

A Letter to Rome

being notes on the Epistle to the Romans.

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Note

If the reader of these Notes will take his Bible in hand, and follow each section and paragraph with care, it is the writer's confidence in God that assures him of result in blessing.

We do well to reverently study God's word. And of all its blessed parts, the Epistle to the Romans is the key to our individual blessing. Until it is understood, more or less, no soul can advance.

To God is this book commended in prayer.

Table of Contents

SECTION 1. CHAPTER 1.....	2
Romans 1: 1-17.....	2
SECTION 1. CHAPTER 2.....	3
Romans 1: 18, Romans 2: 1.....	3
SECTION 1. CHAPTER 3.....	4
Romans 2: 2-29.....	4
SECTION 1. CHAPTER 4.....	5
Romans 3: 1-31.....	5
SECTION 1. CHAPTER 5.....	7
Romans 4: 1-8.....	7
SECTION 1. CHAPTER 6.....	8
Romans 4: 9; Romans 5: 11.....	8
SECTION 2. CHAPTER 1.....	9
Romans 5: 12-21.....	9
SECTION 2. CHAPTER 2.....	11
Romans 6: 1-23.....	11
SECTION 2. CHAPTER 3.....	12
Romans 7: 1-6.....	12
SECTION 3. CHAPTER 1.....	13
Romans 7: 7-24.....	13
SECTION 3. CHAPTER 2.....	15
Romans 7: 25, Romans 8: 4.....	15
SECTION 3. CHAPTER 3.....	16
Romans 8: 5-9.....	16
SECTION 3. CHAPTER 4.....	17
Romans 8: 10-18.....	17
SECTION 3. CHAPTER 5.....	18
Romans 8: 19-39.....	18
SECTION 4. CHAPTER 1.....	19
Romans 9: 1-33.....	19
SECTION 4. CHAPTER 2.....	20

Romans 10: 1-13.....	20
SECTION 4. CHAPTER 3.....	21
Romans 10: 14, Romans 11: 15.....	21
SECTION 4. CHAPTER 4.....	23
Romans 11: 16-36.....	23
SECTION 5. CHAPTER 1.....	24
Romans 12: 1; Romans 13: 14.....	24
SECTION 5. CHAPTER 2.....	25
Romans 14: 1; Romans 15: 7.....	25
SECTION 5. CHAPTER 3.....	26
Romans 15: 8-13.....	26
SECTION 5. CHAPTER 4.....	26
Romans 15: 14; Romans 16: 27.....	26

Romans.

SECTION 1. CHAPTER 1.

Romans 1: 1-17.

The Epistle is specially written to unfold the gospel of God. Paul was a chosen vessel set apart to declare it. He shows it to have been promised in the Old Testament Scriptures (vv. 1-2). The good news from God is not about us, but about His Son Jesus Christ our Lord. According to the prophecies which foretold His coming, He became — as to His Manhood — of David's line, Son of David; but, as to His Deity, He was marked out — as Son of God — by the fact of His resurrection (vv. 3, 4).

And this is according to the Spirit of holiness. The first thing for us to learn is what is exhibited in Jesus Himself. He was here as Son of God in humiliation, crucified through weakness, made sin, bearing sins, suffering for them. Holiness, at the time He was thus made an offering for sin, demanded that He should bear its penalty, pass through all its dues for the sake of others, and be forsaken of God, abandoned, bearing the wrath and judgment of God for sin not His own. But, the cross, and death, and blood-shedding of Jesus being past. He was raised from among the dead; and the same Spirit of Holiness now sets Him before us in risen life, with not a trace of the sin for which He suffered. His atoning death has effectually dealt with it; He personally is clear of it all, and is marked out Son of God with power, in perfect suitability as Man to all that God is in unsullied holiness. The Holy Spirit with all the Divine prerogative of omniscience finds not a contrary thing remaining in or upon the Lord Jesus; nothing but complacent delight. It is this which the epistle opens out to us as the measure and pattern of our new standing and state before God.

This risen One, Who being firstly designated Son of God in His own inherent and eternal Personality, and secondly become of the seed of David in His incarnation, is thirdly determined Son of God with power in resurrection, and Fourthly acknowledged and confessed to be Jesus Christ our Lord by those Who have believed God's testimony concerning Him. This is stated (See R.V. and N.T.) at the end of v. 4.

From Jesus as the One raised from the dead, Paul received his commission. Even Paul needed grace, but the Lord gave him apostleship in addition. And His purpose was to secure obedience to the faith among all nations, for the glory of His own great name (v. 5).

Among the many reached through the gospel addressed in this world-wide way to all nations, were some at Rome who had been effectually called of Jesus Christ, possessors of this genuine faith. Whatever they had been before, they were now believers; and all of them could, because believers, be recognized as beloved of God. This is a great delight to the heart. It is not here that aspect of God's love which we find in John 3: 16 in its activity in a world of sinners, and its manifestation for everybody. It is that personal link reserved for true believers alone. It is not simply that the sun shines for all men, but that the light and warmth of the sunshine have broken in upon their former arctic condition, and have begotten a response of affection that delights to find itself laid hold of and blessed according to God's love. The Roman Christians knew themselves to be objects of the love of God, it had become vital. They were no longer sinners in their sins, but saints. They were in right relations with God as Father and with Jesus Christ as Lord; and could be assured of grace and peace in every sense of the words from both our Father God, and our Lord Jesus (vv. 6, 7).

Nevertheless, they needed to be solidly grounded in the far reaching benefits of the gospel they had already believed.

This then is an epistle, especially penned by Paul, in wisdom supplied by the Holy Spirit, to explain to believers how to use, and benefit by the gospel already believed.

The following verses reveal some of the exercises of heart through which this great and honoured servant passed. We are confronted by his thankful, earnest, and prayerful spirit, whilst he assures them of his desire to visit them (vv. 8, 9, 10). His purpose (and may it be ours in setting forth the gospel), was to establish them, and to have some fruit among them, as among other Gentiles (vv. 11, 12, 13).

As to the gospel itself, he was by no means ashamed to speak of it, even to those who lived at Rome. What though this proud city was the centre of all earthly power, the gospel was God's power. Rome's power was to bring people into its empire by forced submission: God's power was for the salvation of every believer, by means of the gospel, bringing them into His kingdom and under His sway in grace. In it, God reveals His righteousness for the benefit of all who exercise faith in Him. What a mercy it is that we need not be terrified at the thought of the righteousness of God, seeing that it secures the salvation of everyone who in his heart believes the gospel (vv. 14, 17).

SECTION 1. CHAPTER 2.

Romans 1: 18, Romans 2: 1.

God's attitude towards sin is no longer a secret. His wrath is revealed from heaven against it; i.e., His direct dealing in judgment with it. Doubtless this was when Jesus was on the cross, bearing our sins. The wrath of God fell upon Him there as the Sin-bearer; yet the destruction of the world by water in Noah's day, and the destruction of Sodom and the cities of the plain by fire in Abraham's day, may also be cited as evidence of it.

It is revealed against all that is unlike God in men. Even if men profess to have truth from God, yet the smallest inconsistency with His truth puts them under His condemnation. The Jew was favoured with a fuller revelation of God than the Gentile: yet in both cases, that which may be known of God has

been held in unrighteousness. Men have thrown off the claims of God (vv. 18, 19).

In the works of creation, God has appealed to everybody. It is a perpetual witness of God, displaying His eternal power and Godhead. From John 1: 1-3, we see that Christ in creating all things acted as the Eternal Word; that is He as the Word in the Triune and eternal Deity put the impress of the Divine Creator upon every detail of the creation in things great or small, in things heavenly or earthly. Men everywhere are therefore without any excuse in rejecting God's claims. Apart from any other testimony, God has expressed Himself as God, in the works of creation.

But men did not own Him, nor give Him His due. They exalted themselves instead, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image An image moreover of something as low, or even lower, than themselves (vv. 20-23).

Consequently God gave them up to reap as they had sown. It is not that He made them sin (God forbid the thought!), but He threw the reins upon man's neck, just that it might be brought out what was in sinful man's heart — in my heart, reader, and yours. Accordingly we find that sin ruined men's bodies (v. 24), their affections (v. 26), and their minds (v. 28). Three times does it say that God gave them up, and three times is the solemn result stated. First, they set the Creator at naught (v. 25), next, they were wicked towards each other (v. 27), and lastly, there was no form that sin could assume, that did not come out of their wicked hearts (vv. 29-32). They sinned just for the delight of sinning, and found their agreeable company in those that did the same.

But there were some amongst them who saw that they were all wrong. Yet this did not excuse them. The moral judgment which they formed of others' sins was a witness against themselves; for the very same things were in their hearts to do. All are therefore without excuse (Rom. 2: 1).

SECTION 1. CHAPTER 3.

Romans 2: 2-29.

