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COMMENTARY

**DARBY'S SYNOPSIS OF THE
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by John Nelson Darby

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John Nelson Darby, 1800-1882

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ROMANS

The Epistle to the Romans is well placed at the head of all the others, as laying the foundations, in a systematic way, of the relations of man with God; reconciling at the same time this universal truth of man's position, first in responsibility, and secondly in grace, with the special promises made to the Jews. It also establishes the great principles of christian practice, the morality, not of man, but that which is the fruit of the light and revelation given by Christianity. It is important to see that it always views the Christian as in this world. He is justified and has life in Christ, but is here, and not viewed as risen with Him.

The following is, I believe, the arrangement of the epistle. After some introductory verses, which open his subject, several of which are of the deepest importance and furnish the key to the whole teaching of the epistle and man's real state with God (chap. 1:1-17), the apostle (to the end of chap. 3:20*) shows man to be utterly corrupt and lost, in all the circumstances in which he stands. Without law, it was unbridled sin; with philosophy, it was judging evil and committing it; under law, it was breaking the law, while boasting of its possession, and dishonoring the name of Him with whose glory those who possessed it were (so to say) identified, by having received from Him that law as His people. From chapter 3:21 to the end of chapter 8 we find the remedy plainly set forth in two parts. In chapter 3:21 to the end of the chapter, in a general way, through faith the blood of Christ is the answer to all the sin which the apostle has just been describing; afterwards, in chapter 4, resurrection, the seal of Christ's work, and the witness of its efficacy for our justification. All this meets the responsibility of the child of Adam, which the law only aggravated, according to the full grace unfolded in chapter 5:1-11. But in chapter 8 they are assumed to be in Christ who is on high, placing him who had part in it (that is, every believer) in a new position before God in Christ, who thus gave him liberty and life — the liberty in which Christ Himself was, and the life which He Himself lived. It is this last which inseparably unites justification and holiness in life.

[* After the introduction till the end of chapter 3 we find the evil, and the remedy which God has granted in the blood of Jesus Christ: and afterwards, in chapter 4, the resurrection of Christ (after being delivered for our offenses) for our justification, and thus peace with God, our present standing in favor, and hope of glory, with all its blessed consequences in the love of God. Abraham and David, the great roots of promise, confirmed this principle of grace and justification without works. This part closes with chapter 5:11, which divides the epistle into two distinct parts, as to its main doctrine of justification, and our standing before God. Of this farther on.]

But there is connected with this another point, which gives occasion to notice a division yet more important of the subjects of the epistle. From chapter 3:21 to the end of verse 11 of chapter 5, the apostle treats the subject of our sins — individual guilt is met by the blood of Christ who (in chap. 4), delivered for our offenses, is raised for our justification. But from chapter 5:12 the question of sin is treated — not a future judgment met, but deliverance from a present state.* One ends in the blessing of chapter 5:1-11, the other in that of chapter 8.

[* This, while the subject is sin in the flesh and death to it, involves the question of law — the means of discovering it when its spirituality is known.]

In chapters 9-11 the apostle reconciles these truths of the same salvation, common to every believing man without distinction, with the promise made to the Jews, bringing out the marvelous wisdom of God, and the way in which these things were foreseen, and revealed in the word.

He afterwards sets forth (in chap. 12 et seqq.) the practical christian spirit. In this last part, he alludes to the assembly as a body. Otherwise, it is in general man, the individual, before a God of righteousness; and the work of Christ, which places him there individually in peace. For the same reason, save in one passage in chapter 8 to bring in intercession, the ascension is not spoken of in Romans. It treats of death, and Christ's resurrection as the ground of a new status for man before God.*

[* See what has just been said on the division at chapter 5:11, and the fuller development of the division of the epistle farther on.]

Let us now examine the line of thought given by the Holy Ghost in this epistle. We find in it the answer to the solemn question of Job, angry at finding himself without resource in the presence of the judgment of God: "I know it is so of a truth, but how should man be just with God?"

“Nevertheless that is not the first thought which presents itself to the apostle. That is man’s necessity; but the gospel comes first revealing and bringing Christ. It is grace and Jesus which it brings in its hands; it speaks of God in love. This awakens the sense of need,* while bringing that which meets it; and gives its measure in the grace that sets before us all the fullness of the love of God in Christ. It is a revelation of God in the Person of Christ. It puts man in his place before God, in the presence of Him who is revealed — both in himself, and in grace in Christ. All the promises are also accomplished in the Person of Him who is revealed. But it is important to note that it begins with the Person of Christ, not forgiveness or righteousness, though this is fully developed afterwards from verse 17.

[* The heart and the conscience are both brought in. Law can show man’s guilt, and even, when spiritually known, man’s ruined state, to the conscience; a sense of need proves that the heart also is brought into action.]

There is no epistle in which the apostle places his apostleship on more positive and formal ground than in this; for at Rome he had no claim in virtue of his labors. He had never seen the Romans. He was none the less their apostle; for he was that of the Gentiles. He was a debtor to the Gentiles. He writes to them because he had received a mission from the Lord Himself towards all the Gentiles. They were in his allotted sphere of service as being Gentiles. It was his office to present them as an offering sanctified by the Holy Ghost (chap. 15:16). This was his commission. God was mighty in Peter towards the Jews; the mission of Paul was to the Gentiles. It was to him this mission was entrusted. The twelve moreover acknowledged it. If God has ordained that Paul should accomplish his mission in direct connection with heaven and outside the secular influence of the capital, and if Rome was to be a persecutor of the gospel, that city was not the less Gentile on this account. It belonged to Paul with reference to the gospel. According to the Holy Ghost Peter addresses the Jews in the exercise of his apostleship; Paul, the Gentiles.

This was the administrative order according to God; let us now come to the substance of his position. Paul was the servant of Christ — that was his character, his life. But others were, more or less, that. He was more than that. He was an apostle by the call of the Lord, a “called apostle”; and not only that, and laborious as occasion presented itself, he was nothing but that in life here below. He was set apart for the glad tidings of God.

These two last characters are very definitely warranted by the revelation of the Lord to Paul on the way to Damascus — his call, and his mission to the Gentiles on that occasion; and by setting apart by the Holy Ghost at Antioch, when he went forth to fulfill his mission.

He calls the gospel to which he was set apart, the gospel or glad tidings “of God”: the Holy Ghost presents it in its source. It is not that which man ought to be for God, nor yet the means merely by which man can approach Him on His throne. It is the thoughts of God, and His acts, we may add, towards man — His thoughts in goodness, the revelation of Him in Christ His Son. He approaches man according to that which He is and that which He wills in grace. God comes to him; it is the gospel of God. This is the true aspect: the gospel is never rightly understood until it is to us the gospel of God, the activity and revelation of His nature, and of His will in grace towards man.

Having pointed out the source, the Author of the gospel, the One whom it thus reveals in His grace, the apostle presents the connection between this gospel and the dealings of God which historically preceded it — its promulgation here below, and at the same time its own proper object; that is to say, its subject properly so called, and the place held with regard to it by that which preceded it (the order of things which those to whom they belonged sought to maintain as a substantive and independent system by rejecting the gospel). He here introduces that which preceded, not as a subject of controversy, but in its true character, to enforce the testimony of the gospel (anticipating objections, which are thus solved beforehand).

To the Gentile it was the revelation of the truth, and of God, in grace; to the Jew it was indeed that, while also putting everything that regarded him in its right place. The connection of the Old Testament with the gospel is this: the gospel of God had been announced beforehand by His prophets in holy writings. Observe here, that in these holy scriptures the gospel of God was not come, nor was it then addressed to men: but promised or announced beforehand, as to be sent. The assembly was not even announced: the gospel was announced, but as being yet to come.

Moreover, the subject of this gospel is, first of all, the Son of God. He has accomplished a work: but it is Himself who is the true subject of the gospel. Now He is presented in a twofold aspect: 1st, the object of the

promises, Son of David according to the flesh; 2nd, the Son of God in power, who, in the midst of sin, walked by the Spirit in divine and absolute holiness (resurrection being the illustrious and victorious proof of who He was, walking in this character). That is to say, resurrection is a public manifestation of that power by which He walked in absolute holiness during His life — a manifestation that He is the Son of God in power. He is clearly shown forth as Son of God in power by this means. Here it was no question of promise, but of power, of Him who could enter into conflict with the death in which man lay, and overcome it completely; and that, in connection with the holiness which bore testimony during His life to the power of that Spirit by which He walked, and in which He guarded Himself from being touched by sin. It was in the same power by which He was holy in life absolutely that He was raised from the dead.

In the ways of God on the earth He was the object and the fulfillment of the promises. With regard to the condition of man under sin and death, He was completely conqueror of all that stood in His way, whether living or in resurrection. It was the Son of God who was there, made known by resurrection according to the power that was in Him, a power that displayed itself according to the Spirit by the holiness in which He lived.*

[* This puts us, since it is for us, in connection with a holiness (as does the revelation of righteousness farther on, but there more openly) which implies connection with God as He is in Himself fully revealed — not like the Jews outside the veil.]

What marvelous grace to see the whole power of evil — that dreadful door of death which closed upon the sinful life of man, leaving him to the inevitable judgment that he deserved — broken, destroyed, by Him, who was willing to enter into the gloomy chamber it shut in, and take upon Himself all the weakness of man in death, and thus completely and absolutely deliver him whose penalty He had born in submitting to death! This victory over death, this deliverance of man from its dominion, by the power of the Son of God become man, when He had undergone it, and that as a sacrifice for sin, is the only ground of hope for mortal and sinful man. It sets aside all that sin and death have to say. It destroys, for him who has a portion in Christ, the seal of judgment upon sin, which is in death; and a new man, a new life, begins for him who had been held under it, outside the

whole scene, the whole effect of his former misery — a life founded on all the value of that which the Son of God had there accomplished.

