

In the Spirit and the Spirit in you

Rom. 8: 1-27.

Lecture 7 of 'The New Testament Doctrine of the Holy Spirit.'

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There are two main parts of the subject tonight which it is of great consequence for the children of God to distinguish, in order that either one or other should be rightly understood. One is to be in the Spirit. It is a condition that supposes a total change of being; it means, in contrast with nature or the flesh, a new state which souls enter now on the earth. Besides, there is the actual personal dwelling of the Holy Ghost in the believer. This chapter most clearly insists on both truths; and I shall endeavour a little to explain their difference, as well as the conclusion from them both for the blessing of the Christian to God's own glory (and, of course, therefore by Christ Jesus), to which all tend.

In order, however, rightly to enter into the first of these two truths, we must look a little at the general features of the epistle to the Romans.

And, first of all, I would remark that the true key-note of the epistle is righteousness, chiefly and foremost the righteousness of God (*i.e.* His habit or quality revealed in the gospel and founded on redemption, in which God can be perfectly consistent with Himself in justifying the guilty who believe in Christ). Such divine righteousness, when we enquire how it is that God can thus justify us, is by Christ Jesus the Lord. It is in virtue of His blood, of His death; but not that only. It is there indeed most believers are apt to stop. We may bless God that any sinners go so far. We may grieve for our brethren's sake that they go not farther; and this not merely for them, for their own lost enjoyment, more particularly in the matter of liberty, but because every defrauding of the soul of its proper blessing and full liberty before God is just so much detracted from the glory of Christ, and entails proportionate weakness in the service of Christ as well as in worship. We need not envy those who think this a light matter; nor should we in any way sympathize with those who count it the only desirable thing that a soul should just be saved from the wrath to come. It would be true if man's salvation were God's end; but God never proposes less than His own glory; and he who makes salvation the great question proves that he is more careful about himself or his fellows than exercised in what the Holy Spirit reveals about God and His Son. And, in point of fact, there is always a just retribution; for there never was one since the world began that had power of enjoyment in the soul, or had pleasure in glorifying God, or was an overcomer of the world, or was simply and thoroughly a worshipper in the energy of the Holy Ghost, who stopped short where man is apt to stay, and where human theology habitually terminates. For theology consists of so many conclusions, is a system of inferences, and never faith. It draws deductions from certain principles that may be found in the word of God, and many of them true enough, no doubt; but the very thing that makes it to be theology hinders power, forfeits liberty, opposes the glory of God and gives an undue place to man by making him the arranger of doctrine and head of a school. The consequence is, that the children of God are stunted in their growth, and the Holy Ghost is grieved at so much dishonour that is necessarily done to Himself, the only one that is entitled to guide fully and capable of blessing all that belong to Christ, to the glory of God the Father.

Let me call attention first to the obvious facts of the case that meet one in looking at the epistle to the Romans. There is not a word said about the love of God, nor a word more about victory for the

believer, until the whole question of righteousness is settled. This might not at first sight seem the readiest way to give the heart ease, and peace, and liberty; but it is God's way notwithstanding. First and foremost we have that word, always so unbending and withering to man, the "righteousness of God." And why so? His righteousness keeps before man divine authority, will not let him forget His solemn title to judge; for there was no question of righteousness until sin came into the world. What was there for Him to judge till man had ruined himself, and creation dependent on him as its head? All previously was very good. Thus judgment was not the natural or normal relationship, so to speak, between God and man when man was innocent, and God was simply a blesser of man in every kind of created goodness. There man enjoyed, and the thanks of a creature altogether without sin rose up to God. But the scene was soon changed and spoiled; and the conscience which man acquired in the knowledge of good and evil, the knowledge of good that was lost, and of evil that was the bitter gain of sin which had overcome him, led man first to hide his own conscious nakedness, and then at the very sound of the presence of God to retreat from Him. The conscience of man, alas! banished him morally before ever the voice of God sentenced him judicially. Man felt he had no longer place in the presence of God. The fatal consequence was manifest from that day, though brought out gradually, as God was pleased, with increase of light. Sin necessitated judgment.

Thus, evidently, if man was to be saved, he must be called, and this, moreover, to glory and virtue, as it is said in 2 Peter 1 This is the character of God's call. It is to what man had not. It was not simply a sustaining and using aright of what he had. He had lost his original tenure; yea, he had lost not only what was put under him in untainted excellence, but the One who was above him — God Himself (his own conscience bearing its sad and true witness). Accordingly God calls in His grace; but He calls him by glory; He calls to things unseen, and outside what was seen, at the same time acting by moral motives as a restraint upon the evil that had now entered and gained dominion over man's heart. This, of course, is all brought out with incomparably more force and fitness in Christianity; but still we find the principle of it true from the moment that man fell. In due time, however, God gave promises, and these, it is needless to say, powerfully acted upon those who had faith. In due time also the law was given by Moses, and by that no small knowledge of sin where the conscience was exercised; for it raised the question of man's state — a thing that the promises did not touch. The promises simply held out a good that God would surely give in His own time. Their characteristic point was, that they did not depend on man's state, but on God's gracious will and word.

Evidently, however, it would not be good for man, being a sinner, not to feel his real state. Accordingly, after the promises, but before their accomplishment, the law came in, acted as a probe, and brought out most plainly that man was altogether evil and guilty, and, finally, that he had neither the will nor the power to amend, however much he knew the evil of his ways.

Last of all came Christ, who submitted to the law, and might have taken up the promises; for, indeed, He was the heir, as well as the faithful witness, the only One who ever made the law lovely as a moral instrument, and responded perfectly to that expression of God's claim on man. He alone vindicated God, who had given the law, in all His ways here below; but had he, therefore, taken up the promises, and in connection with the law, it is very evident that not one could have shared the inheritance along with Himself.