Now God's estimate is a faithful one. It is according to truth. Those who sin must all be estimated according to what God is. Some think themselves capable of judging the course of others: God judges all (vv. 2, 3). "But God is not yet executing judgment," one might object? True; but God's goodness, which causes Him to hold the judgment back, leads men to repentance. He who abuses God's goodness only heaps up wrath against the day when it will actually be executed upon him. No man will be out of God's reach (vv. 4-6). This unavoidable meeting with God, to which we must all face up, brings us up against the Divine standard by which man is measured or tested. If there were any who fully complied with His will, in unfaltering faithfulness seeking for glory, and honour, and incorruptibility, He would in the coming day award them eternal life; if there were any that did evil, disputing God's sovereignty, and refusing to bow to His message, there is the award of indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish. This righteous* principle applies to every man, whether Jew or Gentile, for there is no respect of persons with God (vv. 7-11). Reader, can you stand before Him on this ground? If you have failed in Well-doing, if you have done evil in any form, you are hopelessly undone before Him. True, there is glory, honour, and peace for every man that worketh good; but you and I have to learn (if we have not already learnt) the solemn, searching truth that "there is none that doeth good; no, not one."

*The reader will note that the apostle is not here proposing terms on which eternal life is to be obtained, but is showing the righteous role according to which God acts. On the ground all were lost.

If Gentiles (to whom the law was never given) have sinned, they will be judged without the law. If Jews, who received the law, sinned against God, they will be judged by the law. Judgment follows in both cases. In the mere hearing of the law in the case of the Jew was no advantage to him if he did not keep it (vv. 12, 13). If he was to be justified before God on the ground of his own doings, he must keep the whole law — not hear it merely. Thousands hear it who do it not. These cannot be justified with God.

The Gentiles, though they never received the law, yet had consciences. Sin was sinful even before the law came. Natural conscience accuses a man of sin, if he kills another; even if he never heard of the ten commandments. This shows that the work of the law — its moral demand — is in every man's conscience. Sin is everywhere sinful to God, law or no law. And men will be judged according to God's thoughts of sin when the day arrives. He will judge the Secrets of men. Oh, how solemn! (vv. 14-16).

Now the Jew was especially favoured. He had the law, and a revelation from God. He was particularly proud of his privilege, and accounted himself well able to instruct others. But his very knowledge of what suited God only condemned him, for he did things that were contrary to God. The very name of God was blasphemed among the Gentiles through the conduct of the Jews. The possession of religion only condemns, if a man does not do the will of God (vv. 17-24).

The Jews were outwardly separated from other nations by the rite of circumcision. But this was rendered null and void before God if a man did not keep the whole law (Compare Gal. 5. 3). On the other hand, supposing a man could have been found who kept the law, although he had never been circumcised, he would have been reckoned righteous. Circumcision neither helped nor hindered justification if any man were forthcoming (Jew or Gentile) who had kept the whole law. With God, it was no question of mere ceremonies only applying to a man outwardly, but of real heart-work (vv. 25-29).

SECTION 1. CHAPTER 4.

Romans 3: 1-31.

The question might be asked now, "Of what advantage was it then to have been a Jew, or to have been circumcised?" Very great advantage indeed; for to this people, even though only outwardly separated from others, were committed the oracles of God. The word of God was spoken and handled in their midst (vv. 1, 2).

"But the majority did not believe or act upon God's word?"

True, but any who did, believe Him got blessing, even though the rest were in unbelief. God is always faithful even if all others play false (vv. 3, 4). His sayings are always true, His judgment is always just. Those who believed Him received blessing through His word: they were reckoned righteous before Him, though in themselves unrighteous.

"Then if our having no righteousness opens out the way for God's word to reach us, and for Him to bring out another righteousness for us, altogether of and from Himself, is it — I speak as a man — is it a righteous thing with God to punish any for their sin?"

Certainly; God is not intending to let sin run on for ever; He is going to judge the world. He will not tolerate sin (vv. 5, 6). Moreover, if He were indifferent to sin, and if it were for His glory that I

should go on in it, why should He adjudge me as a SINNER? The very fact of His calling me a sinner, shews that it is not His will, nor for His glory, that I should go on in sin (v. 7).

Here the apostle refutes a slander that had been hurled at him. In any man — apostle or otherwise (Jesuit for example) — said, "Let us do evil that good may come," HIS DAMNATION IS JUST. Could words be stronger? (v. 8).

"Well then, are we justified because we are better?" Are we who have been blessed of God favoured because we had some goodness or merit to plead?

No, not at all. Already has it been proved that there is no real heart difference before God. All — whether Gentiles or Jews — are under sin. The Old Testament Scriptures confirm this. None are righteous. No person of Adam's race does good in God's sight; no, not one. Verses 10-12 speak of us as individual persons. Verses 13-15 speak of our sins in detail; every member of the body has become an agent for sin. Verses 16-18 show the path we tread. We do not walk naturally in the fear of God. Such is the melancholy fact of our condition before Him in sin. This is the conclusion (see Psalms 14 and 53) reached after the law was given.

We know then, says the apostle, why the law was given! It was given to those who were under the law, that each man might be silenced for ever as to any goodness of his own, and that the whole world might be adjudged as guilty before God (v. 19).

So that of course no one can be or has been Justified by the law; it only carries the knowledge of our sin. It shows it up. We have no righteousness of our own before God.

But whilst we thus stood before Him, naked and destitute of any fitness for His presence, He brought forth His righteousness. It is not on the ground of law-keeping that we are reckoned righteous. The law and the prophets both bore witness that we could not be reckoned righteous, but that God must bring in some way of doing it Himself. Accordingly they stand aside to see God work. Blessed truth! God has a righteousness even for a sinner whom He has proved guilty. He has a way of reckoning even a sinner righteous, if that sinner believes God. It is by faith of Jesus Christ. It is for all who believe. The very fact that there is no difference in God's sight as to the sinful state of men, opens the way for Him to bless, and to reckon righteous, all who believe (vv. 20-23).

But how? Verse 24 is the answer. Without any procuring cause on our side, God has justified the believer by His grace, through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus. The redemption He has made available, and through which we are justified, is fully exhibited, both in its manner and its measure, in Christ Jesus, the risen, exalted, and anointed Head at His right hand. It is on this ground He can justify the worst of Adam's race. Were it a question of merit, none are justified, for all have sinned. But God has set forth Christ Jesus, a meeting-place, a place of approach, through faith in His blood. In that precious atoning blood, shed at the Cross, God has found a full satisfaction, a righteous answer to the believer's sins. He has raised up Jesus again from the dead; and this Person, Christ Jesus, is the One in and through Whom God can righteously clear the soul who believes in Jesus.

Moreover, the sins that were past — that is, the sins of Old Testament believers — are put away by that same blood. Formerly, God forgave sins, even before Jesus died: but until He had died, God had only typically, not manifestly, set forth the righteous ground on which they were forgiven. Now He has done so.*

*As in Lev 16 on the day of annual atonement, the blood of the victim, was sprinkled on the mercy-seat and before it, so is Christ Jesus seen in glory in all the value of His redemptive work which has both met God's claims and glory, and given us standing ground before Him in unimpeachable

righteousness

And not for them only is this true, but for everyone, even today, who believes in Jesus. Does anyone question God's righteousness in forgiving all my sins? God's answer is the precious blood of Christ. There all my sins met their utmost due, and being thus put away, and atoned for, before Him, He is righteous in announcing me clear from them all. He reckons me righteous (vv. 25-26).

How can we boast then, as though we (who are justified by grace) were better than others? If we had reached a position of justification by our law-keeping or works of our own, we might have boasted. But we are justified on the principle of faith in God. Hence boasting is excluded (v. 27).

The summing up therefore is in v. 28. A man is justified by faith without law-deeds. And the moment we think who God is, this is plain. Were justification by the law, only Jews could be justified, and they, only if they kept the whole law. Is He the God of the Jews alone? Thanks be to His name, He is God of the Gentiles also. Therefore the blessing of justification must be on some other ground than that, of the keeping of the law, which was, properly speaking, given to the Jew alone. It is on the principle of faith for both circumcision and uncircumcision.

"Is then the law rendered null and void by those who are justified by faith?"

No, but (as will be seen in the following chapters) it is magnified and made honourable; it is established (vv. 28-31).

SECTION 1. CHAPTER 5.

Romans 4: 1-8.

The apostle now refers to two standard illustrations of his theme. They were test cases so to speak, and being the two central figures of the Old Testament Scriptures, prove in a wonderful way how God justifies a man. The history of Abraham was before the time when the law was given: the history of David came after. But whether before or after the law came, God justified them both.

To take the first, Abraham, if justified on the ground of his own works, has something to boast of. Was this so? Is Abraham able to stand before God, and to say he was entitled to be accounted righteous because of his works?

"NOT BEFORE GOD," is the answer. Abraham is not justified before God by his works. (Contrast the 2nd chapter of James, which speaks of how a genuine believer is proved to have faith in God by the character of his works).

What does the Scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him for righteousness" (Gen. 15: 6). If it had been some reward for his works, the Scripture could not have said "it was reckoned to him." It was not that God owed it to him, but God did it in grace. This proves righteousness to have been reckoned to him on the principle of grace, and not of works. The apostle hence shows (vv. 1-4) that faith in God — not our works — is the way in which righteousness is obtained in His sight. But he introduces it in the strongest way; that God justifies the ungodly who believe in Him (v. 5). This he substantiates from David's Psalm (32). The blessedness of which David speaks is certainly not reached by good works; for he speaks of a man needing forgiveness of iniquities, the covering of sins, and the non-imputation of sin. He rightly describes such a man as ungodly. And yet God justifies him; imputing righteousness* evidently without works (vv. 6-8).

* In Rom. 3. we have GOD'S righteousness, set forth in His acting toward us through Christ. In Rom. 4. it is how we are accounted righteous, so that no imputation of guilt can be possible before God.