In fine, we have, as the subject of the gospel, the Son of God, made of the seed of David after the flesh; and, in the bosom of humanity and of death, declared to be the Son of God in power by resurrection,* Jesus Christ our Lord. The gospel was the gospel of God Himself; but it is by Jesus Christ the Lord that the apostle received his mission. He was the head of the work, and sent forth the laborers into the harvest which they were to reap in the world. The object of his mission, and its extent, was the obedience of faith (not obedience to the law) among an nations, establishing the authority and the value of the name of Christ. It was this name which should prevail and be acknowledged.

[* It is not said “by His resurrection,” but “by resurrection” abstractly. His own was the great proof, but that of every man is a proof likewise.]

The apostle’s mission was not only his service; the being trusted with it was at the same time the personal grace and favor of Him whose testimony he bore. I am not speaking of salvation, although in Paul’s case the two things were identified — a fact that gave a remarkable color and energy to his mission; but there was grace and favor in the commission itself, and it is important to remember it. It gives character to the mission and to its execution. An angel performs a providential mission; a Moses details a law in the spirit of the law; a Jonah, a John the Baptist, preaches repentance, withdraws from the grace that appeared to falsify his threatenings against the wicked Gentiles, or in the wilderness lays the axe to the root of the unfruitful trees in God’s garden. But by Jesus, Paul, the bearer of the glad tidings of God, receives grace and apostleship. He carries, by grace and as grace, the message of grace to men wherever they may be, the grace which comes in all the largeness of the rights of God over men, and in Himself as sovereign, and in which He exercises His rights. Among these Gentiles, the believing Romans also were the called of Jesus Christ.

Paul therefore addresses all the believers in that great city. They were beloved of God, and saints by calling.* He wishes them (as in all his epistles) grace and peace from God the Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ, on whose part he delivered his message. The perfect grace of God by Christ, the perfect peace of man, and that with God; it was this which

he brought in the gospel and in his heart. These are the true conditions of God's relationship with man, and that of man with God, by the gospel — the ground on which Christianity places man. When an individual is addressed, another consideration comes in, namely, that of his own weaknesses and infirmities: therefore "mercy" is added to the wish of the sacred writers in the case of individuals. (See the Epistles to Timothy and Titus, and the Second Epistle of John.)**

[* The reader must take notice that, in verses 1 and 7, it is not "called to be an apostle," nor "called to be saints," but apostle by call, saints by call. They were the thing declared, and they were so by the call of God. A Jew was not holy by call; he was born holy, relatively to the Gentiles. These were the called of Jesus Christ; but they were not simply called to be holy, they were so by call.]

[** The Epistle to Philemon might appear at first sight to be an exception; but it confirms this remark, for it will be seen that the assembly in his house is included in the wish. This makes the address of Jude the more remarkable. There is however a question of a various reading in Titus 1:4.]

If the love of God is in the heart, if He has His place there, it is before God that one is occupied with the objects of grace; and then, the work of God in them, the grace that has been displayed is the first thing that comes into the mind, whether in love or in thankfulness. The faith of the Romans ascends in thanksgivings from the heart of the apostle, whom the report of it had reached.

He then expresses his desire to see them, a desire that often occupied his mind. Here he brings out his apostolic relationship towards them, with all the tenderness and all the delicacy that belong to the grace and the love which had formed this relationship and which constituted its strength. He is apostle by right to all the Gentiles, even although he may not have seen them; but in heart he is their servant; and with the most true and ardent brotherly love, flowing from the grace that had made him apostle, he desires to see them, that he might impart to them some spiritual gift, which his apostleship put him in a position to communicate. What he had in his heart in this was, that he might enjoy the faith which was common to him and to them — faith strengthened by these gifts — for their mutual comfort. Often he had purposed coming, that he might have some fruit in this part also of the field which God had committed to him; but he had been hindered until now.

He then declares himself a debtor to all the Gentiles, and ready, as far as in him lay, to preach the gospel to those of Rome also. The way in which the apostle claims the whole field of the Gentiles as his own, and in which he was prevented by God from going to Rome until he arrived there at the end of his career (and then only as a prisoner), is worthy of all attention.

However it might be, he was ready, and that because of the value of the gospel — a point which leads him to state both the value and the character of this gospel. For, he says, he was not ashamed of it. It was the power of God to salvation. Observe here the way in which the apostle presents everything as coming from God. It is the gospel of God, the power of God to salvation, the righteousness of God, and even the wrath of God, and that from heaven — a different thing from earthly chastisement. This is the key to everything. The apostle lays stress upon it, putting it forward from the commencement of the epistle; for man ever inclines to have confidence in himself, to boast of himself, to seek for some merit — some righteousness, in himself, to Judaize, to be occupied with himself, as though he could do something. It was the apostle's joy to put his God forward.

Thus, in the gospel, God intervened, accomplishing a salvation which was entirely His own work — a salvation of which He was the source and power, and which He Himself had wrought. Man came into it by faith: it was the believer who shared it, but to have part in it by faith was exactly the way to share it without adding anything whatsoever to it, and to leave it wholly the salvation of God. God be praised that it is so, whether for righteousness or for power, or for the whole result; for thus it is perfect, divine. God has come in, in His almighty power and in His love, to deliver the wretched, according to His own might. The gospel is the expression of this: one believes it and one shares it.

But there is an especial reason why it is the power of God in salvation. Man had departed from God by sin. Righteousness alone could bring him back into the presence of God, and make him such that he could be there in peace. A sinner, he had no righteousness, but quite the contrary; and if man were to come before God as a sinner, judgment necessarily awaits him: righteousness would be displayed in this way. But, in the gospel, God reveals a positive righteousness on His part. If man has none, God

has a righteousness which belongs to Him, which is His own, perfect like Himself, according to His own heart. Such a righteousness as this is revealed in the gospel. Human righteousness there was none: a righteousness of God is revealed. It is all-perfect in itself, divine and complete. To be revealed, it must be so. The gospel proclaims it to us.

The principle on which it is announced is faith, because it exists, and it is divine. If man wrought at it, or performed a part of it, or if his heart had any share in carrying it out, it would not be the righteousness of God; but it is entirely and absolutely His. We believe in the gospel that reveals it. But if it is the believer who participates in it, every one who has faith has part in it. This righteousness is on the principle of faith. It is revealed, and consequently to faith, wherever that faith exists.

This is the force of the expression which is translated “from faith to faith” — on the principle of faith unto faith. Now the importance of this principle is evident here. It admits every believing Gentile on the same footing as the Jew, who has no other right of entrance than he. They both have faith: the gospel recognises no other means of participating in it. The righteousness is that of God; the Jew is nothing more in it than the Gentile. As it is written, “The just shall live by faith.” The scriptures of the Jews testified to the truth of the apostle’s principle.

This is what the gospel announced on God’s part to man. The primary subject was the Person of Christ, son of David according to flesh (accomplishment of promise); and the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness. But the righteousness of God (not of man) was revealed in it. This is the grand theme of all that follows. The apostle had indeed reason not to be ashamed of it, despised as it was by men.

But this doctrine was confirmed by another consideration, and was based on the great truth contained in it. God, in presenting Himself, could not look at things according to the partial communications adapted to the ignorance of men, and to the temporary dispensations by which He governed them. Wrath was not merely His intervention in government, as by the Assyrian or Babylonish captivity. It was “wrath from heaven.” The essential opposition of His nature to evil, and penal rejection of it wherever it was found, was manifested. Now God manifested Himself in the gospel. Thus divine wrath does not break forth indeed (for grace

proclaimed the righteousness of God in salvation for sinners who should believe) but it is revealed (not exactly in the gospel — that is the revelation of righteousness; but it is revealed) from heaven against ungodliness — all that does not respect the presence of God — against all that does not comport with the presence of God, and against all unrighteousness or iniquity in those who possessed the truth but still dishonored God; that is to say, against all men, Gentile or otherwise, and particularly the Jews who had the knowledge of God according to the law; and, again (for the principle is universal, and flows from that which God is, when He reveals Himself), against every one who professes Christianity, when he walks in the evil that God hates.

This wrath, divine wrath, according to God's nature as in heaven, against man as a sinner, made God's righteousness necessary. Man was now to meet God fully revealed as He is. This showed him wholly a sinner, but paved the way in grace for a far more excellent place and standing — one based on the righteousness of God. The gospel reveals the righteousness: its opportuneness and necessity are demonstrated by the state of sin in which all men are, and by occasion of which wrath was revealed from heaven. Man was not merely to be governed by God, and find governmental wrath, but to appear before God. How could we stand there? The answer is the revelation of God's righteousness by the gospel. Hence, too, even in speaking of resurrection Christ is declared to be the Son of God according to the Spirit of holiness. God has to be met such as He is. The revelation of God Himself in His holy nature went necessarily farther than mere Jews. It was against the thing sin, wherever it was, wherever it met sin, to make good what God is. It is a glorious truth; and how blessed that thus divine righteousness in sovereign grace should be revealed! And, God being love, we can say that it could not be otherwise; but how glorious to have God thus revealed!

The thesis of the epistle then is in verse 17, that which proved its need in verse 18. From verse 19 to the end of verse 20 in chapter 3, the condition of men, Jews and Gentiles, to whom this truth applies, is given in detail, in order to show in what way this wrath was deserved, and all were shut up in sin (v. 19 and 21 of this chapter giving the leading principles of the evil as regards the Gentiles). From verse 21 to 31 of chapter 3, the answer in grace by the righteousness of God, through the blood of Christ, is briefly

but powerfully declared. For we first get the answer by Christ's blood to the old state, and then the introduction, by death and life through Christ, into the new.

The apostle begins with the Gentiles — "all ungodliness" of men. I say the Gentiles (it is evident that if a Jew falls into it, this guilt attaches to him; but the condition described, as far as chapter 2:17, is that of Gentiles); afterwards that of the Jews, to chapter 3:20.

CHAPTER 1:18 is the thesis of the whole argument from verse 19 to chapter 3:20, this part of the epistle showing the ground of that wrath.