A new thing, therefore, appears in the cross of the Lord Jesus. He who had fulfilled the law, He who was the heir of the promises, takes the curse instead of the crown — takes the judgment of God instead of the kingdom of God. Then was done that most wondrous of all deeds — the outpouring of all that God felt and could express against sin on the person of Him who knew no sin; all that God could do in holy indignation against evil on the One that had done no evil, neither was guile found in

His mouth. He who was His own Son, the object of His perfect delight and absolute eternal favour, — He was given up to unsparing judgment, God Himself dealing with Him as He never did with another, and never can with another again. The very glory of the person of the only-begotten Son, which gave Him power of endurance, made God's wrath so much the more intolerable to be borne. The fact that He was God, and in the relation of Son to the Father — that, therefore, He both had the nature of God, and knew the love of the Father as none ever had or knew — added ineffable poignancy to the sufferings of the Saviour in that awful hour. But "it is finished;" and thenceforward God's righteousness begins to be (not promised merely, but) revealed. The subject may not be wholly traced out in the epistle to the Romans; but, at the least, a very important part is given there, especially that which is in view of man's wants. In 2 Corinthians the Spirit looks at another part of God's righteousness, which we are made in Christ. But the great point here is, that Jesus is glorified above in the glory of God. Not that this is absolutely omitted in Romans; for, as we all know, it is just alluded to very briefly in Rom. 8, inasmuch as the design of the epistle calls for fundamental truth, rather than the heavenly height to which divine righteousness entitles. This would have interfered with the then current of the Spirit, which was to bring out life in Him risen from the dead, rather than to reveal the place of glory to which Christ is gone on high. But, beyond doubt, the most indispensable requisite for the display and foundation of God's righteousness (as Scripture shows it, if looked at as a whole) is, that God should enter the scene of death, where Jesus lay the sacrifice for sin, having become responsible in perfect grace for us. Thereon He raises Christ up from the dead, and, finally, sets Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places.

All this clearly was God's righteousness because of the cross. It was what God owed to Jesus; it was a debt which He could not but pay, both as God and as Father; and this because Jesus was the man who had glorified Him to the uttermost, so as He never had been glorified before, yea, even about that very thing — sin — which was of all things the most hateful to God. He kept back nothing; He endured all things; He held not fast the show of His glory, but put it in abeyance. He committed even His very life into the hands of God. He put Himself thoroughly, so to speak, into the hands of God, enduring everything that was due to God for sin. The consequence is, that God, both as God and as the Father, raised up Him that was the Son but a man, by His own glory (as we are told in Romans 6). But even this would not have been a sufficient estimate of what Christ had done and suffered in God's eyes the cross deserved incomparably more. Undoubtedly He died there, bearing our sins in His own body. By the grace of God, He tasted death for every man. This annulled Satan's power, blotted out sin, brought infinite glory to God, who was indebted thereby to man, the Son of man. Hence, as it is said in John 13, "if God be glorified in him, God shall glorify him in himself, and will straightway glorify him." Therefore, instead of waiting for the administration of the fulness of times, instead of giving Him the whole earth and all the nations on it, God glorifies Christ in Himself at once and on high. There is no delay nor change as to any single thing of the earth. It was a question of God's righteousness, of His moral and heavenly glory; it was absolutely independent of all else. Neither the race nor the world have any part in procuring it. God takes Christ up, and puts Him on His own throne in the heavens. Who but God ever thought of such a plan? There were, no doubt, inspired words in the Psalms and elsewhere, which, when God had thus done, derived a meaning from it, and showed the divine intention from of old; but still glorifying the Son of man in Himself is a form of expressing the glory that He put upon Jesus, for which you might search in vain the word of God, till He Himself declared it just before He went away.

Nor was this portion, glorious as it is, enough for God. It was personal to Christ, and above all precious. Still, His work bore on others, and the epistle to the Romans takes up this side of God's righteousness (namely, the effect of His righteousness as regards believers rather than as regards the

Son). He suffered on the cross, and He was exalted in heavenly glory; but what about the sinners He died for? Would God leave them in their sins? How would this be treating Jesus? What would be a due estimate of the work the Son of man had done for the lost He came to seek and save? Had He failed or conquered in that mighty enterprise? He suffered and died for them and their sins: what is the result? This is answered in the epistle to the Romans, where we have the working out of this truth for sinful man: "The righteousness of God toward (or unto) all, and upon them all that believe."

From Romans 3, whence these words are taken, we learn that His righteousness meets sins completely. It is the "satisfaction," as the old divines were wont to speak, that was rendered about sin. Not that I quite like the phrase or idea; but what we have there is clearly expiation or propitiation for the sins of men. Romans 3 proves that Christ's death or blood in no sense stops with meeting the measure of man's wants. All now is according to the glory of God. Men "come short of the glory of God;" but if God brought in His salvation, it must be to make man capable of standing in His own presence on high, and not merely where he was before. This would be short of God's aims. Reinstating is not salvation. If salvation be wrought, it must be not merely to put man back into the state wherein he was before the fall, but to make him competent to stand in presence of the glory of God.

Accordingly, this is shown in Romans 4, 5 in a more advanced way; and by what means? The precious blood of the Lord Jesus Christ is not all; but He was "delivered," as it is said, "for our offences, and was raised again for our justification." Mark the connection: "He was *raised* again for our justification." Some take it as because we were justified, which appears to my mind far from sound doctrine. The effect of such a version or sense would be to make our justification, like Christ's blood-shedding, a past thing, and independent of faith. It is never so treated in the word of God; and, indeed, the next words, which open Romans 5, refute the thought. "Therefore," says the apostle, "being justified by faith, we have peace with God," etc. There could be no such "therefore," if we had been justified when Christ rose. The work of redemption was, no doubt, wrought when God raised Him; and Christ passed into that glorious condition of resurrection, showing the character of the justification which would be given to him who believes in Him. But the words immediately after prove that justification, in the very place where men would separate it from faith, is indissolubly bound up with it. "Therefore, being justified *by faith*, we have peace with God."

There it is, be it remarked, that we have, for the first time in the epistle, the revelation of peace with God, and entrance into this grace wherein we stand, and exultation in the hope of God's glory. In Romans we are never (as in Ephesians 2) regarded as even now, in a certain sense, linked with the glory; but we are enabled here below to abound in hope of the glory to which we are looking onward. Also, in the midst of the tribulations which also turn to a matter of boast, we are said to have the love of God shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given to us. Thus, again, the first mention of God's love is after the righteousness of God had been as fully explained as this epistle called for.