Abraham's case is referred to, to prove that justification is on the principle of faith. David's case is referred to, to show that this blessedness is not earned by works.

To sum up — such is God's grace through Christ Jesus, that AN UNGODLY MAN WHEN HE REALLY REPENTS OF HIS SINS AND BELIEVES GOD IS RECKONED RIGHTEOUS ON THE PRINCIPLE OF FAITH, WITHOUT WORKS.

SECTION 1. CHAPTER 6.

Romans 4: 9; Romans 5: 11.

We are now shown the character of the circumstances under which Abraham was reckoned righteous before God. He was at the time uncircumcised: so that circumcision is no factor in the blessing, and righteousness is within reach of the uncircumcised (vv. 9-12).

It was not through the law that he received his position of favour, and came in for God's promise. The law had not been given to begin with: and then when it did come it only worked wrath. When it was given, that which had been sin before became transgression now. If therefore Abraham's blessing had depended on the keeping of the law, it would have upset what God said about his faith (see v. 3); and at the same time it would have broken up all hope of God's fulfilling His promise (vv. 13-15).

Thus we are shown that it is by faith, according to which all depends on God and grace. This makes the blessing sure, both to him and to us who believe. Notice how God said "I have made thee a father of many nations," even before Abraham had a child at all. The thing is so sure with God that He, with Whom future things are as though present, could speak of it as a fact. Abraham believed God "in hope" (vv. 16, 17). That is, the fulfilment of the promise was still actually a future thing. Verse 18 gives us the substance of God's communication to him: the nature of the promise given. His eye was not on himself, or upon Sarah, but upon God. So we read that he believed, he considered not, he staggered not, he was fully persuaded. Though all the power of nature could by no means make good the promise, he believed God: and relied upon the performance of the promise by God's own power (vv. 19-21). AND THEREFORE IT WAS IMPUTED TO HIM FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS (v. 22).

On the same lines is a sinner justified now. The communication from God is of a different nature from that which He made to Abraham. But the God Who speaks to us is the One Who spoke to him. It is no longer a promise which is set before us for our faith to lay hold of, but a blessed, thrice blessed fact.

And this fact?

Namely, that God Himself has delivered Jesus for our offences, and has raised Him again for our justification. Thus we see that as truly as our offences took Him into judgment and death at Calvary, so by His resurrection is complete justification assured to every believer. In other words, God having raised Jesus our Lord from the dead, for ever clear of the judgment under which He had passed for us, has thus secured the justification of everyone who believes Him. God has thus in His own way, and righteously, justified every believing soul from all his offences. Blessed fact indeed! (vv. 23-25).

Thus justified by faith, our souls are consciously at peace with God, Who has Himself removed

every cause for unrest through Jesus Christ our Lord (Rom. 5: 1). And not only are we now brought to see what a perfect clearance has been effected for us, but we are also ushered into a new place of acceptance and unbounded favour by the Lord Jesus Christ; we stand in the very favour in which He Himself stands as the Risen One. Moreover, we boast in hope of the glory of God (v. 2). We have found the knowledge of God in grace to be so blessed for our own souls, that nothing will please us better than to see the full glory of that God displayed through all the universe.

But if we are accounted righteous before God, and already stand in His unclouded favour through Christ, why not at once be taken into His glory?

Verse 2 has already shown us that we boast in the hope of it. But now we have opened out our present relations to the world's tribulation on the one side, and God's love on the other (vv. 3-5). God is exhibiting in us the marvellous picture of a people at peace with Him, tried in every way as to earthly circumstances, yet boasting in their very tribulations. For He uses these very things in a progressive way for our education; firstly by tribulation breaking in our spirits and training us to be patient; secondly, as we submit patiently to trials we gain experience of His gracious sympathy, His faithful love, and His delivering mercy; thirdly, our acquaintance with Him leads us to expect good out of fresh trials, and we appreciate, "the end of the Lord," hopefully facing each day with the assurance that God is bent upon doing us good; and finally, if men reproach us with our being no more free from trouble than they are, we are not ashamed, for we know we are subjects of this mighty love of God. We are instructed by the Holy Ghost, Who is given to us, in the wondrous character of this love of God. His is opened out in the following verses.

As to the past, Christ died for us even though we were ungodly, without strength, sinners, enemies. What a display of God's love, surpassing all human illustrations (vv. 6-8).

As to the present, we are now justified by the blood of Christ, reconciled by the death of His Son (vv. 9, 10).

As to the future, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. Being reconciled we shall much more be saved by His life. That is, His death having ended up our enmity, we are now free and at home in the presence of our God; and Christ Who lives again in glory, lives to bring us right through into glory. How blessed is God's love, revealed in Jesus.

Hence we boast in God, as so revealed, through our Lord Jesus Christ. It is through Him as the One Mediator that God has received the atonement, and that we have received the reconciliation (v. 11, margin). The old state of enmity has been ended by the revelation of God's love in the death of Christ; and we are set before Him in the happy realization of all distance removed, and our hearts at rest in the knowledge of Himself.

SECTION 2. CHAPTER 1.

Romans 5: 12-21.

The apostle here commences to look at our Christian blessing from another standpoint. Previously he has looked at men as having sins, and has shown how the one who believes in Christ is justified from them, and brought into Divine favour, with the certainty before him of being saved from wrath and secured for glory.

Now he takes up the question of our sinful nature derived from fallen Adam; and God's way of

deliverance from its power now, whilst living here in this world. Moreover (in chap. 8) he goes on to show how we shall soon leave behind the last trace of sin's presence, when our bodies will enter on a glorified condition.

These two first sections of the Epistle, properly speaking, run together like parallel lines; though the Spirit of God takes up each one separately. The second section is always needed for a continual enjoyment of the first. Still they are not often learnt at one and the same time.

He begins by showing that DEATH is not simply the outcome of breaking a definite law, but it is the necessary result of sin, even where no law was given. This is proved by the fact that death reigned from Adam to Moses, i.e., from Genesis 3 to Exodus 20, during the period in which God gave no law at all (vv. 12-14) .

(Enoch was an exception; he did not die. But he was delivered from it by faith as Heb. 11 so clearly shows; and in his case, therefore, if raised as an objection, would only go to confirm the argument in Romans. That is, that it is only on the principle of faith that any are delivered. None are exempt from it naturally.)

Hence it is necessary to conclude that — apart from the question of outward acts — death pertained to Adam's race in consequence of Adam's sin. He was never the head of the race till after the fall: so that his race is sprung from a fallen head. The taint of sin is communicated by natural generation. "By the offence of the one, many have died."

Now, after the same manner — i.e., just as the consequence of Adam's act reaches out to all connected with him, so with Jesus Christ and "the many" who are linked with Him. The effect of His single act of obedience is made good for all His people; i.e., for believers of course (v. 15) as subjects of grace.

The grace which comes from God through Jesus Christ, is on directly opposite lines to the judgment brought in through Adam. (condemnation attaches to the natural man as descended from the latter; justification (rendered necessary by our "many offences") flows to believers as a free act of favour through Christ (v. 16).

Death gained the supremacy over the people of Adam's race. It reigned. Those who receive grace and righteousness (as believers) shall reign in life. There is a contrast implied between death regnant because of Adam's offence, and believers regnant in life because of Jesus Christ. While this looks on to the glad sinless future it likewise implies surely believers' victory over sin in the life we live now. Victory is on their side, as against death. But it is all by One — Jesus Christ. To Him be all the praise ascribed (v. 17).

The summing up occurs in vv. 18, 19. In consequence of Adam's one sin, his life and the life of those connected with him is a condemned life. Be this borne in mind, that all life derived from Adam is condemned with God. This life must go in death.

But in consequence of Christ's one act of righteousness (referring of course to His death as God values it, and as chapter vi. explains), a new character of life has been furnished for men. That is, Christ in resurrection has become the source of a new life, having which the believer is entirely justified from all question or imputation of sin.

All those whose connection is with Adam before God, are thus made (or constituted) sinners; i.e., they have a sinful moral constitution. All those who are connected with Christ before God are constituted righteous; i.e., they have a new and righteous moral constitution.

In v. 20, it is explained why the law was given. No one could be accounted righteous, or be constituted righteous, by it; but its purpose was to disclose and reveal the awful depth and extent of our sin. And whilst we were made conscious thereby of our depravity and guilt, grace has come in with its super-abundant supplies. On our side, naught but sin; on God's side, naught but grace for the believer. Death, the effect of sin in the old Adam life; eternal life, the effect of grace which has come to the believer in a righteous way through Jesus Christ our Lord (v. 21).

Thus has God detached us from the old standing in Adam, as head of a sinful race with its sinful moral constitution, and attached us to Christ as Head of a righteous race with its righteous constitution. This permits of our exhibiting the moral features of the new life now, though in its completeness this eternal life entails our possession of a glorified body, after the pattern of our Lord Jesus Christ, in answer to all that He has done.

But what grace, that nothing short of this will be accomplished in the believer, as a righteous answer to Christ's death for us. Truly, grace reigns!

SECTION 2. CHAPTER 2.

Romans 6: 1-23.