The Gentiles are without excuse on two accounts. First, that which may be known of God has been manifested by creation — His power and His Godhead. This proof has existed since the creation of the world. Secondly, that, having the knowledge of God as Noah had it, they had not glorified Him as God, but in the vanity of their imaginations, reasoning upon their own thoughts on this subject and the ideas it produced in their own minds, they became fools while professing themselves to be wise, and fell into idolatry, and that of the grossest kind. Now God has judged this. If they would not retain a just thought of the glory of God, they should not even retain a just idea of the natural honor of man. They should dishonor themselves as they had dishonored God. It is the exact description, in a few strong and energetic words, of the whole pagan mythology. They had not discernment, moral taste, to retain God in their knowledge: God gave them up to a spirit void of discernment, to boast themselves in depraved tastes, in things unbecoming nature itself. The natural conscience knew that God judged such things to be worthy of death according to the just exigencies of His nature. Nevertheless they not only did them, but they took pleasure in those who did them, when their own lusts did not carry them away. And this left no excuse for those who judged the evil (and there were such), for they committed it while judging it. Man then by judging condemned himself doubly: for by judging he showed that he knew it to be evil, and yet he did it. But the judgment of God is according to truth against those who commit such things: they who acquired credit by judging them should not escape it.

Two things are presented here with respect to God; His judgment against evil — the evil-doer shall not escape (the real difference of right and wrong

would be maintained by judgment); and His mercy, patience, and long-suffering with regard to the evil-doer — His goodness inviting him to repentance. He who continued in evil deceived himself by trying to forget the sure judgment of God and by despising His goodness. The consequences, both of a life opposed to God and to His truth on the one hand, and of the search after that which is pleasing to Him, and thereby for eternal life on the other, were sure — tribulation and anguish in the one case, in the other glory and honor; and that without more respect to the Jews than to the Gentiles.

God judged things according to their true moral character, and according to the advantages which the guilty one had enjoyed.* Those who had sinned without law should perish without law, and those who had sinned under the law should be judged according to the law, in the day when God should judge the secrets of the heart according to the gospel which Paul preached. This character of the judgment is very important. It is not the government of the world by an earthly and outward judgment, as the Jew understood it, but that of the individual according to God's knowledge of the heart.

[* How strikingly this also brings out what so breaks everywhere through the doctrine of this epistle that everything is according to its reality before God, God being revealed through Christ and the cross. All must take its true character and result according to what He was. Note moreover that the terms suppose gospel knowledge — "seek for glory, honor, and incorruptibility." These are known by Christianity.]

Also God would have realities. The Gentile who fulfilled the law was better than a Jew who broke it. If he called himself a Jew and acted ill (chap. 2:17), he only dishonored God, and caused His name to be blasphemed among the Gentiles whilst boasting in his privileges. He then enlarges on the point that God requires moral reality, and that a Gentile who did that which the law demanded was better worth than a Jew who disobeyed it, and that the real Jew was he who had the law in his heart, being circumcised also in the spirit, and not he who had only outward circumcision. This was a condition which God could praise, and not man only.

CHAPTER 3. Having established the great truth that God required real moral goodness, he considers the position of the Jews. Could they not plead special divine favor? Was there no advantage in Judaism? Surely there was,

especially in that they possessed the oracles of God. The ways of God were full of blessing in themselves, although that did not change the immutable truths of His nature. And if many among them had been unbelieving, this did not alter the faithfulness of God; and the fact that the unbelief of many did but the more demonstrate the faithfulness of God, who remained the same whatever they might be, took nothing from the claims of righteousness. Unbelievers should be punished according to what they were; it would but magnify the unfailing faithfulness of God, which never failed, however unavailing it might be for the mass of the nation. Otherwise He could judge no one, not even the world (which the Jew was willing to see judged); for the condition of the world also enhanced and put in evidence the faithfulness of God towards His people. If then the Jew had advantages, was he therefore better? In no wise: all were shut up under sin, whether Jew or Gentile, as God had already declared.*

[* Note here a very important principle, that there are positive advantages of position, where there is no intrinsic change. Compare chapter 11:17, and 1 Corinthians 10.]

The apostle now cites the Old Testament to prove this with regard to the Jews, who did not deny it with regard to the Gentiles which he had already also shown. The law, says he, belongs to you. You boast that it refers to you exclusively. Be it so: hear then what it says of the people, of yourselves. It speaks to you, as you acknowledge. There is not then one righteous man among you on whom God can look down from heaven. He quotes Psalm 14:2, 3; Isaiah 59:7, 8, to set forth the judgment pronounced on them by those oracles of which they boasted. Thus every mouth was shut, and all the world guilty before God. Therefore it is that no flesh can be justified before God by the law; for if the world in the midst of darkness wallowed in sin, by means of the law sin was known.

But now, without law, apart from all law, a righteousness that is of God has been manifested, the law and the prophets bearing witness to it.

Hence then we find not only the condition of the Gentiles and of the Jews set forth, together with the great immutable principles of good and evil, whatever might be the dealings of God, but the effect of the law itself, and that which was introduced by Christianity as regarded righteousness, altogether outside the law, although the law and the prophets bore witness to it. In a word, the eternal truth as to sin and as to the responsibility of

man, the effect of the law, the connection of the Old Testament with Christianity, the true character of the latter in that which relates to righteousness (namely, that it is a thing entirely new and independent), the righteousness of God Himself — the whole question between man and God, with regard to sin and righteousness, is settled, as to its foundation, in these few words. The manner of its accomplishment is now to be treated of.*

[* Chapter 3:21 reverts in fact to chapter 1:17; what comes between is the demonstration of the ground of chapter 1:18, which made the righteousness of verse 17 imperatively necessary.]

It is the righteousness of God by faith in Jesus Christ. Man has not accomplished it, man has not procured it. It is of God, it is His righteousness; by believing in Jesus Christ participation in it is obtained. Had it been a human righteousness, it would have been by the law which is the rule of that righteousness — a law given to the Jews only. But being the righteousness of God Himself, it had reference to all; its range embraced not the one more than the other. It was the righteousness of God “unto all.” A Jew was not more in relation with the righteousness of God than a Gentile. It was in fact universal in its aspect and in its applicability. A righteousness of God for man, because no man had any for God, it was applied to all those who believe in Jesus. Wherever there was faith, there it was applied. The believer possessed it. It was towards all, and upon all those who believed in Jesus. For there was no difference: all had sinned, and outside the glory of God,* deprived of that glory, were justified freely by His grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. Whether a Jew or a Gentile, it was a sinful man: the righteousness was the righteousness of God; the goodness of God was that which bestowed it, redemption in Christ Jesus the divine means of having part in it.**

[* Remark here how, God being revealed, sin is measured by the glory of God. We are so used to read this that we overlook its force. How strange to say, “and come short of the glory of God!” Man might say, Why, of course we have; but, morally speaking, this has been revealed, and if one cannot stand before it, according to it, we cannot subsist before God at all. Of course it is not of His essential glory — all creatures are short of that, of course — but of that which was fitting for, according to, could stand in, His presence. If we cannot stand there, fitly “walk in the light as God is in the light,” we cannot be with God at all. There is no veil now.]

[** To show how complete is this instruction of Paul's, I give here a summary of its elements. In itself it is the righteousness of God, without law, the law and the prophets bearing witness to it: as to its application, the righteousness of God by faith in Christ Jesus unto all, and upon all them that believe. Christ is proposed as the propitiatory by faith in His blood, to show forth this righteousness by the remission of past sins (of the Abrahams, etc.) according to the forbearance of God; but to show it forth in the present time, in order that He may be just, and justify those who believe in Jesus.]

Before the accomplishment of this redemption, God, in view of it, had in patience born with the faithful, and His righteousness in forgiving them was now clearly manifested. But, further, the righteousness itself was manifested: we come to Christ as a propitiatory that God has set forth before men, and we find on it the blood which gives us free access to God in righteousness, God whose glory is satisfied in the work that Christ Jesus has accomplished, His blood upon the mercy-seat bearing witness thereof. It is no longer "forbearance" — righteousness is manifested, so that God is seen to be righteous and just in justifying him who is of faith in Jesus. Where then is boasting? For the Jews boasted much in reference to the Gentiles — self-righteousness always boasts: it is not a law of works that can shut it out. Man justifying himself by his works would have something to boast in. It is this law of faith, this divine principle on which we are placed, which shuts it out: for it is by the work of another, without works of law, that we through grace have part in divine righteousness, having none of our own.

And is God a limited God* the God of the Jews only? No, He is also the God of the Gentiles. And how? In grace: in that it is one God who justifies the Jews (who seek after righteousness) on the principle of faith, and — since justification is on the principle of faith — the believing Gentiles also by faith. Men are justified by faith; the believing Gentile then is justified. With regard to the Jew, it is the principle which is established (for they were seeking the righteousness). With regard to the Gentile, since faith existed in the case supposed, he was justified, for justification was on that principle.

[* See here again how God is brought out in Himself. Compare Matthew 15:19-28.]

Is it then that faith overturned the authority of law? By no means. It established completely the authority of law; but it made man participate in

divine righteousness, while acknowledging his just and total condemnation by the law when under it — a condemnation which made another righteousness necessary, since according to the law man had none — had none of his own. The law demanded righteousness, but it showed sin was there. If righteousness which it demanded had not been necessary, when it failed to produce it in man, there was no need of another. Now faith affirmed this need and the validity of man's condemnation under law, by making the believer participate in this other righteousness, which is that of God. That which the law demanded it did not give; and even, because it demanded it, man failed to produce it. To have given it would have effaced the obligation. God acts in grace, when the obligation of the law is fully maintained in condemnation. He gives righteousness, because it must be had. He does not efface the obligation of the law, according to which man is totally condemned;* but, while recognising and affirming the justice of that condemnation, He glorifies Himself in grace by granting a divine righteousness to man, when he had no human righteousness to present before God in connection with the obligations imposed on him by the law. Nothing ever put divine sanction on the law like the death of Christ, who bore its curse, but did not leave us under it. Faith does not then annul law; it fully establishes its authority. It shows man righteously condemned under it, and maintains the authority of the law in that condemnation, for it holds all who are under it to be under the curse.**

[* The law is the perfect rule of right and wrong for every child of Adam in itself, though only given to the Jews. But it was not arbitrary. It took up all the relationships in which men stood, gave a perfect rule as to them, and the sanction of God's authority to them, with a penal sanction. But now we have something much higher, not what man ought to be, but God Himself glorified.]