That which I draw from this is, that God would give a deep, solemn sense of sin to those in whom He was working graciously. More than that, He would show them that after all He takes care of His own glory. I do not say that this would be the way to deal with a poor anxious soul; but, in point of fact, the Epistle to the Romans was not written to the anxious and troubled in conscience. Here it is not a question of winning unconverted people to God. In that case, nothing is more important than showing love, just as Jesus first does; and as He wins the attention, He then awakens the conscience before setting it perfectly at liberty, as we know, by the Holy Ghost, now that the work is done. But in dealing with believers, and more particularly where souls have entered into the blessedness of the gospel without any very deep work on the conscience, it is of all importance that the righteous side of

God's salvation should be maintained with all possible clearness, and that it should be distinctly understood that the gospel is "the power of God unto salvation," because it is God's righteousness. Such is the argument: of the apostle in opening the discussion in Romans 1.

When we search into this a little farther, we find another question rise before us. In all this development of the first four chapters, and, indeed, as far as the middle of Romans 5, the great point before the mind is, sinners guilty, and God in His own way meeting them as they were — in their sins. But then there is another thing that far more troubles the soul that has been awakened and brought into peace, and that is, not his *sins*, but his *sin*, not what he has done and been guilty of, but his estate before God. For the most lamentable thing that he finds about himself is, that, after conversion and finding peace, he makes discoveries of his wretchedness and the inward evil of his nature which he could not have believed possible in a child of God — which no man ever anticipates until he proves it in his own person. The word of God may speak about it, but he passes it by and does not dwell on it; and, in point of fact, nobody does understand it until it becomes a matter of personal experience when the heart is really brought to God.

There is precisely where the Christianity of the day, and, indeed, of many a past day for a long time, stops short of the revealed truth of God. It leaves persons, I may say, half-saved. It leaves persons with partial thoughts of Christ before their soul, but never with the proper, simple, clear understanding and consciousness that they are in Christ. I do not mean that the expression "in Christ" is not used, but that people, when they read such language as, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus," for the most part understand nothing more than that Christ died and rose again for them, and that consequently they are cleared in the sight of God. But this is not the full meaning of the text. The difference is that, from the middle of chapter 5 of the epistle to the Romans, a new question is raised by the Holy Spirit of God — man guilty, and the way in which guilt can be met and the soul can have peace about it. All this has been closed; and this is the proper doctrine of the epistle to the Romans. What follows directly after is rather a supplement to all, from chapter 5 down to chapter 8. It is an added instruction of the Holy Ghost of the deepest possible moment for the soul that has already found Christ. The point that is handled here is, that not merely there is a Saviour, who died for my sins, and rose again for my justification, but my old nature has been judged and condemned in Christ's death. "As by one man sin entered into the world," so it is not a question of what I *did*. Wherever *sins* are treated of, we get personal guilt; and it is to this that law applies, and to this that the judgment of God applies for things done in the body.

But grace gives us another thing besides. If all my sins were blotted out and forgiven, I am in a state of things that is a misery to myself and a deep dishonour to God. How has this come to pass? It came in through one man — Adam; and as one man is the head of the evil, blessed be God, there is another man who as certainly has brought righteousness to issue — yea, grace reigning through righteousness unto eternal life — as the first man brought in sin and death. This is deliverance. It is not sinners with the law, but Adam at one extremity and Christ at the other. But how does this affect you or me? No Jew could deny the effects for the race of Adam's position. He might boast about the law, but there was a world ruined before ever the law came in; and the law, instead of repairing the ruin, rather and only fastened additional fetters on man, and gave more complete proof of the extent of the ruin. It could do no more. But now another man came, even Jesus. And how is Jesus spoken of here? As One who passed through death into resurrection-life. The consequence is, that from the middle of Romans 5 the Holy Ghost begins to discuss a new question altogether — not justification by blood, but justification of life.

And herein lies the great deficiency of theologians. There is no understanding, as far as I am

aware, of "justification of life." Manifestly this is not a question of what the Lord did. It is an estate or condition founded on redemption and displayed in His resurrection. Works, however good, do not meet the exigency. Christ did magnify God, as we have said, in everything; and this was absolutely necessary for God's glory, as it is a part of our deep blessing, because we have indeed an entire Christ. Still, what Scripture brings out to meet the question of our state of sin as men is not what Jesus was when here below, but what He rose up into. Therefore, just as Adam only became head of a family when a sinner (i.e. when he had accomplished, as one may say, the work of sin), so the Lord Jesus only becomes Head, the recognized and revealed Head, "a quickening Spirit," when He enters into resurrection. Only when He laid down His life in death, He had finished the work that God gave Him to do. Then it was that the corn of wheat, which fell into the ground and died, now risen, would bring forth much fruit.

This principle is applied in Romans 6 to the sin by which the believer was troubled. The main point of the chapter is not that we are risen, but alive, in Christ risen, to God. The argument of the apostle does not go so far here as to regard the believer as risen with Christ, which is not the doctrine of Romans. In Colossians he is viewed as so risen, in Ephesians he is even seated in heavenly places in Christ; but in Romans the believer is never regarded as risen; he is simply dead to sin and alive unto God. What is here insisted on in regard to holiness of walk is that he should reckon himself "dead unto sin, but alive unto God." But I cannot reckon myself dead if I am risen. This is evident. It would be a contradiction in terms; so that the necessity of the argument and the whole force of the epistle excludes this mistake; and a very important point indeed it is and will be found in Scripture. But this does give the believer a very wondrous deliverance practically; and I am entitled to it from the first moment of my Christian career, when I own the Lord Jesus Christ and am baptized unto His name.

What am I baptized unto? Unto His life — unto what He did? Not at all. I am baptized unto His death. I begin at once with the great and infinite act of divine grace in which He met me, and not merely my sins (for there I find His precious blood); but He does not say unto His blood, but unto His death, which is a larger expression and goes more deeply. This meets my condition as a sinner — as a man alive to sin; and I want to find death to it all; I want to find deliverance out of it; and the only possible deliverance out of a state of sin is death. This is exactly what is wanted. It is not only that I am forgiven: this is all very blessed and most necessary as a beginning; but it is not what is called *salvation*, even if I look at the term as a purely personal matter. There is more than this; for I want the application of His death and His life beyond it, as well as of His precious blood; and this is what I have in Christ.