The apostle now refutes the idea that this great grace permits of continuance of sin. It is only conferred on the ground that our condemned, sinful Adam-life has been ended before God in the death of Jesus (vv. 1, 2). He who is baptized unto Christ Jesus (N.T.), and thus into the profession of Christianity, owns this by his baptism. Such is the significance of the act. We are baptized unto His death. It is not our death, but His. Our profession in baptism is that we take the position assigned to us by the death of Christ. There cannot therefore be a continuance in the life which is ended before God, and which faith owns to be judicially closed. We can now walk in newness of life, after the pattern of Christ risen. When His connection with sin (on the cross) was, closed in death, He was raised again from the dead. Sin, though once put to Him for us, has now been judged and ruled out as a mode of life by His death; and He is alive again in perfect suitability to the Father's glory. In one sense this was not newness of life to Him; He had ever been pleasing to God. But such a life is indeed newness of life to us!

Yet our identification with Him in His death necessarily involves our being of His order in resurrection life. "We shall be also OF RESURRECTION." (Omit the words in italics.) We know that our old man (all that we were as connected with Adam, and having the Adam-life) has been brought to its deserved end in the cross of Christ; to the intent that sin's claim on the body should be annulled, or cancelled, and that we should have nothing further to say to sin. A dead man does not serve sin: he is beyond its mastery (vv. 3-7).

But if we thus see that in Christ's death we have died out of our old condition (and that in God's account we share with Christ) we believe that we shall by-and-bye actually be like Him in His full resurrection life. His resurrection has proved that death's dominion is broken. Sin has gone in judgment; and with sin, death. Hence He lives again in a resurrection body, and with resurrection power; death has no more dominion over Him. Moreover, He lives for the delight of God's heart, and for the accomplishment of God's will. "He liveth unto God" (vv. 8-10).

In like manner are we responsible to reckon for ourselves. As to sin — dead TO IT: as to God — alive IN CHRIST JESUS (N. T.). It is not that sin is dead; but we reckon that in Christ's death, we have

died to it. It is not that we actually have our resurrection bodies as yet; but we reckon that in Christ Jesus, we are alive to God.

Hence we refuse the dominion of sin over us. If it prompts to some action we persistently and resolutely say "NO" to it.

On the other hand we now hold ourselves once for all to be here for the will of God; and though we are still waiting for resurrection bodies, yet these present bodies of ours are at His disposal, vessels for the will of God. We are to promptly respond with every member of our bodies to the indications of His will. What a blessed life! (vv. 11-13). The two parts of v. 13, explain the two parts of v. 11. "Say 'NO' to sin; and 'YES' to God."

This position is secured to us by grace. The law while condemning sin does not give freedom from sin's dominion: grace does. Sin has lost its hold upon us. We are not now under law. The law was given before man's ruin was fully demonstrated to him. It applied to him therefore as one whose standing was still "in Adam," and whose state or constitution was still "in the flesh." Grace has brought the Christian on to another platform (as linked with Christ in resurrection) where the law does not apply. If we were under the law, sin would have dominion over us:- a solemn consideration for many (v. 14).

This does not (says the apostle again) give license for sin. If we are set free from sin, we do not serve it. We are now servants of righteousness, i.e., in our new life we find our freedom in obeying God's will. The language of the apostle is intentionally simple so that they should not- fail to understand. Once, in their old condition as linked with the sin-life of Adam, they used their bodies and minds for sin; now sin was no more their master. They were now servants of righteousness, and their whole being was to be characterized by holiness (vv. 15-19).

"Ye were the servants of sin," says he (vv. 17-20). But that is now a thing of the past, thank God. There was no fruit in the former life of sin; and they had now become ashamed of it, for it only tended to, and ended in, death.

Their present position before God therefore was that of freedom from sin's mastery, and their joy was to serve God. This produces holiness in the present, and its ultimate issue is — not death, but — everlasting life. This again (as in Rom. 5: 21) is everlasting life in its fullest sense, including a body of glory like Christ's (Rom. 5: 22). Only that whereas the death was the result and outcome of their own works ("wages"), eternal life in its fullest meaning is God's gift in Christ Jesus our Lord. It was not dependent on their doings at all (v. 23).

SECTION 2. CHAPTER 3.

Romans 7: 1-6

Having thus disposed of the question of sin's dominion in Rom. 6, he now takes up that of the law's dominion. Briefly stated — sin's dominion has been ended by Christ's death. But the same death which frees us from the domination of sin, has put us out of reach of the law. The law has dominion over a man during his life: not beyond. A dead man does not need law. Nor can it apply to him as such (v. 1). The simple illustration of vv. 2 and 3 shows in a practical way that death having come in, the law no longer applies. It held the claim of death over men in their undelivered state. But, having the death of Christ before his view, the apostle shows its bearing as regards the law. That death ended the

claims of the law, just as effectually as it closed sin's mastery. As he thinks of that holy body of Christ, once dead on the cross and in the grave, he gently unfolds its blessed meaning. "My brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ" (v. 4).

Previously we were in the flesh. But now death has come in. Our connection with the first husband (to use the illustration given in the chapter) is over. The jurisdiction of the law has closed for us. Its authority which applied to men who were in the flesh is therefore annulled. We are set free from it. Death has ended, before God, our connection with it. The whole state of existence to which the law applied has thus been judicially terminated. Faith accepts this. We are not under the law. If we were under the law we could not be under Christ. It must be Christ or the law; it cannot be Christ and the law. That would be like the woman having two husbands. It would be spiritual adultery. We cannot have the law and Christ.

The Christian's present position is then, that of being dead as regards the law. He has no more to say to it in Rom. 7: 4, than he has to say to sin in Rom. 6: 11. But a new link has been formed with Christ, the risen One. We are now under the rule — not of law, but — of Christ risen. This is not bondage as the first was; it is liberty; blessed, fruitful liberty. The former husband told me what I ought to do, but gave me no power to do it. I only produced sins. This relationship with the law only brought forth fruit unto death. That was its issue: death. It brought nothing for God.

But the new position and relationship with Christ in resurrection — the second husband — yields fruit for God.

The gravity of this matter demands close attention. The Christian (and of course I speak of a real Christian), is not in the flesh at all before God. Now when, as a sinner, he was in the flesh, sin had mastery over him; and hence the law which forbade sin, applied to him when in that state. That state has been ended by death — Christ's death (v. 4). He is thus dead in God's account not only to sin, but to the law which applied to him in his state of sin. In faith therefore he accepts this. He is dead to a bad thing — sin, in Rom. 6; and also to that which is in itself a good thing — law, in Rom. 7.

But to what intent? It is that he should now serve God, not in the oldness of the letter, but in newness of spirit: i.e., not as a matter of legal enforcement, but with holy, blessed liberty and delight, as one linked with, and controlled by the holy love of, the risen Christ (vv. 5-6).

Up to this point the apostle has spoken of the position of the Christian as such. Hence he has freely used the pronouns "we," and "ye," in describing it. But evidently all this is intended to be laid hold of in faith, and to be made good in our souls. And therefore he develops step by step, in a logical sort of way (and yet in a manner that appeals to every converted man's experience), how we learn in faith, and by the Spirit, to appropriate the truth.

It is a hard lesson, but so profitable and blessed when learnt. Believer, do you long for a life of holy liberty from sin in the very scene where sin is so painfully manifest to you?

We have seen the new Christian position and its obligations down to Rom. 7: 6. He who is truly a Christian is justified from sins, Rom. 4; and having life in Christ — not now in Adam, Rom. 5, is freed from the dominion of both sin and the law (Rom. 6, and Rom. 7: 1-6).

That all this may become real and true in our souls, let us now with broken hearts apply ourselves to the rest of our chapter.

SECTION 3. CHAPTER 1.

Romans 7: 7-24.

If then a man is delivered from the law by Christ's death, is the law sin? Is it a bad thing since it was necessary for me to be delivered from it? The very reverse. It was God's instrument to lay bare the hidden sin of my nature. It said, "Thou shalt not lust (covet)." It not only brought in condemnation where I did evil, but also where I desired or had the tendency to do evil. Apart from the law I was unconscious of the existence of sin, i.e., of my sinful nature. Sins there were: my conscience told me that. But of inbred sin I was unconscious till the law came. Without the law sin was dead. But the moment the law appeared, rebuking and condemning even the desire for or the tendency to sin, I was amazed to discover that even apart from the question of my outward acts, I possessed a nature which inclined to sin. The very forbidding of it only made me conscious of its existence. Hence, the law having found me out, it held over my conscience its stern sentence of death. "When the commandment came, sin revived, and I died." Wonderfully forcible is the language. Thus the law, perfect and spiritual as it was in itself, only produced death in my conscience.* It was ordained to life; i.e., it promised that "the man that doeth these things should live in them;" but I found that I was unable to fulfil its obligations. Trying to get life by it therefore was only to be the victim of a deception; sin was there; and the law, instead of helping me, could only under the circumstances put me to death. Thus death was produced in my conscience; I was consciously under the agony of the death sentence.

*Even as a man justly condemned to death for crime, might stand upon the scaffold, blindfolded, and — in a few moments by the withdrawing of a bolt, — to plunge to his death.