[** Hence those who put Christians under law do not maintain its authority; for they hold them exempt from its curse, though they break it.]

The reader will remark that what is distinctly set forth to the end of this third chapter is the blood of Christ as applying itself to the sins of the old man, hence making forgiving a righteous thing, and the believer clear from sins, because cleared by Christ's blood. This met all the guilt of the old man.

We now enter on another aspect of that which justifies, but still proves sins; not yet, however, putting us in a new place — that of resurrection, in connection with, and consequent on, this.

CHAPTER 4. In dealing with the Jew, and even in dealing with the question of righteousness, there was, besides the law, another consideration of great weight both with the Jews themselves and in the dealings of God. What of Abraham, called of God to be the parent-stock, the father of the faithful? The apostle, therefore, after having set forth the relation in which faith stood towards the law by the introduction of the righteousness of God, takes up the question of the ground on which Abraham was placed as well-pleasing to God in righteousness. For the Jew might have admitted his personal failure under the law, and pleaded the enjoyment of privilege under Abraham. If we consider him then thus according to the flesh (that is, in connection with the privileges that descended from him as inheritance for his children) and take our place under him in the line of succession to enjoy those privileges, on what principle does this set us? On the same principle of faith. He would have had something to boast of if he was justified by works; but before God it was not so. For the scriptures say, “Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness. Now to him that worketh is the reward not counted of grace, but of debt. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him who justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.” For thereby, in fact, he glorifies God in the way that God desires to be glorified, and according to the revelation He has made of Himself in Christ.

Thus the testimony born by Abraham’s case is to justification by faith. David also supports this testimony and speaks of the blessedness of the man to whom righteousness is imputed without works. He whose iniquities are pardoned, whose sins are covered, to whom the Lord does not impute sin — he is the man whom David calls blessed. But this supposed man to be a sinner and not righteous in himself. It was a question of what God was in grace to such a one, and not of what he was to God, or rather when he was a sinner. His blessedness was that God did not impute to him the sins he had committed, not that he was righteous in himself before God. Righteousness for man was found in the grace of God. Here it is identified with non-imputation of sins to man, guilty through committing them. No sin is imputed.

Was then this righteousness for the circumcision only? Now our thesis is, that God counted Abraham to be righteous by faith. But was he circumcised when this took place? Not so; he was uncircumcised. Righteousness then is by faith, and for the uncircumcised through faith — a testimony that was overwhelming to a Jew, because Abraham was the beau ideal to which all his ideas of excellence and of privilege referred. Circumcision was only a seal to the righteousness by faith which Abraham possessed in uncircumcision, that he might be the father of all believers who were in the same state of uncircumcision, that righteousness might be imputed to them also; and the father of circumcision — that is, the first model of a people truly set apart for God — not only with regard to the circumcised, but to all those who should walk in the steps of his faith when uncircumcised. For, after all, the promise that he should be heir of the world was not made to Abraham nor to his seed in connection with the law, but with righteousness by faith. For if they who are on the principle of law are heirs, the faith by which Abraham received it is vain, and the promise made of none effect;* for, on the contrary, the law produces wrath — and that is a very different thing from bringing into the enjoyment of a promise — for where there is no law there is no transgression. Observe, he does not say there is no sin; but where there is no commandment, there is none to violate. Now, the law being given to a sinner, wrath is necessarily the consequence of its imposition.

[* The careful reader of Paul's epistles must attend to the use of this word "for." In very many cases it does not express an inference, but turns to some collateral subject which, in the apostle's mind, would lead to the same conclusion, or some deeper general principle, which lay at the groundwork of the argument, enlarging the sphere of vision in things connected with it.]

This is the negative side of the subject. The apostle shows that with regard to the Jews themselves, the inheritance could not be on the principle of law without setting Abraham aside, for to him the inheritance had been given by promise, and this implied that it was by faith: for we believe in a promise, we do not ourselves fulfill a promise that has been made to us. Accordingly the righteousness of Abraham was — according to scripture — through this same faith. It was imputed to him for righteousness.

This principle admitted the Gentiles; but here it is established with regard to the Jews themselves or rather with regard to the ways of God, in such a manner as to exclude the law as a means of obtaining the inheritance of

God. The consequence with regard to Gentiles believing the gospel is stated in verse 16, “Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace, to the end that the promise might be sure to all the seed” of Abraham to whom the promise was made; not to that only which was under the law, but to all that had the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all before God, as it is written, “I have made thee a father of many nations.”

Thus we have the great principle established. It is by faith, before and without law;* and the promise is made to man in uncircumcision, and he is justified by believing it.

[* Lit. “apart from law,” which had nothing to do with it.]

Another element is now introduced. Humanly speaking, the fulfillment of the promise was impossible, for in that respect both Abraham and Sarah were as dead, and the promise must be believed in against all hope, resting on the almighty power of Him who raises the dead, and calls things that are not as though they were. This was Abraham’s faith. He believed the promise that he should be the father of many nations, because God had spoken, counting on the power of God, thus glorifying Him, without calling in question anything that He had said by looking at circumstances; therefore this also was counted to him for righteousness. He glorified God according to what God was. Now, this was not written for his sake alone the same faith shall be imputed to us also for righteousness — faith in God as having raised up Jesus from the dead. It is not here faith in Jesus, but in Him who came in power into the domain of death, where Jesus lay because of our sins, and brought Him forth by His power, the mighty activity of the love of God who brought Him — who had already born all the punishment of our sins — out from under all their consequences; so that, by believing God who has done this, we embrace the whole extent of His work, the grace and the power displayed in it; and we thus know God. Our God is the God who has done this. He has Himself raised up Jesus from among the dead, who was delivered for our offenses and raised again for our justification. Our sins were already upon Him. The active intervention of God delivered Him who lay in death because He had born them. It is not only a resurrection of the dead, but from among the dead — the intervention of God to bring forth in righteousness the One who had glorified Him. By believing in such a God we understand that it is Himself who, in raising Christ from among the dead, has delivered us Himself from

all that our sins had subjected us to; because He has brought back in delivering power Him who underwent it for our sakes.

Thus, being justified by faith, we have peace with God. Remark here also the difference of Abraham's faith and ours. He believed God could perform what He promised. We are called to believe He has performed. Faith in God's word, believing God, and this faith laying hold on His power in resurrection, is faith that this has lifted us out* of the whole effect of our sins. It reposes in God's power as having wrought this deliverance for us, and justified us therein. Christ has been delivered for our offenses and raised again for our justification.**

[* Not that the body of course is yet renewed.]

[** I reject entirely the interpretation "because we have been justified." It is not the force of the Greek, and by excluding faith from our being justified contradicts the beginning of chapter 5.]

The apostle had established the great principles. He comes now to the source and application of all (that is to say, their application to the condition of the soul in its own feelings). He sets before us the effect of these truths when received by faith through the power of the Holy Ghost. The work is done; the believer has part in it, and is justified. Having been justified, we have peace with God, we stand in divine favor, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. We believe in a God who has intervened in power to raise Him from the dead who had born our offenses, and who, being raised, is the eternal witness that our sins are put away, and that the only true God is He who has done it in love. I have then peace with Him; all my sins are blotted outannulled — by the work of Christ; my unburdened heart knows the Savior God. I stand as a present thing in that grace or favor, God's blessed present favor resting on me, which is better than life. Through Christ, entered into His presence, I am even now in the enjoyment of His favor, in present grace. All the fruits of the old man are cancelled before God by the death of Christ. There cannot be a question as to my sins between me and God. He has nothing to impute to methat has been all settled in Christ's death and resurrection. As to the present time, I am brought into His presence in the enjoyment of His favor. Grace characterises my present relationship with God. Further, all my sins having been put away according to the requirements of God's glory, and Christ being risen from the dead, having met all that glory, I rejoice in the

hope of the glory of God It is a full well-grounded hope of being in it, not a coming short of it. All is connected with God Himself, with, and according to, His perfections, the favor of God, and His glory for our hope. All is connected with His power in resurrection — peace with God already settled, the present favor of God, and the hope of glory.

Remark here that justification is distinct from peace. “Having been justified, we have peace.” Justification is my true state before God, by virtue of the work of Christ, of His death, and of resurrection. Faith, thus knowing God, is at peace with God; but this is a result, like the present enjoyment of the grace wherein we stand. Faith believes in the God who has done this, and who — exercising His power in love and in righteousness — has raised from the dead the One who bore my sins, having entirely abolished them, and having perfectly glorified God in so doing. On this ground, too, “by Him” we have found access into the full favor of God in which we stand. And what is the result? It is glory; we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. It is God who is the root and the accomplisher of all. It is the gospel of God, the power of God in salvation, the righteousness of God, and it is into the glory of God that we are introduced in hope. Such is the efficacy of this grace with regard to us; it is peace, grace or favor, glory. One would say, This is all we can have: the past, present, and future are provided for.

Nevertheless there is more. First, practical experience. We pass in fact through tribulations; but we rejoice in this, because it exercises the heart, detaches us from the world, subdues the will, the natural working of the heart, purifies it from those things which dim our hope by filling it with present things, in order that we may refer more to God in all things, which, after all, are entirely directed by Him whose faithful grace ministered all this to us. We learn better that the scene in which we move passes away and changes, and is but a place of exercise, and not the proper sphere of life. Thus hope, founded on the work of Christ, becomes more clear, more disentangled from the mixture of that which is of man here below; we discern more clearly that which is unseen and eternal, and the links of the soul are more complete and entire with that which is on before us.

Experience, which might have discouraged nature, works hope, because, come what may, we have the key to all, because the love of God who has given us this hope, made clearer by these exercises, is shed abroad in our

hearts by the Holy Ghost who is given to us, who is the God of love dwelling in us.