The glorious fact is, that I am entitled to account Christ's death as meeting my state with every root of evil; so that I have the comfort of knowing not only that by His blood I am forgiven, but that by Him risen I am called and warranted to count myself dead to all indwelling sin, which otherwise would be an intolerable burden. Thus a double blessing is procured in the dead and risen Lord Jesus. There is remission of sins, but also plenary deliverance. Only he that has died is cleared from sin. The blood of Christ meets the sins; but I wept the death of Christ in all its value for sin. This alone, therefore, supplies the answer to our wants; for He that was dead in atonement is risen into a new estate altogether, where no question of sin, or of anything requiring to be done or suffered on Clod's part, ever appears again. The entire blessedness of Christ is for the believer, and, mark, from his baptism. Is it a something that a man grows up into which gives a certain kind of value to experience? This would be all sadly liable to turn to self-applause, and, from the subtlety of the natural heart, would be the means of taking away from Christ on the plea of honouring the work of the Spirit of God within. Alas! this is precisely where (in spite of God's care in Scripture, as in the facts of Christianity)

so many Christians slip aside; and would you know why? For this simple reason: the world, the law, and the flesh go together. If I am simply a man living in the world, I need a law to keep me in order, a rule to deal with my nature — to reprove me here, and to strike me there.

Accordingly, when God concerned Himself actually with His people Israel, a nation living in the world, He gave them His law, which acted as a curb or restraint, a kind of bit and bridle on their rebellious flesh. It had to be checked on the one hand, it had to be pushed on the other, so to speak. Thus it was that the law dealt with man's flesh; and this is what the law would essay for Christians. But to go back to it now is just the denial of Christianity. I have not the slightest hesitation in pronouncing, that some good men who in grievous error would impose the law as a rule of life for the Christian mean very well by it (for they aim at being pious); but I am well satisfied that the whole principle is false, and that the law, instead of being a rule of life, is necessarily a rule of death to one who has sin in his nature. Far from being a delivering power, it can only condemn such; far from being a means of holiness, it is, in fact, and according to the apostle, the strength of sin.

What I want first of all is deliverance. How is this deliverance to be found? By death. Our death? Am I to die? This would be destruction, not salvation; and we find it not thus in Scripture. Resting on His death, I can die daily; I can submit to the scorn of the world according to the measure of my faith, and expose myself to that which I know will bring separation and suffering from the world; and it is the glory of a Christian to go forward humbly but boldly withal, and at the same time entirely separate from the world, by a path which is strewn with all bitterness of trial. But what is it I must start with? It would become a matter of boasting, and reflect a certain degree of credit on myself, if I had to die to my evil nature gradually. But it is not so; and hence the importance of the truth set forth in Christian baptism. A man at the beginning of his profession of Christ confesses His death and resurrection. I am not going to discuss now any points that are disputed, but assume it to be an initiatory institution. Differences on the subject there are, no doubt, as all allow; but all should hold its initiatory character, as well as the truth which it sets forth objectively. What does it signify? That the Saviour confessed is not a living One, but dead and risen. "As many as are baptized unto Jesus Christ are baptized unto *his death*." This is more than the sprinkling of His blood to me, true and precious as such a privilege undoubtedly is.

Besides blood there is His death, which deals with my nature, and sets me free before God in Christ risen. The more simply I take it the better. There is nothing like simplicity in the things of God; and there is no faith so true as that which takes His word on His own authority though we may as yet understand little. If God tells me, a Christian, that I am dead, am I to believe it or not? If, then, it is certainly true that I am dead, am I not to believe also the inferences which His word draws for me — that my judgment has fallen on Christ, and that He, risen, is the power and sample of my deliverance, and that as, for man and the world, they have no claim on me, who now belong to Another, even to Him who is raised from the dead? What claim can there be longer on a man that is dead? Everybody knows that such an one is to be buried out of men's sight. The law passes completely out of application to the dead. Not that the law ceases to retain its force; but it is for those alive under it. The law is all-important in its proper sphere; but its power and sphere consist in dealing with men alive in the world. Out of this I have emerged by Christ's death and resurrection; so that I am no longer living in the world as to my proper Christian life. To flesh and world I have died; and this is what, in my baptism and profession of the Lord Jesus, I began with. I was living as a natural man, but a dead and risen Christ has closed all this for me. It is not only that I believe in Christ, and know forgiveness by His precious blood; but I am entitled by God's word also to know and say that I am dead in the death of Christ. One is as much a truth as the other. But the feeblest saint, practically mixed up with the

world, feels the need of knowing that which stays divine judgment, and hence clasps that comfort to the heart in the hour of trial and sorrow. Why do they not equally accept the other truth? Because they do not like to face the full grace of God, nor the full responsibility of the Christian.

The blood of the paschal lamb sprinkling the door-posts was known even in the land of bondage; but the Red Sea separated from it manifestly, that the people, now redeemed and outside, might be only for the Lord. Then it becomes imperative that the Christian's walk be in the pure light of the grace of God. "We are not under the law," as Romans 6 insists, "but under grace." And this is a humble as well as holy walk, where flesh counts for nothing; and there is not a word about the law, save indeed expressly exempting the believer completely from its jurisdiction. It is not made for a righteous man, which of course a believer is. It has its force against the unrighteous; its application is to the wicked living in the world. Against the evil of man, as such, the law bears its witness not in vain. They are living in the pride of the world, in the profanity or the self-righteousness of the flesh; and the law deals with such. That is, whether men give loose reins to low flesh, or religious pretensions to high flesh, the law deals with them all. But as for the Christian, he begins with death to his nature — as alive in the world. I press again that this is the precise meaning (not of John's, but) of Christian baptism unto death. The Christian finds his blessing in that which the natural heart finds so dreadful — in death; but it is in the death of Christ he is a dead man before God, as he was dead in sins. Such is the first Adam condition out of which the believer emerges by the faith of Christ, by whose death he too has died to all he previously lived in, and now enjoys as part of God's grace toward him, to reckon himself "dead to sin, but alive to God through Jesus Christ our Lord."