So that the law is not evil; it condemned sin root and branch (vv. 7-11). The Law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good. Was then this good law responsible for this collapse, and the originator of death to me? No; but sin. For even when a good thing like the law came to me, such is the sin of my nature that this good law could do nothing but condemn me. I have now got a deepening sense by means of the commandment, of how dreadful a thing sin is. We know how the law is spiritual: the fault is not there; but I am carnal. So that the law in its effect upon me — far from delivering me — only brings me into bondage. I am sold under sin. I am made miserably aware of a nature which loves not the law, but which desires to sin. And what is worse, it only mocks my attempt to do better. When I do a thing, I am conscious of its sin, and I hate it. I wish for holy actions, yet I do them not; I hate sin, and yet I do it (vv. 12-15).

And yet — let me consider.

If I repudiate — if I refuse in my mind — these sinful actions, at least I can say that I agree with the law as to their being sinful. I consent to the law. Morally I bow to its holy claim, even though it be thus against myself. So that my sympathies have somehow or other been enlisted on the side of holiness; and if there be sinful actions they proceed from the sin that alas! dwells in me, foreign to my new life.

Yet this only shows me more awfully than ever the utter badness of the flesh. All that I did before I was awakened was of course only sin; but it is a hundredfold worse to find that even when I want to perform that which is good, the flesh is incapable of it. In me, that is in my flesh, there dwelleth no good thing. I see good things which I want to do, but I don't do them; other things which I want to avoid because they are evil, I do (vv. 16-19).

Helpless therefore as I feel in the matter, I am again confirmed in what I had so faintly

understood before (v. 17). That is, I learn more distinctly than ever to distinguish between myself as one born of God, and the sin that dwells in me. Hence the apparent contradiction in the verse. "I do the wrong thing," one is compelled to exclaim on each successive failure; yet when I come to analyze it I see that "it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me." I am a puzzle to myself. Here I am almost like two persons. The one (which I hate) which would use my body for its sinful doings; the other (which longs to do God's will, and to be practically holy) which yet is powerless. This becomes clearer, though it is misery. I find a law, that when I would do good evil is present with me. The inward man (with which I now thoroughly identify myself) delights in God's will; but there is this hateful, incorrigible sin in opposition.

"I want to live for God," says the inward man.

"You must die," says God's holy law. The flesh, working in me, brings home the sentence of death upon me.

And there is no agreement between the two. My question is how I am to be delivered from the latter. The one would use my body for sin, the other longs to use it for God and holiness. I own in my conscience that the death-claim of the law must be met; and yet I must live unto God. I cannot make the sin into anything better; it is unmendably bad. The inward man (what I am as converted to God) groans in its bondage. It loves holiness, or as I may now say, I love holiness. I long to be free to do God's will without let or hindrance. But I am powerless. This state of things is intolerable. I must get deliverance. But I cannot deliver myself. "WHO shall deliver me?" Certainly there is no man on earth who can stand forward as the deliverer. And so long as I look within or around, the question remains unanswered, "Who?" (vv. 20-24).

SECTION 3. CHAPTER 2.

Romans 7: 25, Romans 8: 4.

I have now reached, in my own experience, the point at which I am prepared for deliverance. Man has no effectual plan to propose, and I am shut up to — God!

And instantly it dawns upon me that He is my Deliverer through Jesus Christ our Lord. True the distinction ever remains between the "I myself" of our verse, and "the flesh." Or as we sometimes say, between the flesh and spirit (John 3: 6). The one is ever set for God's will; and the other is ever set for sin. But God is my Deliverer.

And here it is that I learn for myself in my own soul, the value of the truth brought out in Romans 5 - 7. What a perfect deliverance it must be; wrought out by God, through Jesus Christ our Lord! My eye turns to Him. I am ready to seize in faith and in spiritual power the mighty fact of God's deliverance. I have learnt to endorse God's thought about myself as viewed in connection with the flesh; it is no good, and nothing good can be made of it. The only thing is that it must undergo its judgment. Death must come in upon it.

Now — through Jesus Christ our Lord — God HAS done away with it on His side. And on my side, I have fallen in with God's judgment upon it; i.e., morally I have done with it too. Seeing its unmendable character, I give up struggling with it: I accept its judgment in faith: the bolt has been withdrawn, and I fall back upon the blessed truth that God has already judged it. My connection with it which brought me into such terrible bondage in Rom. 7, has, I see, been dissolved by Christ's death, so

that God no longer esteems me to be connected with it. Faith accepts this. It has been ended before God. God reckons me to have died to sin, even though it is in me still. I also reckon in the same way. In Christ's death, and with Christ, I also have died to sin. The judgment of death which my conscience told me I so richly deserved (Rom. 7) for sin, has been ended already. I am freed from death by death. I have died in His death as to all that I was in the flesh. In faith I appropriate His death. To sin — I am dead. To God — I am alive in the risen One, Christ Jesus our Lord.

Therefore there is now no condemnation for me. There is none before God for me, and what is more, I have learnt this in my conscience. No longer is my soul under the bondage, which the sense of condemnation produces. I am consciously free in my soul as well as before God.

The life which I have from and in Christ Jesus, is totally distinct from the life which I had in Adam. As for the latter, it has already been condemned in Jesus' death — its condemnation is already past. As for the former, there is no condemnation. The Spirit given message in ch. 8. 1 is not merely that I shall not come into condemnation, but that there is no condemnation left for me to come into.

God gives no place to the Adam life in His thoughts about the believer. faith gives it no place also. In faith, I accept what God has done with it, and hence I am no longer occupied with it.

The new life which I have in Christ Jesus is not carnal, but spiritual. The people who have it (i.e., believers, Rom. 4: 25) are characterized as walking not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. They have learnt to refuse the old life, and to give it no place. On the other hand the Spirit ever acts regularly and consistently in the new life. helpless as I was in myself against the law of sin and death (and miserable so long as I was occupied with it), I have now found that God has delivered me from its power. The Spirit of life in Christ Jesus attaches me to the new Husband (Rom. 7: 1-4). I am for ever set free from the old one. I am under no obligation to the latter. I need no longer detain myself by distressing efforts to change it or even to master it; I am privileged to regard myself in respect of it as dead. It is my delight to love Christ, and to live Christ (Rom. 8: 1, 2).

So that God, as my Deliverer, has done what I could not do for myself, and what the law could not do for me. By condemning sin-in-the flesh (when His own Son came in the likeness of flesh-of-sin), God has judicially got rid of the unmendable life in His account, and for faith. The righteous requirement of the law has thus been fulfilled in Christ's death, and my death with Him. And I now consciously live before God in a new life which walks not after the flesh but after the Spirit (v. 3, 4). It is a life which is beyond the reach of law, but which finds a holy joy and liberty in doing God's pleasure and being here for Christ. Love to God, and to one's neighbour are a natural outflow as I live out the life in which God sees me.

SECTION 3. CHAPTER 3.

Romans 8: 5-9.

I have dwelt much on the seventh chapter, because of its importance. The apostle again takes up the utter contrast between flesh and spirit. It is practically a development of John 3: 6. Only that Paul speaks not of two natures in the one man, but of two classes of men who are identified before God with either the one or the other. The unconverted man as such is after the flesh: the saved man as such is after the Spirit. Each has his tastes and pursuits accordingly. But, for the first order of man, how solemn is v. 6. Death is upon him. spiritual death now — actual death, yea the second death also, by-and-bye.

For the second order of man, life and peace, are his known and enjoyed portion. Peace as the first section of the Epistle sets forth, in the settlement and removal of every element of disturbance or disquiet, (Rom. 1-5: 12); life as brought out in the second section (Rom. 5: 12 - 7: 6). These have been made good now in his soul. The apostle does not in this verse touch the question of our every-day ups-and-downs; but is speaking of the character which the believer has in the eyes of God; i.e., what believers are characteristically. That which is born of the Spirit is spirit.

The flesh is the flesh, and its character is that of enmity against God. It cannot be improved; thus, those who are in the flesh, have no power to please God (v. 7, 8).

But we are in the Spirit.* This is how God looks at the saved man. We are NOT IN THE FLESH. blessed fact. The apostle carefully guards it by saying, "if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you." So blessed is it that he would not have it rudely handled, nor taken up by any save genuine Christians. "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is not of Him" (v. 9).

*Note — there are thus two things developed in the teaching of the epistle. Our standing before God as to acceptance is in the risen Christ Jesus, the new living Head. Our constitution or state is in the Spirit, being fruit of the Spirit's own work. There is a third thing not developed in this chapter, i.e. our practical condition of soul from day to day, in which there are fluctuations constantly. The first two are God's work, and naught of flesh enters into them.

Can the reader now honestly look at these verses, and set to his seal that God is true? Can he take them up in faith, and say, "Thank God, I am in Christ Jesus before Him — not in Adam He looks at me as being in the Spirit-not in the flesh"? Can you now say from your heart, in spite of changeful feelings, and whatnot, that your soul has laid hold of the fact that God Himself no longer regards you as in any way identified with the flesh? And that He looks upon you as being for ever identified with "life in Christ Jesus" — a life which is suitable to God, and which is energized by the Spirit?

If so, how it becomes us to praise Him!

SECTION 3. CHAPTER 4.

Romans 8: 10-18.

The Spirit of God has now shown us the new way in which God looks at us. We do not, as believers, live in the flesh before Him, but in the Spirit. Christ is our life. This being so, we hold our bodies as dead, so far as sin is concerned.

In Rom. 7 I was struggling to put a stop to sin. I saw that it was no good trying to do that. I have now learnt that sin has put a stop to me, DEATH HAS COME IN. I grant you that it is not exactly my death; but it is Christ's death for me, and my death with Him. Sin has reached its terminus; the body is dead because of sin. All is over. DEAD!