Nevertheless, while giving this inward foundation of joy, the Spirit is careful to refer it to God, and to what He has done outside us, as regards the proof we have of it, in order that the soul may be built upon that which is in Him, and not on that which is in ourselves. This love is indeed in us; it sweetly explains all; but the love which is there through the presence of the Holy Ghost is the love of God, proved, namely, in that when we were destitute of all strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. The due time was when man had been demonstrated to be ungodly, and without strength to come out of this condition, although God, under the law, showed him the way. Man can devote himself when he has an adequate motive; God has displayed the love that was peculiar* to Himself, in that, when there was no motive for Him in us, when we were nothing but sinners, Christ died for us! The source was in Himself, or rather was Himself. What a joy to know that it is in Him and of Him that we have all these things!

[* The word is emphatic in the original, His own love, v. 8.]

God, then, having reconciled us to Himself according to the prompting of His own heart, when we were enemies, will much more, now that we are justified, go on to the end; and we shall be saved from wrath through Christ. Accordingly he adds, speaking of the means, "If we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son," by that which was, so to speak, His weakness, "much more shall we be saved by his life," the mighty energy in which He lives eternally. Thus the love of God makes peace with regard to that which we were, and gives us security with regard to our future, making us happy withal in the present. And it is that which God is that secures to us all these blessings. He is lovefull of consideration for us, full of wisdom.

But there is a second "not only," after our state — peace, grace, and glory — what seemed complete and is complete salvation, had been established. "Not only" do we joy in tribulation, but we joy in God. We glory in Himself. This is the second part of the Christian's blessed experience of the joy which results from our knowledge of God's love in Christ, and our reconciliation by Him. The first was that he gloried in tribulation because

of its effect, divine love being known. The second is the love of God Himself in man. This known, we glory, not only in our salvation, and even in tribulation, but knowing such a Savior God (a God who has raised up Jesus from the dead, and has saved us in His love), we glory in Him. Higher joy than this we cannot have.

This closes this section of the epistle, in which, through the propitiation made by Christ, the putting away of our sins, and the love of God Himself, has been fully made good and revealed: peace, grace possessed, and glory in hope; and that by the pure love of God Himself known in Christ's dying for sinners. It is purely of God and thus divinely perfect. It was no matter of experience, whatever joy flowed from it, but God's own acting from Himself, and so revealing Himself in what He is. Up to this, sins and personal guilt are treated of; now, sin and the state of the race. The pure favor of God towards us, beginning with us as sinners, is wonderfully brought out, going on to our rejoicing in Himself who has been, and is, such to us.

Having given the foundation and the source of salvation, and the confidence and enjoyment that flow from it, having based all on God, who had to do with those who were nothing but sinners devoid of all strength, and that by the death of Christ, the question of our sins was settled — that for which each man would have had to be judged according to what each had respectively done. Lawless, or under law, all were guilty; a propitiatory, or mercy-seat, was set forth in the precious blood of Christ, peace made for the guilty, and God revealed in love. But this has carried us up higher. We have to do with God, and man as he is as a present thing. It is a question of sinful man; the Jew had no privilege here, he had nothing to boast of. He could not say, sin came in by us and by the law. It is man, sin, and grace that are in question. The apostle takes up this fundamental and essential question — not sins and guilt to be judged of hereafter if not repented of, but the present state of man.

Man had nothing to boast of either. The God of grace is before our eyes, acting with regard to sin, when there was nothing else, save that law had aggravated the case by transgressions. Now sin came in by one man, and by sin death. This brings us to the condition of the race, not merely the acts of the individuals. That condition was exclusion from God, and an evil

nature. All were alike in it, though surely each had added his own personal sins and guilt. Sin had come in by one, and death by sin. And thus death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned. For sin was in the world before the law. Nor did the law add much to the advantage of man's condition; it definitively imputed* his sin to him by giving him knowledge of it and forbidding it. Nevertheless, although there had been no imputation according to the government of God in virtue of an imposed and known rule, yet death reigned — a constant proof of sin (moreover, the history of Genesis made all this incontestable, even to the Jew) over those who had not broken a covenant founded on a known commandment, as Adam** had done; and the Jews also, after the law was given. Men, between Adam and Moses, when there was no question of a law, as there was both before and after that interval, died just the same — sin reigned.

[* The word “imputed” in this passage (chap. 5:13) is not the same as righteousness imputed, or faith imputed for righteousness. It means an act (or sum) put to the account of another, not esteeming the person to be such or such.]

[** This is a quotation from Hosea 6:7 according to its true sense, which accuses Israel of having done the same thing as Adam. “But they, like Adam, have transgressed the covenant.”

We must observe here that from the end of verse 12 to that of 17 is a parenthesis: only the idea is developed, as in similar cases. In the parenthesis the apostle, after having presented Adam as the figure of Him who was to come — of Christ, argues that the character of the gift cannot be inferior to that of the evil. If the sin of the one first man was not confined in its effects to him who committed it, but extended to all those who as a race were connected with him, with much greater reason shall the grace which is by one, Christ Jesus, not end in Him, but embrace the many under Him also. And with regard to the thing, as well as to the person — and here the law is in view one single offense brought in death, but grace remits a multitude of offenses. Thus it could suffice for that which the law had made necessary. And, as to the effect, death has reigned; but by grace, not only shall life reign, but we shall reign in life by One according to the abundance of grace — by Jesus Christ.

In verse 18 the general argument is resumed in a very abstract way. “By one offense,” he says, “towards all for condemnation, even so by one accomplished righteousness (or act of righteousness) towards all men, for

justification of life.” One offense bore — in its bearing, so to speak, referred to all, and so it was with the one act of righteousness. This is the scope of the action in itself. Now for the application: for as by the disobedience of one man (only) many are constituted sinners, so by the obedience of one (only) many are constituted righteous. It is still the thought that the act of the individual is not confined, as to its effects, within the limits of his own person. It affects many others, bringing them under the consequences of that act. It is said “all,” when the scope of the action* is spoken of; “the many,” when it is the definitive effect with regard to men; that is, the “many” who were in connection with him who accomplished the act.

[* The same distinction, with the same difference in the preposition, is found in connection with the righteousness of God, when the apostle speaks of the efficacy of the blood: only he points out who the many are, because the object of faith is presented rather than the efficacy of the work, although this is supposed, chapter 3:22 “righteousness of God by faith of Jesus Christ towards all and upon all those who believe”; unto all, and upon all believers. So here it was by one offense “towards all,” and then the many connected with Christ are constituted righteous by His obedience.]

This then was outside the law, though the law might aggravate the evil. It was a question of the effect of the acts of Adam and of Christ, and not of the conduct of individuals, to which evidently the law related. It is by one man’s disobedience the many (all men) were made sinners, not by their own sins. Of sins each has his own: here it is a state of sin common to all. Of what use then was the law? It came in, as it were, exceptionally, and accessory to the chief fact, “that the offense* might abound.” But not only where the offense, but where sin abounded — for under the law and without the law it has abounded — grace has superabounded; in order that, as sin has reigned in death, grace should reign through righteousness in eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord. If where sin reigns righteousness had reigned, it would have been to condemn the whole world. It is grace that reigns — the sovereign love of God. Righteousness is on a level with the evil, when it deals with evil, by the fact that it is righteousness; but God is above it, and acts, and can act — has a right to act — according to His own nature; and He is love. Is it that He sanctions unrighteousness and sin? No, in His love He brings about the accomplishment of divine righteousness by Jesus Christ. He has accomplished in Him that divine righteousness in raising Him to His right hand. But this is in virtue of a work wrought for

us, in which He has glorified God. Thus He is our righteousness, we the righteousness of God in Him. It is the righteousness of faith, for we have it by believing in Him. It is love which — taking the character of grace when sin is in question — reigns, and gives eternal life above and beyond death — life that comes from above and ascends thither again; and that in divine righteousness, and in connection with that righteousness, magnifying it and manifesting it through the work of Jesus Christ, in whom we have this life, when He had wrought what brought out divine righteousness, in order that we might possess eternal life and glory according to it. If grace reigns, it is God who reigns. That righteousness should be maintained is that which His nature required. But it is more than maintained according to the measure of the claim God had on man as such. Christ was perfect surely as man; but He has glorified what God is Himself, and, He being raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, God has glorified His righteousness by setting Him at His right hand, as He did His love in giving Him. It is now righteousness in salvation given by grace to those who possessed none — given in Jesus, who by His work laid the full ground for it in glorifying God with regard even to sin, in the place where in this respect all that God is has been displayed.

[* Not sin. Sin was already there; the law made each of its motions a positive offense.]

The fulfillment of the law would have been man's righteousness: man might have gloried in it. Christ has glorified God — a most weighty point in connection with righteousness, connecting it withal with glory. And grace imparts this to the sinner by imputation, accounting him righteous according to it, introducing him in the glory which Christ merited by His work — the glory in which He was as Son before the world began.

But alas! in this glorious redemption accomplished by grace, which substitutes the righteousness of God and the person of the second Adam for the sin and the person of the first, the perversity of the flesh can find occasion for the sin which it loves, or at least to charge the doctrine with it. If it is by the obedience of One that I am constituted righteous, and because grace superabounds, let us sin that it may abound: that does not touch this righteousness, and only glorifies this superabundance of grace. Is this the apostle's doctrine? or a legitimate consequence of his doctrine? In no wise. The doctrine is, that we are brought into God's presence

through death, in virtue of the work which Christ therein accomplished, and by having a part in that death. Can we live in the sin to which we are dead? It is to contradict oneself in one's own words. But, being baptised unto Christ (in His name, to have part with Him, according to the truth contained in the revelation we have of Him), I am baptised to have part in His death for through this it is that I have this righteousness in which He appears before God, and I in Him. But it is to sin that He has died. He has done with it for ever. When He died, He who knew no sin came out of that condition of life in flesh and blood, to which in us sin attached, in which we were sinners; and in which He the sinless One, in the likeness of sinful flesh and as a sacrifice for sin, was made sin for us.* We have then been buried with Him by baptism for death (v. 4), having part in it, entering into it by baptism which represents it, in order that, as Christ was raised up from among the dead by the glory of the Father, we also should walk in newness of life. In a word I am brought into the participation of this divine and perfect righteousness by having part in death unto sin; it is impossible therefore that it should be to live in it. Here it is not duty that is spoken of, but the nature of the thing. I cannot die to a thing in order to live in it. The doctrine itself refutes as absolute nonsense the argument of the flesh, which under the pretense of righteousness will not recognise our need of grace.**

[* This does not refer simply to bearing our sins: that is the subject of the first part of the epistle. The condition in which we were, as a whole race, was that of fallen sinful Adam. Christ the sinless One came and stood for us and God's glory substitutively; that is, as a sacrifice in that place, He was made sin, underwent the forsaking of God, and, glorifying God, died in and to the place, to the whole condition of being, in which we were, and in which, as made sin, He stood for us before God. This work, though done as and for man, I doubt not, goes farther than our salvation. He appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. He takes away, as God's Lamb, the sin of the world. His sacrifice is the basis of the condition of that new heaven and new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness.]