Such is one of the privileges, with a grave responsibility attached to it, to which the Holy Ghost applies the death and resurrection of Christ. It is no longer a question, it will be observed, of our sins, or of God's washing us from them in His grace by the blood of Christ. Sin, as such, the fleshly nature, is met in Christ's death, who, risen, communicates a new life, a spiritual nature, in the power of His resurrection. That man is my Saviour, and that new nature is exactly what I have got as part of the new creation; for "if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature. Old things have passed away, and behold all things have become new." The second epistle to the Corinthians may carry the doctrine farther, as remarked before, because it treats of the glory of Christ, and not merely the application of God's righteousness, as a basis of salvation, which is the point of the epistle to the Romans.

Next we come, in Romans 7, to the question of the law; and though this be not the time to discuss that subject fully, I may just observe that we have here also alike thorough and divine clearance from this difficulty that we had in chapter 6 from sin. "Wherefore," he says, "my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ." And how is this? The body of Christ is very expressive; for nobody in his senses would use such a phrase as this to describe Christ's life here below. Apply it to His death, and all is quite simple and consistent. "Ye are become dead to the law by the body of Christ, that ye should be married to another." And in what condition? Even to Him who shed His blood for you? Not so; but "even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God. For when we were in the flesh;" — then we are there no longer. This is the point needed. But it will be found that, when those who insist on the law as the rule of life for the Christian refer to this expression of the apostle, they put quite a mistaken meaning on not being in the flesh, and only mean by it our old unconverted state. But it goes farther. What experience does the Holy Ghost bring before us in the end of this chapter? It is a man wretched, but evidently converted. He has been given to turn to God. He abhors sin, yet he is always falling into it; he loves holiness, but ever comes short of it: in fact, he is every way miserable. He feels rightly as to all this, but no effort to do good or shun evil avails. The evil is present, and the good seems to elude his grasp: such is the experience of

his heart. I am not speaking of his outward life, because this is not the question here, but a deeper thing. There may be no fall into open sin, but sin sadly works within.

That which the apostle here transfers to himself in application is the bitterness of a soul who thought he had nothing but blessing, yet after all never realized himself to be so unhappy in his life. In his unregenerate days he might have tasted the unsatisfying pleasures of the world. Now he had turned his back on the world and his face to God, yet never was there (he felt) so disconsolate a being. The misery increases till he bursts out into "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me?" when the darkness yields to a better and calmer light than ever. Thus it is the case of one who had seen Christ as the hope of his soul, who had been born of God, yet, nevertheless, had no sense of deliverance. God lets him feel his own inward evil till he looks quite out of himself to Christ as his Deliverer, not alone from guilt or wrath, but "from this body of death." It is not sins, it is sin, which harasses him so much the more because his conscience is awakened. Being alive to what is due without adequately knowing grace or redemption, God or his own heart, he suffers severely till he knows the reality, nature, and extent of liberty in Christ. Accordingly, this is the very question the Holy Ghost sets Himself to answer in the Scripture I have just now read. And what is its purport?

The first answer is, that God has already in His love brought in a full deliverance for my soul; by-and-by He will bring in an equally complete deliverance for my mortal body. Thus a real present deliverance of grace comes first, and this becomes the pledge of all that follows in glory. What is the nature, then, of the soul's deliverance now? If I use the word "partial" about what God gives now, it is only because there is the body as well as the soul. As far as the soul is concerned, the emancipation is perfect; but it is perfect only for the inner man, if I may so say, not yet for the outer.

Accordingly, the apostle brings this before us in the earlier verses of Rom. 8. "There is therefore now no condemnation," because he looks to, rests, and is in, Christ alone. This is, in part, the answer to the soul's confession of misery and cry for a Deliverer. Awakened to feel that it is not merely pardon he wants, but deliverance from self, he finds that deliverance is in Another. He had thought that, having found pardon in Christ, he must deliver himself by the inward working of the Spirit of God; but he learned, when most wanting Him, that the Spirit of God did not help him; he found, somehow or another, that the Spirit of God was making him miserable with himself. The reason is manifest: because he had put himself under law in the spirit of his mind, and the Holy Spirit (just because He is the Spirit of God come down to glorify Christ) will never give power, but rather make a man prove his weakness, as long as he is trying to put law in the place of Christ. This is in no wise what the Holy Ghost has come down to do. He came to earth from heaven to glorify the Lord, and not the law.

The lack of deliverance was learnt in groans; thence he is driven to turn to the Deliverer; whereon, in spite of the old nature being still as bad as ever, having thanked God, he concludes, "there is therefore now no condemnation" — not for those for whom Christ died, but — "to them that are in Christ Jesus." We are now by grace set in Another, even Christ risen, in order to give us our status before God. Nothing can be more blessed.

Some may be helped to an understanding of it in part, even from a human illustration. Take the case of a man who is worthy, whose honourable feelings and whose resources (I speak after the manner of men,) are as great as his worthiness, and he makes a choice. Being a wise and worthy man, he selects wisely and worthily, and he is pleased to choose where others had not the heart to choose. He does choose where nobody else could afford to do so; but having chosen, what then? The person he has chosen, and who is married to him, was once wretched and low, but she acquires the status proper to her husband, and all the old antecedents, perplexities, and griefs completely disappear. Among men

the wife gets the name of her husband: her own name is gone for ever, and a new one taken. We find it is thus with those who are in Christ Jesus. What is their place? Where He is. Jesus walking on earth — is this my status? As the heavenly and divine pattern, He may be followed, but He "abideth alone:" if that had been all, I had been left out for ever. But Christ died, yea, rather, is risen again. Then He can give me of His Spirit. This is what Christ does. His death has met the evil doubly. The sins are gone, but the nature is also judged righteously. Therefore God can reveal the new nature He has given, and vouchsafe another position altogether. Christ risen is the sole Head of God's family. I do not speak of His body but of the family; for the epistle to the Romans, except in the figure used so practically in Romans 12, does not go beyond that. But here I have the family of God, and the condition, place, or standing of that family before Him, resulting from the death and resurrection of Christ. "Behold I and the children that God hath given me." Grace imparts Christ's own status to the whole family. And what is the result for them? "No condemnation." Christ had suffered for the Christian; and, now that He is risen, the Christian is, as it were, part of the righteousness of God, as is indeed yet more strongly said in 2 Cor. 5. How could God demand justly a debt to be paid twice? And now Christ has entered into this place where He could have others identified with His own blessedness before God. This, and nothing less, is its character — "no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus."

