy pathway here) the rights of God in blessing, and eventually removing completely every feature introduced by Satan and practised by man which challenged the glory of God Himself. The gospel is of God, its theme is "His Son Jesus Christ our Lord;" our hearts drink in the blessed results of divine love — "we joy in God," and join in Paul's happy doxology — "for *of* Him, and *through* Him, and *to* Him, are all things; to whom be glory for ever. Amen."

Enlarging upon this precious theme in his letter to the Ephesian believers Paul, in chapter 2, twice refers to our condition, before the good news of the gospel reached us, as "dead in trespasses and sins." His heart seems to overflow as he speaks of God's "rich mercy;" His "great love;" "the exceeding riches of His grace," and "His kindness towards us in Christ Jesus," and in verse 5 he cannot refrain from adding, by way of parenthesis, "by grace ye are saved," as though he would emphasize the fact that we owe everything to the precious Saviour by whom "grace came." What happy assurance fills our souls as we contemplate the greatness of the salvation which grace has wrought (the verb is in the perfect

tense) — our salvation is secure and abides.

Verses 20-28 in 1 Corinthians are most obviously a parenthesis (see New Translation); the context would indicate this to be so, verse 19 so definitely connecting with verse 29. The content of this section is beyond the scope of the present paper, but is replete with the greatest truths. The assertion of the truth of Christ's resurrection; the establishing thus of a realm in which the living God can bring to fruition His eternal purpose of blessing and glory; the precious features of the new Head — "in Christ all shall be made alive" — in contrast to the state of death consequent upon Adam's failure in headship; every enemy, including death itself, annulled, and everything seen in subjection under the feet of Christ, who will hand the kingdom over to God in all its pristine beauty and in absolute accord with God's own mind and desires. And, finally, the introduction of the eternal state in which God is "all in all." Precious truths indeed!

It is generally accepted that the whole of Ephesians 3 from verse 2 to the end is also one of Paul's parentheses — and rich indeed is its content. The revelation of the mystery; the unsearchable riches of the Christ; the manifold wisdom of God and His eternal purpose; the riches of His glory; the breadth and length and depth and height of the divine realm; the love of Christ which passeth knowledge; the fulness of God; the abounding ability of our God; the power which worketh in us. As we contemplate something of the greatness and importance of these precious truths, so uniquely dear to the heart of the apostle, we can surely join again in his doxology — "Unto Him be glory in the Church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen."

Many more of these important passages could be cited, meditation upon them would yield spiritual substance and joy. In Hebrew 13 from verse 19 onwards several intensely practical exhortations are brought to bear upon the people of God, including verse 23 which reads — "Let us hold fast the profession of our faith (the confession of the hope) without wavering;" and to strengthen faith and stimulate hope, the writer adds "for He is faithful that promised." Thus the pathway of faith and hope is illuminated with a fresh sense of the ever-abiding help and succour of the faithful God. Hebrews 11 records the history of those whose faith gave them a moral superiority above any "honours list" of this world — "of whom," says the writer of the epistle, "the world was not worthy." Can we not discern something of the exhilaration with which the writer interposed these words? A servant of Christ, now with the Lord, speaks thus — "Their glory was with God, the world was not worthy of them."

Finally we refer to a passage which has been the stay and comfort of the people of God throughout the present dispensation. In 1 Thess. 4 after assuring the hearts of the saints as to those who had fallen asleep through Jesus, Paul is led by the Spirit in verse 15-18 (a parenthesis) to disclose in unmistakable language the precious truth of the Lord's coming for His own. The urgent importance of this truth, so sadly neglected and misunderstood by many, lies not only in its parenthetical presentation but also in the apostle's word, "For this we say unto you *by the word of the Lord*". This word of absolute authority and power thrills our hearts — the *Lord Himself* will soon rapture us *to Himself*, we shall actually meet the *Lord* in the air and shall be for ever with the *Lord*. In this short parenthesis the name of the *Lord* appears five times in four verses — all power is His, nothing can successfully challenge His right to have His people with Him for ever. "Wherefore comfort one another with these words."