[** Note, we are not here viewed as risen with Christ; the believer being always viewed here, as I have said, as being on the earth, though alive in Christ and justified, it is used as a ground for practice and walk here.]

The character of this new life, into which the resurrection of Christ has brought us, is presented here in a striking way. Christ had perfectly glorified God in dying; also even in dying was He the Son of the living God. It is not all, therefore, that He could not be holden of it, true as that

is because of His Person; His resurrection was also a necessity of the glory of God the Father. All that was in God was compelled to do it by His glory itself (even as Christ had glorified all), His justice. His love, His truth, His power; His glory, in that He could not low death to have the victory over the One who was faithful; His relationship as Father, who ought not, could not, leave His Son in bondage to the fruit of sin and to the power of the enemy. It was due to Christ on the part of God, due to His own glory as God and Father, necessary also, in order to show the reflex of His own glory, to manifest it according to His counsels, and that in man. Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father. All that the Father is came into it, engaged to give Jesus the triumph of resurrection, of victory over death, and to give resurrection the brightness of His own glory. Having entered, as the fruit of the operation of His glory, into this new position, this is the model — the character — of that life in which we live before God.*

[* Indeed Father, Son, and Holy Ghost were all engaged in the resurrection of Christ. He raised the temple of His body in three days, was quickened by the Spirit, and raised by the glory of the Father.]

Without this manifestation in Christ, God, although acting and giving testimonies of His power and of His goodness, remained veiled and hidden. In Christ glorified, the center of all the counsels of God, we see the glory of the Lord with unveiled face, and every mouth confesses Him Lord to the glory of God the Father.

Our life ought to be the practical reflection of this glory of the Lord in heaven. The power that brings us into association with Him in this place, and still works in us, is shown at the end of the first chapter of the Ephesians* But there it is to introduce our resurrection with Christ. Here it is Christ's own resurrection, the doctrine, or the thing in itself, and its consequences and moral import with regard to the individual living here below, in view of his relationship with God as a responsible man. It is an altogether new life. We are alive unto God through Him.

[* To which we may add in full effect the end of the third. Details are found elsewhere.]

Identified thus with Him in the likeness of His death, we shall also enter into that of His resurrection. We see here that resurrection is a consequence which he deduces as a fact, not a mystical participation in the

thing; knowing this first (as the great foundation of everything), that our old man — that in us which pleads for sin as the fruit of the perfect grace of God — is crucified with Christ, in order that the whole body of sin should be destroyed so that we should no more serve sin. He takes the totality and the system of sin in a man, as a body which is nullified by death; its will is judged and no longer masters us. For he who is dead is justified* from sin. Sin can no longer be laid to his charge as a thing that exists in a living and responsible man. Therefore, being thus dead with Christ — professedly by baptism, really by having Him for our life who died — we believe that we shall live with Him; we belong to that other world where He lives in resurrection. The energy of the life in which He lives is our portion: we believe this, knowing that Christ, being raised from among the dead, dieth no more. His victory over death is complete and final; death has no more dominion over Him. Therefore it is that we are sure of resurrection, namely, on account of this complete victory over death, into which He entered for us in grace. By faith we have entered into it with Him, having our part in it according to His therein. It is the power of the life of love that brought Him there. Dying, He died unto sin. He went down even to death rather than fail in maintaining the glory of God. Until death, and even in death, He had to do with sin, though there were none in Him, and with temptation; but there He has done with all for ever. We die unto sin by participating in His death. The consequence — by the glory of the Father — is resurrection. Now, therefore, “in that he died, he died unto sin once for all; in that he liveth, he liveth unto God.”

[* The word is “justified.” And here we see distinctly the important difference between sin and sins: you cannot charge a dead man with sin. He has no perverse will, no evil lusts. He may have committed many sins while alive, he may or may not be justified from them. But you cannot accuse him of sin. And, as we have seen, from chapter 5:12, we are treating of sin — of man’s state — not of sins.]

Thus He has nothing more to do with sin. He lives, only perfectly, without reference in His life to anything else, unto God. In that He lives, His life is in relationship to God only.* We also then ought to reckon — for it is by faith — that we are dead to sin and alive to God, having no other object of life than God, in Christ Jesus. I ought to consider myself dead, I have a right to do so, because Christ has died for me; and being alive now for ever unto God, I ought to consider myself as come out, by the life

which I live through Him, from the sin to which I died. For this is the Christ I know; not a Christ living on the earth in connection with me according to the nature in which I live here below. In that nature I am proved to be a sinner, and incapable of true relationship with Him. He has died for me as living of that life, and entered, through resurrection, into a new state of life outside the former. It is there that as a believer I know Him. I have part in death, and in life through Him who is risen. I have righteousness by faith, but righteousness as having part with Christ dead and raised again, as being therefore by faith dead unto sin.

[* This is a wonderful expression. As to faithfulness His life was spent for God, He lived to God. But now His life knows nothing but God.]

And this is the essential difference of this part of the epistle. It is not that Christ has shed His blood for our sins, but that we have died with Him. There is an end for faith to our state and standing in flesh. The Christ who is become our life did die, and, as alive through Him, what He has done is mine; and I have to say I died. I reckon myself dead.* The apostle deduces the evident consequence: "Let not sin, therefore, reign in your mortal body." Do not yield your members as instruments to the sin to which you are dead by Christ; but as alive, as awakened up from amongst the dead, yield your members as instruments of righteousness to God unto whom you live. The body is now the mere instrument of divine life; and we are free to use it for God as such. For in fact sin shall not have dominion over us, because we are not under the law but under grace. Here it is not the principle but the power that is spoken of. In principle we are dead to sin, according to faith; in practice it has no power over us. Observe that the source of practical power to conquer sin is not in the law, but in grace.

[* Note here, the Epistle to the Romans does not go on to say we are risen with Christ. That leads on necessarily to union, and is Ephesian ground. Only we must remark that death and resurrection never go on to the heavenly state; they are the subjective experimental state. In Ephesians, when dead in sins, we are taken, quickened, and put into Christ, as Christ was raised and put into glory above the heavens: simply God's work. Here it is individual: we are alive in Him. We shall have part in His resurrection, walking in newness of life. It is personal and practical: man, as we have seen, alive on earth.]

Now it is true that, not being under the law, the rule under which we are placed is not that of imputation but of non-imputation. Is this a reason why we should sin? No! there is a reality in these things. We are slaves to

that which we obey. Sin leads to death; obedience to practical righteousness. We are upon the wider principle of a new nature and grace; not the application of an external rule to a nature which was not, and could not be subject to it. And, in truth, having been in the former case, the disciples in Rome had given proof of the justice of the apostle's argument by walking in the truth. Set free from the slavery of sin, they had become (to use human language) the slaves of righteousness, and this did not end in itself; practical righteousness developed itself by the setting apart of the whole being for God with ever-growing intelligence. They were obedient in such-and-such things; but the fruit was sanctification, a spiritual capacity, in that they were separated from evil, unto a deeper knowledge of God.* Sin produced no fruit, it ended in death; but set free from sin and become servants to God — the true righteousness of obedience, like that of Christ Himself — they had their fruit already in holiness, and the end should be eternal life. For the wages of sin was death, the gift of God was eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. Now this life was living unto God, and this is not sin; nevertheless it is grace. Here the apostle, whose subject is judicial righteousness before God, approximates to John, and connects his doctrine with that of the First Epistle of John, who there, on the other hand, enters upon the doctrine of propitiation and acceptance when speaking of the impartation of life. The appeal is very beautiful to a man in true liberty — the liberty of grace, being dead to sin. He is set wholly free by death. To whom is he now going to yield himself? For now he is free; is he going to give himself up to sin? It is a noble appeal.**

[* Compare Exodus 33:13.]

[** It is not, note, an appeal to sinners as sometimes used, but to those already set free.]

CHAPTER 7. We have considered the effect of the death and resurrection of Christ with reference to justification and to practical life. In the early part of the epistle (to chap. 5:11) He has died for our sins. From chapter 5:12, He having died, we reckon ourselves dead to sin and alive to God through Him. Our state as under the two heads, Adam and Christ, has been discussed. Another point remained to be treated of by the apostle — the effect of this last doctrine upon the question of the law. The Christian, or, to say better, the believer, has part in Christ as a Christ who has died, and lives to God, Christ being raised from the dead through Him. What is the

force of this truth with regard to the law (for the law has only power over a man so long as he lives)? Being then dead, it has no longer any hold upon him. This is our position with regard to the law. Does that weaken its authority? No. For we say that Christ has died, and so have we therefore; but the law no longer applies to one that is dead.

In bringing out the effect of this truth, the apostle uses the example of the law of marriage. The woman would be an adulteress if she were to be to another while her husband was alive; but when her husband is dead she is free. The application of this rule changes the form of the truth. It is certain that one cannot be under the authority of two husbands at once. One excludes the other. The law, and Christ risen, cannot be associated in their authority over the soul. But in our case the law does not lose its force (that is, its rights over us) by its dying, but by our dying. It reigns over us only while we live. It is with this destruction of the bond by death the apostle began. The husband died, but in application it is annulled by our dying. We are then dead to the law by the body of Christ (for we have to do with a Christ risen after His death), that we should be to Him who is raised from the dead, in order that we should bear fruit for God; but we cannot belong to the two at once.