But a new kind of life has been made good to me. The Spirit is life; and it comes out in the way of practical righteousness. Moreover, the fact that I now have the Spirit of God dwelling in me as a Divine Person, is the pledge that my very body will by-and-bye partake in the full benefit of Christ's resurrection. I have resurrection life now; the Spirit of God dwelling in me; and a sure pledge that my old creation body will shortly be changed and fashioned like unto the risen Christ (vv. 10, 11).

The effects of our old connection with the flesh are thus completely reversed by Christ. We owe nothing to it. Such as do live according to it, die. We have died; and hence through the Spirit mortify

the deeds of the body. Life in resurrection is our portion. We belong, as Christians, to the class who live (vv. 12, 13).

These are led by the Spirit of God. These are the sons of God. These no longer dread God, nor are they in bondage; they have received the Spirit of sonship, and cry to Him "Abba Father." These, being consciously free in their own spirit in God's presence, the Spirit of God bears witness with their spirit that they are the children of God. It is not a mere feeling with them, nor simply a text of Scripture, but the Spirit's testimony that they are God's children. These are God's heirs; and they are joint-heirs with Christ. They suffer here in this world, in sympathy with a rejected Christ; but it is in view of their sharing the glory with Him in the coming day of His kingdom. We are gainers by what (as Christians) we suffer here (vv. 14-18). How God's gospel brings in a complete triumph over sin, and all its attendant circumstances!

SECTION 3. CHAPTER 5.

Romans 8: 19-39.

We can now pass on. The whole creation awaits the time when the children of God (now unknown, and little thought of) shall be manifested in glory. It was brought into bondage and subjection, by Adam's sin, for a time: but (Christ will bring in a full reverse, and the long bondage of corruption will then be succeeded by the liberty of the glory. But the glory is that of the children of God. Creation has to wait for its deliverance until the day we are manifested in glory with Christ (vv. 19-22).

In sympathy with the groaning creation, we also, in our old-creation bodies, await the moment when Christ will put forth His power and change them. We have the first-fruits of the Spirit (see v. 15), and hence are not in bondage; we are free. But we earnestly long to leave behind all that is of the old creation, and hence we groan. We are saved — that is true: but as to its full results, we are still in hope: we have not yet received glorified bodies. With patience we wait for this.

Meanwhile, the Spirit, acquainted as He is with our infirmities, prays for us. As a Divine Person Who indwells us, and is in His own Person distinguishable from us, He graciously identifies Himself with each of us in such an intense way that His petitions cannot be articulated in words or even in groans. It is not that we pray to Him, but He Who prays for us. We often fail to know what to pray for. He never fails to ask for us according to God's will. Our circumstances are shaped then according to the Spirit's intercession; and hence it is that we know that all things work together for our good, as those that love God, and are called according to His purpose. Blessed purpose of God! He is going to have us like His Son as Man, and to this end has called us, and justified us. Yea, and so sure is the fulfilment of His purpose, that He speaks of it as a fact. "Whom He justified, them He also glorified." No soul, whom God has ever justified, will God fail to glorify (vv. 23-30).

What can our hearts say to all this? God is FOR us. Can He Who spared not His Son begrudge us aught beside? None can lay a charge against those whom He justifies: none can condemn. The very Christ Who died, and has risen again, is He Who is in the place of power, at God's right hand, and interceding for us incessantly on high, never for a moment loses His interest in us. Who shall separate us from Christ's love? Can earthly circumstances? Never. Can all the powers of heaven or earth or hell? Not at all. The love of God rests upon us unchangeably, unalterably, in Christ Jesus our Lord (vv. 31-39). What a God! What a Saviour! Ten thousand praises be His!

SECTION 4. CHAPTER 1.

Romans 9: 1-33.

The apostle now proceeds to give a summary of God's ways with His ancient people Israel. He has shown in Rom. 8 that nothing can hinder the carrying out of God's purpose with regard to us. Nor has He given up His intention as to the people of Israel.

He briefly enumerates their privileges as a nation, crowned by the fact that Christ, as a Man, was born of them. Yet this reference to His true sinless humanity is carefully guarded by the statement of His essential Deity.

The apostle, when thinking of them, had wished himself accursed from Christ for their sakes, so deep was his love for them. This was in the spirit of his beloved Master, Who actually did undergo curse for them. He had continual sorrow on their behalf, for they were guilty of unbelief and the rejection of Christ (vv. 1-5).

But, guilty as the mass of the Israelites were, it must not be understood that God had failed to carry out His word (v. 6). For God's promise did not apply to everybody who was naturally descended from Abraham. Abraham had many children — Ishmael and Isaac we might especially mention. Yet God set Ishmael and the rest (Gen. 25) aside, and said, "In Isaac shall thy seed be called." To state it briefly, we learn from this that blessing did not depend upon mere natural descent from Abraham, but purely on the promise of God. Ishmael — the child of natural energy — was set aside for Isaac — the child of promise (vv. 7-9).

Secondly, even Isaac's children did not all share in blessing alike. For even before they were actually born did God select the younger son Jacob to receive the place of earthly supremacy. This proves that they were not blessed on the ground of their own works, for at the time God spoke of their relative positions, they were not born; they had done neither good nor evil. Subsequently they both did evil: but God secured, by His own faithfulness to His promise, the place of supremacy for Jacob. Later, in Malachi, and when their histories had brought out their respective lives, God said, I have loved Jacob, and I have hated Esau.

The third case, which occurred in the time of Moses (just after the making of the golden calf, Ex. 32) proves this. For at a time when all the people of Israel might have been righteously swept from the earth, God still insisted on His sovereign right to bless. "I will have mercy, on whom I will have mercy" (vv. 10-15).

So that we learn, first that Israel's blessing as a nation depends on the promise of God; next, that it is not of works; but that thirdly, it comes purely on the ground of mercy. These three factors are summed up in v. 16.

He now takes up the case of those who failed to receive blessing. Pharaoh illustrates this. Mercy had been within his reach, but he refused it again and again. Six times over had he been solemnly warned as to the folly of resisting God, in the shape of terrible plagues, but each time he hardened his heart (Ex. 7: 13, should read, "And Pharaoh's heart was hardened (or strong) that he hearkened not." The Lord did not judicially harden him till Ex. 9. 12). Then came that terrible word, "In very deed, for this cause have I raised thee up, to show in thee My power." If privilege and mercy be despised, God hardens people's hearts, and uses them as beacon lights of His power and wrath. He can in this way turn even the wrath and unbelief of man to the display of His own holy glory (vv. 17-18).

A man might then be tempted to say, "Well then I cannot help it; if I am to be blessed, I suppose I shall be blessed; or if I am to be damned, I suppose I shall be damned."

Ah, reader, none who have any sense of the majesty and wisdom of God, or of the glory due to His Name could thus speak. It is true that God has "power over the clay," to turn it to any shape He pleases. But what if God, slow as He is to anger — yet were willing to show His wrath, and to manifest His power? Would He do it by arbitrarily consigning so many of His creatures to destruction? Never.

He endures with much long-suffering these guilty resisters of His mercy, until they have fitted themselves for destruction. Alas! how many have thus filled up the measure of their iniquity.

On the other hand, He picks up and fashions vessels of mercy, in which He will display His riches of glory. Vessels of mercy! Poor, wretched sinners, who could do nothing but own their guilt and shame, and be debtors to mercy alone. Oh, to think that He prepares such — by His grace — unto glory! And that this wondrous grace reaches out, not to sinners of the privileged Jews alone, but of the outcast Gentiles also! (vv. 19-24).

Yet this is but in harmony with what he had promised in the Scriptures. Hosea had shewn how grace would reach out to those who had no claim upon God. Isaiah had spoken of the fact that only a remnant of Israel would receive it; and that that remnant of Israel even, would only receive it on the ground of sovereign mercy (vv. 25-29).

Looking at this matter then as a whole we learnt that even Gentiles, sinful as they were, are brought into a position through faith where they are accounted righteous before Him. Moreover, Israelites, religious as they were under the law, have failed to be accounted righteous before God. Speaking of the great mass of them, they sought a righteousness of their own on the ground of their law keeping instead of believing God. The consequence was that they rejected Christ, Who is God's righteousness for sinners. "They stumbled at that stumbling-stone" — a lowly rejected Saviour. Had they believed in Him, they would never have been put to shame (vv. 30-33).

SECTION 4. CHAPTER 2.

Romans 10: 1-13.

The apostle (who was at this time on his way to Jerusalem) here speaks of the intense desire he had for their salvation. He knew their burning zeal for their religion, but showed how it was their very zeal that hindered them. They sought (blindly enough) to work out righteousness for themselves on the terms which the law proposed; and thus would not bow to God, owning their need of a righteousness from Him. Yet God had prepared one which totally ended all the old vain struggling. "For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone that believeth." The object of the giving of the law was to make it apparent that nothing but Christ would avail to set man righteously before God. The hopeless patchwork of their own doings is for ever set aside for believers, by Christ and His work (vv. 1-4).

Previously in Romans 4, Abraham and David had been called in as witnesses of the principle on which a man becomes righteous before God. Now Moses is called in.