And next the reason is given; for, says the apostle, "the law of the Spirit of life," etc. Mark well that it is not simply because His blood was shed. This alone would not suffice. However efficacious for the consequences of the old estate, it would not give us the new standing before God. Without His precious blood I could not be brought into this new condition; but I want not only the blood that cleanses from the sins of my past life, but also complete clearance out of the old condition, and a holy, happy, settled place in the new creation. And what can do this? Himself dead and risen. Just as He is the One that perfectly meets the sins, and, more than this, that was judged for the sin; so He is the blessed ensample and power of the new estate in resurrection. He is the head and source of all the blessing. Accordingly, then, the apostle speaks of a "law of the Spirit of life." Hence it was that, when Christ rose from the dead, having purchased with His blood the best and most intimate blessings, He breathed on the disciples; His own blessed person vouchsafed the sign of it. Judgment had fallen on Christ for us; sin was put away, death vanquished. None of these has anything to do with the new life in Christ. Not but that a believer may slip into sin, as he may also die; but he neither sins nor dies from having the new life, but rather he sins because he has indulged the old nature, and he dies because it pleases God that Jesus should not come yet, and accordingly He calls him to be with Himself above meanwhile. But the life that he gets from Jesus neither sins nor dies. It is a holy life. And therefore, in virtue of its source and character, it may be said, that "he who is born of God doth not commit* sin." So the Christian does not die, as far as the new nature is concerned, even having eternal life in Christ.

* It means really practise sin; which the Christian does not.

But observe, all this deliverance is merely for the inner man; there still remains the need of the outer. Although reconciliation is complete as regards the soul, it is but partial as regards the rest of nature, and God will never be content with what is short of His own counsels. He means to deliver wholly, and He will deliver worthily of Himself, of the Holy Ghost, of Christ, and of His redemption.

Further, the apostle proceeds to give the reason why the law of the Spirit of life in Christ has made the Christian free from the law of sin and death. For he says, "What the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh," God has done. Observe how the law and flesh go naturally together. "What it could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh." He does not, of course, say, in sinful flesh; for this it was not, yet certainly in the likeness of it. That is, it was not at all in the circumstances of one who refused a place in a sin-stained

world, but of one who was made flesh, born of a woman — no doubt, supernaturally born so — who should only be in the likeness of sinful flesh, but most truly born, or He else could not have the nature of man. But He who was the Son of God nevertheless becomes as truly man as He was God from everlasting, and dies in the nature which He had assumed — dies for man, dies vindicating God for man's sins; and more than that, not merely for his sins, but for his sin.

I call your attention to it; for this is what was needed, and this is what is asserted here. God sent His own Son in the likeness of flesh, of sin, and for sin. It is not merely that there was an accumulation of sins, but it is the nature which is in question here. I have as I need forgiveness for my sins; but do you suppose I want God to forgive my bad nature? Why I do not forgive it myself. No; I want that nature to be condemned, and myself to be delivered. And this is exactly the character of the new estate which Jesus brings us into, and puts us in before God. It is perfect liberty, as far as regards the soul; not merely deliverance from what I have done, but from what I am. So that I am no longer as a Christian man having to do with the responsibility that attaches to mortal men, but am passed now into a new state, even while I am in the world. Before quitting things here below, I have acquired by grace a new relationship before God. And He that declares and brings out and illustrates this relationship is Jesus in His presence. Such is the believer's place through His redemption, and it belongs to every Christian.

The grave question is, Are we in it in faith consciously? Who can doubt, from Scripture, that God really designs it for His own now? But faith was to enter in, and to make it good, looking at Christ. It is mere self-deception, and serious misunderstanding of the word of God, to suppose that a man can be at the same time in the struggle of good and evil described in the latter part of Rom. 7, and all the while enjoying the liberty of Rom. 8. Together they are quite inconsistent. Can a man be in bonds and free at the same time? They are equally a contradiction in terms: only man sees the absurdity of it in nature easier than in grace. No man can be at the same time wretched and happy. With one breath he cannot say, "Wretched man," and "I thank God;" but he can well say, "I thank God" *after* he knew what it is to be a "wretched man." But it is the fruit of a false system, itself the fruit of unbelief, to assert that one can be made free from the law of sin and death *while* one is "carnal, sold under sin." The law of the Spirit does not reign *along with* the law that, when one would do good, evil is present. One may know heaviness through manifold temptations with joy in the Holy Ghost; one may be at peace with God, yet suffering deep grief on account of what the world is, and what the people of God are. This gracious sorrow burdened our blessed Lord here below, and drew out His groans; and we may and ought to know the fellowship of His sufferings. All this I quite admit; but those were not the groans of one who lacked the peace of God. Unbroken communion is precisely what the Lord Jesus, in the days of His flesh, always possessed; as He said, "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give unto you." Now we dwell in that peace made by His blood, as it is brought out to us in the power of His resurrection. But then it is when we have left behind the exercises under law of Rom. 7. What I complain of is, that quickened souls, who really look to Christ, take up the law, and erroneously think it a duty to toil like a galley-slave at that oar of bitter bondage, when God calls them into the liberty of Christ. They have not died to law in their own souls. The death of Christ brings completely outside that condition; just as really as a man in prison for debt remains no longer under the power of the law when he dies. No doubt, as long as the man lives, the law applies to him; but death makes it impossible for the law to hold him fast; he is irrevocably gone beyond its reach. It is exactly so in the case of the Christian.

