

In the Kingdom of God

Romans 12. 1-11.

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(Extracted from Scripture Truth Vol. 23, 1931, page 249.)

Yesterday this Scripture somehow began to take shape in my mind as my message for you, and last night I had it very definitely confirmed. I was visiting a dying brother, a man who has not played a very conspicuous or great part in Christian work — he has just pegged away and served the Lord for a good many years in his own small corner. When I came to leave him I said, "Now I am going back to High Leigh where many young Christians are gathered." He said, "Tell them there are some little jobs left for them to do — it is not only the great jobs but the little jobs." He has been in the building trade. "Tell them to do the little jobs well and clear up as they go along." Well, I will hand on his message to you, my young brethren, tonight. There is a great tendency to overlook the little jobs; they are not less important than the big ones, as our Scripture shows.

We are reminded here that we are one body in Christ and hence we all have different functions, and the great thing is for each to fulfil his own part, whether apparently big or little. In connection with the divine scheme of things it is necessary not only to do what the Lord will have us do but to do it in the right way. You will notice all down through these verses that seems to be *the* point. Let the prophet by all means prophesy, but prophesy according to the measure of faith — or the minister, let him wait on his ministering — or the teacher on his teaching, or the exhorter on his exhortations — or he that giveth let him give with simplicity. The ruling is to be done with diligence — he who shows mercy is to do it with cheerfulness. To do not only spiritual things but to do them in a spiritual way; material things also are to be done in a spiritual way — even your giving must be done in a spiritual way. That seems to be the great point in this passage. The fact is that the apostle is bringing home to the believers in Rome what it really means to be in the Kingdom of God. You may remember that when he reviews his ministry before the Ephesian elders he seems to divide it into three parts. I have preached the gospel of the grace of God. That has been the first great item in my ministry. But then he speaks of going among them all — the circle of the saints — preaching the Kingdom of God. Thirdly he speaks of his faithfulness in not shunning to declare unto them the whole counsel of God. We get the gospel of God, the Kingdom of God, and the counsel of God, and we must not omit the one in the middle. The Kingdom of God means not only that the rejected Jesus is the rightful King, and that the hour is coming when He will take His throne, but the point is, everywhere he went among the saints he took care to make them to see the bearing of the truth that he unfolded. He said, Brethren, you have been brought into the divine kingdom, subjects of divine birth — you are under divine rule — the sway of God has been established in your hearts and that means this, and this, and this. He showed them what it meant. Personally I am heartily glad for the plain words that have been spoken tonight; it is a note that has been missing; we have not had the Kingdom of God pressed as it ought to have been. There are these heavenly things, but what is the reflex light they cast upon us here? The Apostle Paul preached the Kingdom of God and brought the truth to bear in a practical fashion. You may depend upon it, it is that we want today. Having pointed out the way in which he is setting the Kingdom of God before the Roman believers, he shows them the alteration it is going to make in their lives, the new character coming out in them as subjects of the kingdom. At the beginning of the chapter we get that which underlies all this — what it is that is going to enable us to carry out these exhortations. A moment has to be reached in our histories when our hearts, being constrained by the mercies of God — referring to

the latter part of Romans 11 — absolutely surrender themselves to Him.

We are the subjects of divine mercy. We deserved nothing, but we are enriched with practically everything. If the sense of divine mercy takes possession of our hearts, then we shall see that our bodies, which were the vehicles in which sin wrought and dominated us — that were used by us to express all our sinful wilfulness — we must now present as a living sacrifice, something wholly and livingly devoted to God — to be absolutely at His disposal, set apart for Him and His service and acceptable to God, seeing it is our reasonable and intelligent service. In the sixth chapter, where we get very similar truth, I believe we get the verb yield used in a twofold way — first, the Kingdom as an accomplished fact, absolutely yielded, then secondly in a more present sense, going on yielding. Has a moment ever been reached in our histories when we have been brought to the point of presenting our bodies a living sacrifice — something now devoted to God — set apart for His use, never to be recalled? It is our only reasonable service. That is the body — the next verse speaks about our mind. Be not conformed to this world — be not fashioned according to this age. You say, He is going to talk now about our dress. Well, Suppose I do! I know we are very largely the victims of the fashions, yet we should be careful to dress as becomes godliness. But after all it is not primarily a matter of dress, it is a matter of the mind. "Be not fashioned according to this age: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind." We get down beneath that question to a more fundamental matter. Be not fashioned in your mind according to this age. There are terrible fashions in the mind regions — the scientific world is full of fashions. Scientists seem to be the greatest devotees of the goddess fashion that you can find anywhere. No Parisian fashions exert their sway over minds in the way that the scientific fashions do. We are not to be fashioned according to this age, but rather transformed; we are to be non-conformists in this sense, not reformists — but transformed by the renewing of our minds. God begins at the citadel, in the very centre of our beings. Some may say, Be practical and tell us how to get our minds renewed. Soak them in the Word of God prayerfully, in dependence upon the Spirit of God. As we progress and prayerfully study the Holy Book it is wonderful how our minds get shaped according to God. We unlearn our own thoughts, we begin to imbibe divine thoughts. Thus our minds are renewed and we prove what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God. Well, we say, it is such a perplexing thing to decide, what is this will of God? The point here is not that you may discover, but that you may *prove* the will of God. How do you prove a thing? You put it to the test. A person tells you that if you put certain chemicals together they act in a certain way — you prove and test it and it works. It is not mere theory, it is proven in every day life — it is a practical proposition. In the same way you and I are to prove what is the will of God, and as we prove what it is we shall discover it is good, acceptable and perfect. We shall of course learn incidentally that our own wills are bad, and imperfect and very disastrous. Naturally we love our own wills — you and I are to have our wills removed that we may prove and carry out in practice what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God. How much is our Christianity purely a theoretical thing? How much have we proved, experimentally proved, the blessedness of the will of God? We shall experience it if we present our bodies a living sacrifice to Him, and if our minds are not dominated by what the world thinks.

We come then under the influence of the Word of God. We think, reverently, His thoughts after Him, and are subject to Him. Our minds renewed, our bodies presented as living sacrifices, all these lovely things detailed in the chapter are the outflow. If we have not had such a moment in our histories, may the Lord give us the joy of having such a moment and to have it before we sleep tonight, for His Name's sake.