When we were in the flesh — when, as man, any one was held to be walking in the responsibility of a man living in the life of nature, as a child of Adam, the law to him was the rule and perfect measure of that responsibility, and the representative of the authority of God. The passions which impelled to sin acted in that nature, and, meeting with this barrier of the law, found in it that which, by resisting it, excited the will, and suggested, even by the prohibition itself, the evil which the flesh loved and which the law forbade; and thus these passions acted in the members to produce fruit which brought in death. But now he was outside its authority, he had disappeared from its pursuit,* being dead in that law to the authority of which we had been subjected. Now to have died under the law would have been also condemnation; but it is Christ who went through this and took the condemnation, while we have the deliverance from the old man which is in death. Our old man is crucified with Him, so that it is our deliverance to die to the law. It did but condemn us, but its authority ends with the life of him who was under that authority. And being dead in Christ, the law can no longer reach those who had been under it: we belong

to the new husband, to Christ risen, in order that we should serve in newness of spirit, the goodwill of grace in our new life, and — as the apostle will afterwards explain, by the Holy Ghost** not in the bondage of the letter.

[* It is thus, I doubt not, that this passage should be read. My reader may perhaps find “the law being dead.” The expression, “dead to that wherein we were held,” alludes to verse 4, where it is said, “ye died to the law.” Christ under the law died under its curse. To be in the flesh is to live under the responsibility of a man in his natural life — a child of fallen Adam. In that life (unless it is lawless) the law is the rule of human righteousness. We must not confound the flesh being in the Christian with a man being in the flesh. The principle of the old life is still there, but it is in no way the principle of his relationship to God. When I am in the flesh, it is the principle of my relationship with God; but, its will being sinful, it is impossible that I should please God. I may seek for righteousness in it — it will be on the ground of law. But the Christian is dead by Christ to all that state of things — does not live of that life; his life is in Christ, and he has received the Holy Ghost. The flesh is no longer the principle of his relationship with God; on that ground he has owned himself lost. Elsewhere we learn that he is in Christ on the ground upon which Christ is before God. The Holy Ghost, as we shall see, places him there in power by faith, Christ being his life.]

[** He does not say here by the Spirit, because he has not yet spoken of the gift of the Holy Ghost in virtue of the work of Christ. He only speaks of the manner, the character, of the service rendered.]

This is the doctrine. Now for the conclusions that may be deduced from it. Is the law, then, sin, that we are withdrawn from its authority? By no means. But it gave the knowledge of sin, and imputed it. For the apostle says, that he would not have understood that the mere impulse of his nature was sin, if the law had not said, Thou shalt not covet. But the commandment gave sin occasion to attack the soul. Sin, that evil principle of our nature,* making use of the commandment to provoke the soul to the sin that is forbidden (but which it took occasion to suggest by the interdiction itself, acting also on the will which resisted the interdiction), produced all manner of concupiscence. For, without the law, sin could not plunge the soul into this conflict, and give the sentence of death in it, by making it responsible in conscience for the sin which, without this law, it would not have known. Under the law lust acted, with the conscience of sin in the heart; and the result was death in the conscience, without any deliverance for the heart from the power of concupiscence.

[* It will be remembered that all through this part of the epistle (that is, from chapter 5:12) we have to do with sin, not with sins.]

Without the law, sin did not thus agitate a will which refused submission to that which checked it. For a barrier to the will awakens and excites the will: and the conscience of sin, in the presence of God's prohibition, is a conscience under sentence of death. Thus the commandment, which in itself was unto life, became in fact unto death. "Do this and live" became death, by showing the exigencies of God to a sinful nature whose will rejected them, and to a conscience which could not but accept the just condemnation.

A man walks in quiet indifference, doing his own will, without knowledge of God, or consequently any sense of sin or rebellion. The law comes, and he dies under its just judgment, which forbids everything that he desires. Lust was an evil thing, but it did not reveal the judgment of God; on the contrary, it forgot it. But when the law was come, sin (it is looked at here as an enemy that attacks some person or place), knowing that the will would persist and the conscience condemn, seized the opportunity of the law, impelled the man in the direction contrary to the law, and slew him, in the conscience of sin which the law forbade on the part of God. Death to the man, on God's part in judgment, was the result. The law then was good and holy, since it forbade the sin, but in condemning the sinner.

Was death then brought in by that which was good? No. But sin, in order that it might be seen in its true light, employed that which was good to bring death upon the soul; and thus, by the commandment, became exceedingly sinful. In all this, sin is personified as some one who seeks to kill the soul.

[* Sin and death are correlative. The law is introduced in order to make manifest through the offense what they both are. The apostle first asks, "Is the law sin?" since its result was death to man. God forbid! but it gave the knowledge of sin, and wrote death upon the soul through judgment, man being a sinner. The second question is, "The law being thus good in itself, has it become death to me?" No. It is sin which (in order that it might appear in all its enormity) has slain me, using the law as a means, in my conscience. It found in man's condition the means of perverting this good thing, and making it death to him.]

Such then was the effect of the law, that first husband, seeing sin existed in man. To bring this out more plainly, the apostle communicates his spiritual apprehension of the experience of a soul under the law.

We must remark here, that the subject treated of is not the fact of the conflict between the two natures, but the effect of the law, supposing the will to be renewed, and the law to have obtained the suffrage of the conscience and to be the object of the heart's affections — a heart which recognises the spirituality of the law. This is neither the knowledge of grace, nor of the Savior Christ, nor of the Spirit.* The chief point here is not condemnation (although the law does indeed leave the soul under judgment), but the entire want of strength to fulfill it, that it may not condemn us. The law is spiritual; but I, as man, am carnal, the slave of sin, whatever the judgment of my inward man may be: for I allow not that which I do. That which I would I do not; and that which I hate I practice. Thus loving and thus hating, I consent to the law that it is good. It is not that I do the evil as to moral intent of the will, for I would not the evil which I do; on the contrary I hate it. It is the sin then that dwells in me, for in fact in me (that is, in my flesh — the whole natural man as he is) there exists no good, for even where there is the will, I do not find the way to perform any good. Power is totally wanting.

[* There is also conflict, when the Holy Ghost dwells in us. Galatians 5 speaks of this. "The flesh lusteth against the Spirit," etc. But then we are not under the law, as the apostle goes on to say, "If ye are led by the Spirit, ye are not under the law." Here the person spoken of is under the law: everything is in connection with the law. The law is spiritual; we consent to the law, we delight in the law. Neither Christ nor the Spirit is mentioned until the question of deliverance comes in.]

In verse 20 the apostle, having this explanation, lays stress upon the I and me. "If that which I myself would" (we should read), and "It is no longer myself that does it, but the sin that dwelleth in me." I find then evil present with the myself which would do good; for, as to the inward man, I delight in the law of God. But there is in me another constant principle which wars against the law of my mind, which brings me into captivity to this law of sin in my members. So that, whatever my desires may be, the better even that they are, I am myself a miserable man. Being man, and such a man, I cannot but be miserable. But, having come to this, an immense step has been taken.

The evil here spoken of is the evil that is in our nature, and the want of power to get rid of it. The forgiveness of sins had been fully taught. What distresses here is the present working of sin which we cannot get rid of. The sense of this is often a more painful thing than past sins, which the believer can understand as put away by the blood of Christ. But here we have the conscience of sin still in us, though we may hate it, and the question of deliverance is mixed up with our experience, at least till we have learned what is taught us in this part of the epistle, to judge the old man as sin in us, not ourselves, and reckon ourselves dead. Christ, through whom we now live, having died, and being a sacrifice for sin, our condemnation is impossible, while sin is condemned and we free through "the law of the Spirit of life in him." It is not forgiveness, but deliverance, sin in the flesh being condemned in the cross.

Under divine grace the renewed man learned three things. First, he has come to the discovery that in him, that is, in his flesh, there is no good thing; but, secondly, he has learned to distinguish between himself, who wills good, and sin which dwells in him; but, further, that when he wills good, sin is too strong for him. Having thus acquired knowledge of himself, he does not seek to be better in the flesh, but deliverance, and he has it in Christ. Power comes after. He is come to the discovery and to the confession that he has no power. He throws himself upon another. He does not say, How can I? or, How shall I? but, Who shall deliver me? Now it was when we were devoid of all strength that Christ died for the ungodly. This want of strength is discovered; and we find grace at the end, when with regard to what we are, and to all hope of amelioration in ourselves, grace is our only resource.

But happily, when we cast ourselves upon grace, there is nothing but grace before us. Deliverance is accomplished by our not being alive in the flesh at all: we have died away from it, and from under the law, which held us in bondage and condemnation, and we are married to another, Christ raised from the dead; and as soon as the distressed soul has said, "Who shall deliver me?" the answer is ready, "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord." The answer is not, He will deliver. Deliverance is already accomplished: he gives thanks.

The man was wretched in conflict under law, without knowledge of redemption. But he has died in the death of Christ out of the nature which made him so; he has quite done with himself. The deliverance of God is complete. The two natures are still opposed to each other, but the deliverance is not imperfect. This deliverance wrought of God, and the progress of its manifestation, are developed in the next chapter.

We may here remark that the apostle does not say, “We know that the law is spiritual, and we are carnal.” Had he done so, it would have been to speak of Christians, as such, in their proper and normal condition. It is the personal experience of what the flesh is under law, when the man is quickened, and not the state of a Christian as such before God. Observe, also, that the law is looked at from the point of view of christian knowledge” — we know” — when we are no longer under it, and when we are capable of judging concerning its whole import, according to the spirituality of him who judges: and who sees also, being spiritual, what the flesh is; because he is now not in the flesh, but in the Spirit.*

[* This gives the key to this — alas! because souls are not free — much spoken-of passage. It is not the present experience of any one, but a delivered person describing the state of an undelivered one. An undelivered person could not speak exactly thus, because he is uneasy as to the result for himself. A man in a morass does not quietly describe how a man sinks into it, because he fears to sink and stay there; when he is out, he describes how a man sinks there. The end of Romans 7 is a man out of the morass showing in peace the principle and manner in which one sinks in it. All this part of the epistle is more complicated than what precedes chapter 5:12, because our own experience is in conflict with what faith teaches us to say. If through grace I am forgiven and justified, there is no contradiction in my experience. It is what God has done for me outside myself. My debt is paid. But if I am to say, I am dead to sin, my experience contradicts it. Hence we have no rest in this respect, till we give up self or flesh as wholly bad and irremediable, and learn that, consequent on redemption, we are not in the flesh at all. Compare chapters 7 and 8.]