He it was through whom the law was given. Even he showed in his own lifetime the impossibility of blessing being secured on the ground of the people's works. He describes the righteousness of the law as being only possible to a man who fully answered all its requirement. (v. 5). And what then?

After describing in Deut. 29 the total breakdown of the whole nation on that ground, he turns in Deut. 30. of that book, to show how God would come in on another ground altogether — even that of grace. Israel's ultimate earthly blessing is to depend, not on their doings, but on God's faithfulness to His word. Righteousness and blessing are for them to be gained, not through works of law, but through faith in God's word.

Beautifully does the Holy Spirit apply this at the present time. Man's DOING never obtained righteousness for him before God: Christ's DONE has secured it for ever, for those who believe God. The believer has not even to ask God to do anything further for him as regards his being reckoned righteous.

Christ has come down from above, and has gone to death for us; we have not to ask Him to do so. Christ has been raised again from the dead in righteous discharge from our sin which He bore; we have not to do it.

What then? Why, the message of blessing speaks of a completed righteousness for the sinner who believes it, in this way, "That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth Jesus Lord, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved" (vv. 6-9).

This plainly means heartwork, "for with the heart, man believeth unto righteousness"; but the man who thus believes in his heart that God hath raised the Lord Jesus from the dead, also confesses the Lord Jesus, the Risen Man, as His righteousness before God. Faith of the heart conducts him into the position where he is reckoned righteous before God; confession of the mouth conducts him into the position of a saved man (v. 10). Whether the confession be made to God or man is not the point: doubtless it covers both. The idea is that it is not merely a man undergoing a secret operation, but that as a result of the heartwork within, he boldly takes up the confession of Jesus as Lord. He boldly owns that he is reckoned righteous on the ground of Christ's death and resurrection alone. For the Scripture saith, "Whosoever believeth on Him, shall not be ashamed" (compare Rom. 1: 16).

This is connected with the confession of Christ. If there be real heart-faith in Christ there is ALWAYS with it, courage to confess Christ as our righteousness. Let us take this to heart reader. I could not venture to speak of you as saved, if you do not thus confess Him. "With the mouth confession is made unto salvation." "Whosoever believeth on Him, shall not be ashamed." This is absolute, or else the Scripture is wrong (v. 11).

Thus it is that blessing comes out for men (whether Jews or Gentiles) from Christ in glory. He is exalted, as Man, over all; and His wealth is for all who apply to Him, and rest upon Him. True, none do it but such as have found out their utterly hopeless condition. Yet, "Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord, shall be saved" (vv. 12-13).

SECTION 4. CHAPTER 3.

Romans 10: 14, Romans 11: 15.

What need there is therefore for the gospel to be preached. Perhaps the apostle refers especially to Jews; but how true for all the world, that those do not call upon Jesus as Lord, who have not believed on Him; and that those could not believe on Him, who have never heard His Name; and that they cannot hear without a preacher! Lord, awake our hearts!

Yet how preach, if unsent? In the case of those who are sent, how beautiful are their feet to the

eyes of God, as they traverse the mountains — the glad heralds of peace! How beautiful to God! This cheers the preacher's heart, even though he has to learn that it is not all that will obey the Gospel (vv. 14, 15).

Isaiah found this out. He spoke of the suffering and glory of the Messiah, but has to cry "Lord, who hath believed our report?"

But this discloses the fact that faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. The word of God brings a report: faith believes it. How blessedly simple is the whole thing! (vv. 16, 17)

But have not the people of Israel heard therefore? Yes; for as wide as creation (Ps. 19) — to Jews and Gentiles — has the testimony gone. And what makes it worse for Israel is that the Scriptures themselves foretold how God would go outside of their favoured circle with His blessing, to stir them up to prize it. This made the guilt of the people of Israel all the more apparent.

Moses had said that God would call in those who were not of His people (Israel) to provoke them to jealousy. That is, He would bestow great favour on the Gentiles, to make the Jews think about getting favour from Him too (vv. 18, 19).

Isaiah bears witness of the same thing very boldly. Gentiles found God, though naturally they sought not for Him; and God revealed Himself to them, although they did not ask Him to do so (v. 20).

But Israel He found to be disobedient to His word, and antagonistic when it was proclaimed. From the moment they rose up, till the moment they went down — all the day — they disbelieved God, in whatever way He spoke to them (v. 21). Hence it is that they are set aside.

Then has God given up Israel altogether? No; the apostle Paul's own case shewed He had not, for was he not an Israelite?

No; it was somewhat similar in Elijah's day, when the nation as a whole was without the knowledge of the true God. Then God preserved a little remnant; and as in that day, so now. Grace still works, though at present in only a few of that nation. As a whole, Israel has been suspended on account of its disobedience and unbelief, but a few of their number still come in for blessing, on the principle of grace and through faith in Christ Jesus. Their present fall as a nation is a judicial consequence (as both Isaiah and David show) of their unbelief (Rom. 11. 1-10).

Then is their humiliation a permanent thing? Certainly not: it is temporary only. God is using the period of their fall for bringing salvation to the Gentiles: but by-and-bye He will use this very thing to make them seek His face again (v. 11).

Moreover, if their fall means blessing to Gentiles now through God's grace, their restoration by-and-bye on the ground of grace, will bring more still. (True, in that day, the blessing, will be of another character — earthly in which the whole world will share.) This despised and humbled people of Israel are still the centre of all God's ways in the government of the earth. If then their fall is a means of bringing wealth into the world (in the shape of the gospel), what must their future exaltation bring? It will be for creation like life from the dead! (vv. 12-15). The winter of their natural judgment and scattering will be followed by the spring and summer of elevation under the reigning Christ, through the millennial age.

SECTION 4. CHAPTER 4.

Romans 11: 16-36.

How we are let into God's thoughts and ways in this chapter! Spite of all their sin and failure, God holds to His promises concerning the nation of Israel. His promise may be taken to be the root of all blessing and privilege on the earth, and He will not fail to fulfil it. At present in His ways of government, God has taken away from the nation (except the small remnant spoken of in v. 7) the privileges that were once given to it. Only for a short time, however, as he goes on to show.

The many olive branches are broken off. The Gentile, wild as he is by nature, has been grafted in instead. He is now in the place of privilege which was once occupied by the nation. Can he then boast of his position as against Israel? Certainly not.

The reason why Israel lost its position for a time, as a nation, was its unbelief and pride. The Gentile has been brought in only as a favour from God; not because he is any better than the other. If therefore he develops the same pride and unbelief that marked the Israelite, shall he not also be cut off? Indeed he will (vv. 16-22).

The reader will easily perceive, under the teaching of God's Spirit, that the apostle is not here addressing the individual believer, but is speaking to the Gentile as such: and of the privileges which have for the time been put into his hands. These were only to be continued to him on condition of his proving faithful. Alas! he has failed, and as the holder of these privileges has forfeited his position even as Israel did. He also will be cut off. Christendom which in the main is composed of Gentile peoples — even such as have nominally adopted the faith of Christ — is under sentence of judgment.

Moreover, if Israel by-and-by turns to God in repentance, God is able to give them their positions again. in mercy. God, Who brought the Gentile into that position for a time, has been keeping the old branches under His eye, and it is certain that His power is sufficient to graff them in again (vv. 23, 24).

And now our apostle winds up this blessed unfolding of God's ways, by stating in the most positive and definite way that God will bring Israel back again to enjoy as the fruit of His mercy the position they once forfeited as the fruit of their unbelief. They are, as a nation, in blindness now, until God has fulfilled His present purpose of taking out from amongst the Gentiles a people for His Name (Acts 15: 14, 19). Then, all Israel shall be saved. Their long-promised Deliverer, Christ, will appear in Zion; and by revealing Himself to them publicly, will turn away ungodliness from the most fickle amongst them. Moreover, He will thus bring about His new-covenant promises, having entirely removed their sins (vv. 25-27).

God has never gone back from His purpose, and He will not fail to carry it out. For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance. Gentiles, who formerly were unbelievers, found mercy when they believed God. Even so, though Israel be now unbelieving — yea, though they be enemies for the gospel's sake — yet does God love them for the father's sakes, to whom He pledged His promises. And they will by-and-by believe God when they see their Deliverer; and shall also obtain mercy. God has proved their unbelief, and shut them up in it, that none should be able to claim blessing on the ground of their merits; and that He might bring it about on the ground of mercy alone (vv. 23-32).

Thus it is that in Rom. 8, the apostle shows that God's purpose with regard to all true Christians will be actually and unfailingly accomplished: and here His purpose with regard to believing Israel will

also be absolutely carried out. God has neither forgotten them, nor repented of His purpose to bless them as a nation. All shall be fulfilled.

Well might the apostle break forth in the way he did at the close of the chapter. Everything that God has ever purposed will be carried out on the ground of mercy. It is His wisdom that has planned it all; it is His power that is carrying it out; it is to His glory that all will redound.

Of Him therefore — as the Originator of blessing: through Him — as the Operator, making all His purposes good: to Him — as the Omega, for Whose glory all will result, are all things.

Thus would we have it also; and our hearts add their deep "Amen!" (vv. 33-36).

SECTION 5. CHAPTER 1.

Romans 12: 1; Romans 13: 14.

In the remaining chapters we are introduced to the course of practical conduct which flows from the position God has given us in His mercy.