Some speak as if it were all mysticism. No doubt, it is a figure of speech; but it is a most expressive statement of a blessed reality. Those who do not believe so in simplicity pay the penalty of

their unbelief in the uncertainty and powerlessness which attend it. Whenever there is an exercised conscience in one who thus puts himself under the law as a rule of life, then he proves of necessity the bondage of the law, which is the strength of sin, not of holiness; and ends in defeat, not in victory. It is never thus that one finds strength; for this is the fruit of grace, and not of the law. Hence, when a soul is thus under law, the more the Spirit of God deals with his conscience, the more miserable he finds himself; and this is the reason why the most conscientious are often thus. Will any person dare to affirm that this is the ordering of God? Is it of Him that a believer should be godly and conscientious, and yet without peaceful enjoyment and rest in Christ? The reason which accounts for so strange a state is, that such a man has not entered into the place of death to the law in which Christ would set him.

Others, indeed, may venture to tell me that it is a false doctrine that Christ died for sin as well as my sins, and that I am dead to sin as well as forgiven my sins. I have heard such charges among those who ought to have known better. But death to sin in Christ's death seems to me a vital truth of Christianity. He that would shut me up to forgiveness through Christ's blood, who allows no more in the work of Jesus than that He died for my sins, who denies that He has given me besides this death to sin, has not realized the completeness of salvation or the positive side of Christianity. It is a great mercy from God to know the complete blotting out of all my evil works and guilt; but this alone is comparatively negative. Hence so many children of God try to gather a positive ground of righteousness from what Jesus did day by day in His walk on earth. Now, there is the positive side as well as the negative: only it is found in resurrection, not under law on the other side of the cross.

And the Christian will learn that he needs all that God has given him. He will learn that he needs this precious truth too. To be dead to sin is a very substantial part of the Christian's blessing; and any man who does not know it omits a capital doctrine of the positive side of Christianity, which is revealed from Rom. 5: 12 to Rom. 8. Of course, I say nothing of Colossians or Ephesians, which epistles one must never expect to be understood by those who stand on legal ground. I limit myself to that which the Christian wants as the liberty, if not the foundation, of his soul. Be it remarked, that there is not a word about overcoming till we have entered here — not a word of "being more than conquerors" till we come to this. There is neither the groaning nor the joy of the Holy Ghost, the intimate working of God in his soul, till he has got solidly founded on the precious footing where the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ puts him. May God keep His people from abandoning that which He has brought out for their deliverance and for practical victory? Scripture is plain enough: the difficulty, as ever, lies elsewhere. The heart shrinks from that which puts sentence of death on nature in all its forms.

Are the days evil? So much the more do we need to hold fast. Let me, in speaking of this subject, press it on those around me to look at 2 Peter and Jude — two portions of the word of God specially in view of a day of declension? Of increasing wickedness, and even apostacy; and what do you find there? The saints given up to decay as if it must be? Not at all. It is in these epistles above all others that we are exhorted to growth and progress in the truth of God. Such are the resources of grace for a day of deepening darkness.

As to the point in hand, may we treat as of the enemy, no matter what the form or pretension, everything that would blot out so precious and, after all, so simple and fundamental a truth bound up with our very baptism! What a warning, that men should be so beguiled as to treat this as some strange doctrine!

How, then, may one describe this new condition in which the Lord Jesus puts the Christian?

According to the New Testament, there are not two, but three conditions in which a man may be. I press this, because it is connected with the faith as well as with practice. It is not true that a man must be a natural if not a spiritual man. These are not the only alternatives. We find a third and intermediate class between a natural and a spiritual man. The former is clearly one who has unremoved sins, who is simply a child of Adam, without anything whatever above fallen humanity. When God's grace converts such an one, a new nature is imparted, and, on the footing of redemption, he is brought to God. But every man who is thus reconciled to God is not necessarily a spiritual man. There is more than one cause that may hinder a believer from being what Scripture calls spiritual. The spiritual are those who, as the apostle Paul says, are "not in the flesh, but in the Spirit."

Again, the Corinthian saints (however grave their faults) were not by the apostle said to be natural men. He lays down that "the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God." He does not say so about the saints. But he does tell them that they are children; that, instead of their being full-grown, instead of his being able to speak to them of God's deep things, he is obliged to feed them with milk suitable to their estate. And what were they then? "Carnal men." Hence men are natural, carnal, or spiritual. This is a very humbling truth. I can understand men not liking it; and why? Because they fear that they may not be accounted spiritual, if believers may indeed be carnal without being natural men. Such persons prick up their ears on hearing any action of God's Spirit distinct from the new birth. They shrink back from the sound of His distinctively Christian operations, as if the assertion of so bright privileges were to deprive them of something they have not, instead of making them feel the lack of what they should have. It is evident that, whether carnal or spiritual, I ought, on the contrary, if there be anything wrong or lacking, to own my state. Is not this the way to have the wrong rectified, and the deficiency supplied of God?

Now, there are various causes that hinder the believer's spirituality. The first is, where he has never passed in the consciousness of his soul into the thorough sense of nothing but evil in the flesh, and the faith that it has been all fully judged in the death of Christ. Without this in substance, is it possible for one to be truly spiritual? I doubt it gravely, though admitting freely how much a deep sense of Christ's love may effect in one who has not learnt this. But then there is another hindrance which may operate — not the law, but fleshly wisdom. There may be such a value given to man's thoughts, such a lowering influence consequently exercised over the spirit by heed to the philosophy of the world in one shape or another, that one can only in such a state be carnal. The spiritual manifest what God has made them to be in the Second Man, and desire not to cultivate but to mortify what belongs to the first. Instead of pampering flesh up, or admiring it, such an one treats it, on the contrary, as a dead thing. The consequence is, that this does not fail to give him power over every such snare.

One danger — that to which Satan continually incites the children of God — is to take all the comfort they can in Christ, while at the same time holding fast all they wish of the world's ease. It is evident that the heart and conscience of a healthy believer must repel such ways and thoughts, as the very world does too; for if a Christian is observed in any place where he ought not to be, others will express (what one ought to have felt without such a hint) their surprise that a confessor of Christ should be there. Is it not most humbling for a Christian to startle the world after this fashion; allowing himself such a licence as men generally feel to be unbecoming the Master's name? The world is sensitive as to consistency. They may tempt the Christian to share their pursuits and pleasures; they may insist on the great importance that the Christian should help to set the world right and show a good example, entering into its assemblies, and taking part in its senates, sitting, on the judicial bench, and exercising authority in every conceivable sphere. And, no doubt, it is uncommonly pleasant to the flesh to be in dignity and power; but is not this precisely what Christ formally, as well as in spirit and His

own example, interdicted? These things the Gentiles do and value; but Christ died and rose to take us out of this present evil age. His grace makes us happy in our little lot, and content with whatever estate God may have apportioned us. It is a most bright and blessed thing in such a world as this to see a soul that so values Christ, and so rejoices in the place that God has given him in Him, as to yearn after nothing but His will and glory.

On the other hand, as long as a man is labouring under the law, he is always weak by reason of the flesh. He may make resolves, but he does not keep them; he may ever so much strive, but there is no power to attain. He is incessantly wrestling, but he is obliged to confess at the end of each day that the things he would he does not, and the things he would not he does. Thus he is always repenting and sinning, sinning and repenting. Such is the invariable condition of a man under law. But can intelligent men affirm that this is the condition of a Christian? I do not mean to deny that the state of many a Christian resembles this; but it is wholly irregular, and contrary to what Scripture supposes in every Christian. When I urge that it is not a Christian condition, I do not insinuate that it is a state in which no Christian may be found, but only that it is at issue with that which our God gives to us and looks for in us. A child of God may be in a state which does not answer to the grace shown him. If I take the epistles with simplicity, it is impossible to avoid seeing that God intends me, by the working of the Holy Ghost through the word, so to lay hold of the place which He has given me as to enter into stable peace and real joy of heart. This is of the highest possible moment for practical testimony; and God would have me, as being a vessel of the Holy Ghost, to testify continually of Christ in this wretched world. This is the main reason why His grace has so blessed us, and would have us to know and enjoy it all.

That of which I have spoken is what is meant by being "in the Spirit;" and this depends on, and is proved by, the fact that the Spirit of God dwells in us. It is not the Spirit acting on the soul to produce faith, but dwelling in the believer. "Ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now, if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." This is the characteristic of the Christian. Without His Spirit, one is not stamped with His essential character. The Holy Ghost, not mere flesh, distinguished Christ from His conception, as He was sealed by Him in due time, and acted always and only in the Spirit. So the Christian, as he lives in the Spirit, is now called to walk in the Spirit. It is no question of not being lost — this is not the force of the expression — but of being distinctively Christ's here below. "And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness." When a man is converted, but troubled under law, he has no sense of such a place, and no power to count the body dead. The Spirit is a convincer of sin, not strength to glorify God in peace while he is thus. But when he gives all up to God's sentence on the flesh, finding his all in Christ, the Spirit does strengthen him inwardly. Thus he is not only freed, but can use his liberty in practical power also.

There is yet more. "But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you." This is full deliverance even for the body, and the complete answer to the question raised in the distress of Rom. 7: 24. Thus the Holy Ghost, who witnesses of redemption, does not only give me now my status in Christ dead and risen before God, but is the divine pledge, as I look at Christ that this mortal body shall be instinct with that life which I now enjoy in my soul; for I look not on Christ simply as God's Son, but see Him raised in righteousness, and by the Father's glory. I say that in grace He came down and died; in righteousness He is raised up and seated at the right hand of God; and the righteous award for the infinite work He wrought in grace overflows, so that God frees us who were once slaves of sin and Satan, but now believers in Him, according to the liberty of Christ — first, for

the soul now; next, for the body when Christ comes to wake us up; and the Spirit is the seal of the one, and the earnest of the other.

Is Christ my portion? It is Christ who determines the display of justification. It is really as perfect as Christ before God. What a measure is Christ Himself before God! Therefore it is that we are said to be made the "righteousness of God" in Him. Grounded on this, the Holy Ghost comes down to dwell in me now, (not merely to act in me,) anticipating the bright day of glory, and meanwhile just so far empowering me as I treat the old nature as dead, and make Christ my all.

This, then, is the full answer to the cry for a deliverer. The soul is emancipated first; the body shall be quickened later. Meanwhile, the Holy Ghost takes His blessed place not only as to the soul, but also as to the body. When the believer is raised up by-and-by, it will not be without the Holy Ghost; the Son quickens, but by the Spirit, who takes His part in every atom of blessing that body or soul receives. How sweet, how glorious, a thing it is to have the Spirit of God, who thus identifies Himself with every part of the blessing! How should we, therefore, feel at grieving "the Holy Spirit of God, whereby we are sealed unto the day of redemption?" But this is not all. No doubt the Spirit of God has not yet raised up our mortal bodies; notwithstanding He works in us now, and sustains in our hearts the cry "Abba, Father." This is the first and suited action of the Holy Ghost when deliverance is entered into by the believer. It is necessarily Godward, and as the Spirit of sonship or adoption. Thereby the soul rejoices not in the blessing merely, but in the source whence it came, and accordingly "Abba, Father," is the word.

Nor is it thus only that the same indwelling Spirit works in us; and how? He gives the certainty that we shall be delivered shortly; nay, more than that, He *groans* within us "with groanings which cannot be uttered." There is perfect sympathy with all the state in which we are now. The groans of the Spirit of God are not in any wise because I am not delivered, but just because I am. It is true that I am only delivered in part, not completely. Thus, if I groan in the Spirit, I groan because, being set free in my soul, I feel the contrariety of my outward man, as well as of all things around me, and my heart is looking onward to the day when creation itself shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the liberty of the glory of the sons of God. I have got the liberty of God's grace now, and I shall have the liberty, even for the mortal body, of God's glory by-and-by. And thus, then, we have this blessed place of the Spirit of God, as will be observed, as a personal Spirit distinct from the new nature; but at the same time the Holy Ghost gives His name, so to speak, to the condition in which I am now put, as a delivered soul, as a Christian, by virtue of the death and resurrection of Christ; and so I am in the Spirit, and the Spirit dwells in me.

It will not, in this sketch, be expected that I should enter into all the applications and practical uses of so great a truth. But I have desired particularly to discuss the point that is commonly least understood — that is, the Spirit as a condition in which we are now. I presume most here are more familiar with the truth of the Spirit of God dwelling in us; but the other truth is also of the highest interest and importance for the Christian.