As to ourselves, we are in His favour, and our bodies are now at His disposal. Let us see to it that this definite transaction of handing ourselves over to God for the performance of His will has taken place, one for all. The details of that will, so far as they relate to us as saints in this world, follow. In short, they show us how — by the Spirit's power, and in our new character as possessing the Spirit-life (Rom. 8) — we are now found living to God (See Rom. 6: 10, 11); Gal. 2. 19, 20).

As to the place we fill in God's ways on earth, we see that this present world is all wrong, and that it is reserved for a soon-coming day for the world to be put right. Hence we are not to be in touch with this world (or age), but to be transfigured (changed into a complete opposite from all that characterizes the world) by the renewing of our mind. Thus we bring into practical proof what the will of God is (vv. 1, 2).

As Christians, let us see to it that we do not get exaggerated ideas of either ourselves or others. We need to have our inward judgment formed in the presence of God. We then look at every man (not according to his natural qualifications but) as God has dealt to him a measure of faith. Since what we are in His sight we owe to Him, who is there that can boast? But let us lay ourselves out to act upon earth according to the grace given to us individually. The members of the human body whilst occupying different offices, and performing different functions, yet work harmoniously for the good of one another, and of all. So let Christians, who are one body in Christ,* regard each other for mutual help and consideration. Let each act in his own capacity; and according to his own proportion of faith (vv. 3-6).

*This subject of the one body, though hinted at as based upon the teaching of the Roman epistle, and the fact of the Holy Spirit indwelling every believer, is not developed here. Further light is given upon it in Corinthians, Ephesians, and Colossians.

Some are qualified from God to prophesy (see 1 Cor. 14. 3): others to serve; others to teach the saints: a fourth for exhortation; and so on. One may have the power of giving, another that of leading or ruling; a third shows mercy. Each is to act in the capacity according to which he has been qualified (not of man, but) of God. Thus there would be unaffected and unassuming love towards each other. We abhor evil: we cling to what is good (vv. 7-10).

As to our circumstances, we do heartily to the Lord that which our hands find to do. Joy, patience, prayer, liberality, hospitality—these are some of the traits of the Christian (vv. 11-15).

He blesses when persecuted: he does not invoke a curse. He is glad when others have joy according to God; he weeps if others have sorrow. He loves the society of the lowly, and is not proud of his humility. Quietly and honestly he goes through this world, never provoking others unnecessarily; and even when wrongfully treated, he suffers in patience, leaving all in the hands of the Lord, to Whom vengeance belongs. And God will repay those who hate him.

He is so much in the spirit of his Master, that he does all the good he can even to his enemies. Thus he triumphs over evil, with good (vv. 14-21).

He recognizes the authority of those who rule in the world: he subjects himself and does not resist. Even if rulers fail in the exercise of their duties, that is their responsibility, not his. He regards them as deputed of God to punish evil, and to praise good. He therefore pays tribute without murmuring. He stands apart from the lawlessness of the many around him, giving honour, custom, and fear, wherever these are due (Rom. 13: 1-7).

He avoids getting into debt with anybody, except the debt of love which he owes to all fellow-Christians. Thus, though he is not under the law, his practical conduct is such as the law enjoined upon those who were under it. All its precepts are embraced in that one word, love. Love is the outflow of the Divine Nature in the Christian, and it works no ill to its neighbour (vv. 8-10).

All the more should we attend to these practical exhortations, since the time of our stay here is soon to be closed. We await the moment of full salvation — the salvation, that is, of our bodies — it is already much nearer than when we believed. How clear should we stand of all that is of this poor world, its works of darkness, its self-indulgence, its strife. Instead of indulging the flesh, we should wear the character of the Lord Jesus Christ (vv. 11-14).

SECTION 5. CHAPTER 2.

Romans 14: 1; Romans 15: 7.

In matters of conscience amongst our fellow-Christians, we are to have a great regard for a brother even if he be weak in the faith. We should not involve him in discussion. He may feel a compunction about the eating and drinking of certain things, or about the observance of one day above another. Let us remember that he is the Lord's, whether strong or weak, living or dying: and as dear to Him as ourselves. Moreover, he is not to stand at our judgment-seat, but at God's. Each of us shall give account of himself to God, not of his brother. Let us therefore ever keep a good conscience before Him, and allow others to do the same. Thus our good will not be evil spoken of. We should not wittingly offend a weak brother. We are as believers subjects of God; and His kingdom does not consist in matters of eating and drinking; but it is righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. The Christian antedates the day when God's kingdom will be set up publicly under Christ; and thus he is personally a righteous man, a peaceful man, and a happy man, because the Holy Ghost brings him under God's sway even now. If we thus serve Christ in the kindly consideration of our weaker brethren, it is pleasing to God. If on the other hand, we do not consider them, we not only hinder them (v. 15), but also the work of God (v. 20). When in their company we should avoid any offence to their consciences. We must however see to it that we never go against our own consciences in what we allow for ourselves. If doubtful about details, let us wait till we are clear; for anything done with a bad conscience before God

is sin. We should thus be self-condemned, communion would be interrupted (Rom. 14. 1-23).

Forbearance one with another is thus learnt. Let us not please ourselves in this matter, but lay ourselves out for the good of our brethren: even as Christ, our blessed Master did. We are to gather from the Old Testament Scriptures the principles that are to control our conduct: we are to be students of them. It was so with the Lord Jesus, as Man; and if we do so, we shall be like-minded with Him. Thus there will be real fellowship with each other — a mutuality of reception not defined by class distinctions, or limited to those who see eye to eye in all matters — and real glory to God (Rom. 15: 1-7).

SECTION 5. CHAPTER 3.

Romans 15: 8-13.

Moreover, the Lord Jesus will thus have the place in our hearts to which God has appointed Him. He will lead forth our united praises to God, without discord; even though the chorus be from those who were once as widely opposed as Jews and Gentiles. What a triumph of grace! Christ our undivided Object: our hearts knit together in undistracted occupation with Him.

It is thus seen that God's purpose has ever embraced Israel, in the fulfilment of His promises to the fathers, and that He has like, wise ever had mercy for Gentiles in view; a harmony of blessing under Christ (vv. 8, 9).

In v. 9 the apostle points out that testimony was to go out through the Messiah to the Gentile nations, inducing the song of praise in their midst.

In v. 10. The nations were to be associated with Israel in the joy of the coming millennium.

In v. 11. The call was to be general to all the nations; there was to be no limit of national frontiers in the kingdom Gospel.

In v. 12. The coming glorious reign of (Christ was to stretch over all nationalities; He is the Hope of Gentiles as well as of Israelites; under God, He is the only Hope of all.

God Himself fills our hearts with all joy and peace in believing: the Holy Ghost unhindered flooding our souls with heavenly expectation (vv. 8-13) of the coming One, whatever be the difficulties of our present environment.

SECTION 5. CHAPTER 4.

Romans 15: 14; Romans 16: 27.

The apostle thus leads these dear saints at Rome, whom he had not seen, into this lofty position of praise and thanksgiving. He counted upon them, though unknown personally; because God had especially commissioned him to minister Jesus Christ to the Gentiles. Individuals from among the Gentiles (Acts 15: 14) being saved and set apart by the Holy Spirit, were offered up collectively and presented with acceptance to God; a kind of heave-offering to Him.

Of the fact of his mission being God-given there was abundant evidence. He thinks of himself soberly as God has given to him a measure of faith (ch. 12: 3). But what a measure his was! (vv. 14-

17).

Mighty blessing followed his preaching: mighty miracles accompanied it: mighty energy had marked his movements. Immense tracts of country had he journeyed over under his glorious commission: and on new ground most of the time. His aim had been to cover spaces where Christ's Name was unknown. That vast stretch of country was now evangelized: he had no more space in those parts!!

He had much desire to visit Rome, and thought of going on later to Spain, but just at the moment was on his way to Jerusalem with a contribution for the poor and tried saints there (vv. 18-26). When that service was fulfilled it was in his mind to go further afield, even to Spain; and he would take Rome on the way.

A principle is indicated which is of importance. If the Gentiles get blessing in spiritual things, they ought to regard it as their duty to minister of their temporal things. There is a sort of obligation in this matter. Mildly does the apostle suggest to those saints at Rome, that they might send along a little help to their Jewish fellow-Christians (v. 27) in their present need.

In view therefore of his forward movement, he prayed beforehand that the saints would cry to God for blessing on his mission. Great servant as he was, he was not independent of, nor too proud to ask for, the prayers of the saints (vv. 28-33). He wrote a letter of commendation for Sister Phoebe that they might receive her in a saintly way, and further her business as much as possible; and commends also many of those at Rome, whom he had met in his journeyings (Rom. 16: 1-16).

He further warns them against any who sought to make parties amongst them: such were to be avoided, however good words and fair speeches they might make. His earnest desire was that they should be deeply versed in what is good in God's sight, but content to know little about evil. The moment of the saints' triumph over the last vestige of Satan's power, was near (vv. 17-24).

The gospel which he had thus set forth in this wonderful epistle, was according to the revelation of the mystery which previously was hidden up in God's mind, but was now made known amongst all nations for the obedience of faith, under the commandment of God (vv. 25, 26). The apostle would give us to understand that it is when we have become established in the meaning of the gospel, it prepares us for the apprehension of the deeper mysteries of God's purpose as unfolded in other epistles.

To God only wise, be glory through Jesus Christ for ever. Amen.