Literally, this passage is not the condition of anyone at all; but principles opposed to each other, the result of which is laid open by supposing a man under the law: the will always right, but good never done, evil always. Nevertheless to the conscience this is the practical condition of every renewed man under the law. We may remark one other important principle. Man in this condition is entirely taken up with himself; he desires good, he does not perform it, he does that which he would not. Neither Christ nor the Holy Ghost is named. In the normal condition of a

Christian, he is occupied with Christ. But what is expressed in this seventh chapter is the natural and necessary result of the law, when the conscience is awakened and the will renewed. For to will is present with him. But he is under law, sees its spirituality, consents to it, delights in it after the inner man, and cannot perform what is good. Sin has dominion over him. The sense of unanswered responsibility, and the absence of peace, cause the soul necessarily to turn in upon itself. It is taken up entirely with self, which is spoken of nearly forty times from verse 14. It is well to be so, rather than to be insensible. It is not peace.

This peace is found elsewhere, and it is in this; when reduced to the consciousness of one's own inability to do good towards God, one finds that God has done for us the good which we need. We are not only forgiven but delivered, and are in Christ, not in the flesh at all.

The conflict goes on, the opposition between the two natures continues, but we give thanks to God through our Lord Jesus Christ.* Remark here that deliverance is only found when there is the full conviction of our incapacity and want of power, as well as of our sins. It is much more difficult to arrive at this conviction of incapacity than at that of having sinned. But the sin of our nature — its irremediable perversity, its resistance to good, the law of sin in our members — is only known in its legal gravity by experience of the uselessness of our efforts to do well. Under the law the uselessness of these efforts leaves the conscience in distress and bondage, and produces the sense of its being impossible to be with God. Under grace the efforts are not useless, and the evil nature shows itself to us (either in communion with God, or by downfalls if we neglect communion) in all its deformity in presence of that grace. But in this chapter the experience of sin in the nature is presented as acquired under the law, in order that man may know himself in this position — may know what he is as regards his flesh, and that in fact he cannot succeed in this way in coming before God with a good conscience. He is under the first husband; death had not yet severed the bond as to the state of the soul.

[* The last verse of chapter 7 speaks of the abstract mind and character of the opposed natures; one the mind, however, and purpose of heart in the renewed man; the other, the fact of flesh being there, one "I myself," the other "my flesh." So the "I" is right; only it is not considered under the law or the contrary.]

We must now remember that this experience of the soul under the law is introduced parenthetically, to show the sinful condition to which grace applies and the effect of the law. Our subject is that the believer has part in the death of Christ and has died, and is alive through Him who is risen; that Christ, having by grace gone under death, having been made sin, has for ever done with that state in which He had to do with sin and death in the likeness of sinful flesh; and having for ever done with all that was connected with it, has entered by resurrection into a new order of things — a new condition before God, totally beyond the reach of all that to which He had subjected Himself for us, which in us was connected with our natural life, and beyond reach of the law which bound sin upon the conscience on God's part. In Christ we are in this new order of things.

“There is therefore now no condemnation to those which are in Christ Jesus” (chap. 8). He does not here speak of the efficacy of the blood in putting away sins (all-essential as that blood is, and the basis of all the rest), but of the new position entirely beyond the reach of everything to which the judgment of God applied. Christ had indeed been under the effect of the condemnation in our stead; but when risen He appears before God. Could there be a question there of sin, or of wrath, or of condemnation, or of imputation? Impossible! It was all settled before He ascended thither. He was there because it was settled. And that is the position of the Christian in Christ. Still, inasmuch as it is by resurrection, it is a real deliverance. It is the power of a new life, in which Christ is raised from the dead, and of which we live in Him. It is — as to this life of the saint — the power, efficacious and continued, and therefore called a law, by which Christ was raised from the dead — the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus; and it has delivered me from the law of sin and death which previously reigned in my members, producing fruit unto death. It is our connection with Christ in resurrection, witness of the power of life which is in Him, and that by the Holy Ghost, which links the “no condemnation” of our position with the energy of a new life, in which we are no longer subject to the law of sin, having died to it in His death, or to the law, whose claims ‘have ceased also necessarily for him who has died, for it has power over a man as long as he lives. Christ, in bearing its curse, has fully magnified it withal. We see, at the end of Ephesians 1, that it is the power of God Himself which delivers; and assuredly it had need be so

— that power which wrought the glorious change — to us this new creation.

This deliverance from the law of sin and death is not a mere experience (it will produce precious experiences); it is a divine operation, known by faith in His operation who raised up from the dead, known in all its power by its accomplishment in Jesus, in the efficacy of which we participate by faith. The difficulty of receiving it is that we find our experience clashing with it. That Christ has put away my sins, and that God has loved me, is a matter of simple faith through grace. That I am dead is apt to find itself contradicted in my heart. The process of chapter 7 must be gone through, and the condemnation of sin in the flesh seen in Christ's sacrifice for sin, and I alive by Him judging sin as a distinct thing (an enemy I have to deal with, not I), in order to have solid peace. It is not all that Christ has put away our sins. I live by Him risen, and am linked with this husband, and He being my life — the true "I" in me, I can say that I have died because He has. "I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." If so, I have died, for He has; as one taken into partnership has the advantages belonging to that acquired, before he was taken into it. That this is so is evident according to verse 3. God has done it in Christ, the apostle says; he does not say "in us." The result in us is found in verse 4. The efficacious operation, by which we reckon ourselves dead, was in Christ a sacrifice for sin. There sin in the flesh was condemned. God has done it, for it is always God, and God who has wrought, whom he brings forward in order to develop the gospel of God. The thing to condemn is indeed in us; the work which put an end to it for our true conscious state before God, has been accomplished in Christ, who has been pleased in grace, as we shall see, to put Himself into the position necessary for its accomplishment. Nevertheless, through participation in the life that is in Him, it becomes a practical reality to us: only this realisation has to contend with the opposition of the flesh; but not so as that we should walk in it.

One other point remains to be noticed here. In verse 2, we have the new life in its power in Christ, which sets us free from the law of sin and death. In verse 3, we have the old nature, sin in the flesh, dealt with, condemned, but in the sacrifice for sin in which Christ suffered and died, so that it is

done with for faith. This completes the deliverance and the knowledge of it.

The key to all this doctrine of the apostle's, and that which unites holy practice, the christian life, with absolute grace and eternal deliverance from condemnation, is the new position entirely apart from sin, which death gives to us, being alive in Christ now before God. The power of God, the glory of the Father, the operation of the Spirit, are found acting in the resurrection of Christ, and placing Him, who had born our sins and been made sin for us, in a new position beyond sin and death before God. And by faith I have part in His death, I participate in this life.

It is not only satisfaction made by Christ for sins committed, and glorifying God in His work — the basis, indeed, of all — but the deliverance of the person who was in sin, even as when Israel was brought out of Egypt. The blood had stayed the hand of God in judgment; the hand of God in power delivered them for ever at the Red Sea. Whatever they may have been, they were for that time with God who had guided them to His holy habitation.

Moreover, the first verses of this chapter sum up the result of God's work with regard to this subject in chapters 5:12 to the end, 6 and 7: no condemnation for those who are in Christ; the law of the Spirit of life in Him delivering from this law of sin and death; and that which the law could not do God has done.

It will be remarked that the deliverance is from the law of sin and death: in this respect the deliverance is absolute and complete. Sin is no longer at all a law. This deliverance, to one who loves holiness, who loves God, is a profound and immense subject of joy. The passage does not say that the flesh is changed — quite the contrary; one would not speak of the law of a thing which no longer existed. We have to contend with it, but it is no more a law; neither can it bring us under death in our conscience.

The law could not work this deliverance. It could condemn the sinner, but not the sin while delivering the sinner. But that which the law could not do — inasmuch as it required strength in man, while on the contrary he had only strength for sin — God has done. Now it is here that Christ's coming down among us, and even unto death, is set before us in all its importance

— His coming down without sin unto us and unto death. This is the secret of our deliverance. God, the God of all grace and of glory, has sent Him who was the eternal object of His delight, His own Son, in whom was all the energy and divine power of the Son of God Himself, to partake of flesh and blood in the midst of men, in the position in which we all are; ever in Himself without sin, but — to go down to the depth of the position in which we were, even to death — emptying Himself of His glory to be a man, “in the likeness of sinful flesh,” and being a man humbling Himself unto death, in order that the whole question of sin with God should be decided in the person of Christ, He being considered as in our position;* when in the likeness of sinful flesh He was made sin for us — “for sin,” as it is expressed (that is, a sacrifice for sin). He undertook to glorify God by suffering for that which man was. He accomplished it, making Himself a sacrifice for sin; and thus, not only our sins have been put away, but sin in the flesh (it was the state of man, the state of his being; and Christ was treated on the cross as though He were in it) has been condemned in that which was a sacrifice of propitiation for the sinner.

[* The reader will understand that Jesus could take this position and be made sin, precisely because He was Himself absolutely exempt in every way from it. The power of resurrection in Christ dead was the power of holiness in Christ living. It was also the power of that love which He displayed while living, and which we know in perfection in His death. He was the just object of divine delight.]

The Son of God — sent of God in love — has come, and not only has He born our sins, but (He having offered Himself up freely to accomplish His will, whose will He was come to do, a spotless victim) God made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us. He has placed Himself, ever without sin (in Him it was grace and obedience), in the place in which our failure in our responsibility here below had set man, and, made in the likeness of men, died to glorify God in respect of sin, so that we are discharged by the cross from the burden on the conscience of the sin that dwells in us. He takes on Himself before God the whole charge of sin (but according to the power of eternal life and the Holy Ghost that was in Him) offers Himself as a victim for it. Thus placed, He is made sin; and in His death, which He undergoes in grace, sin in the flesh is totally condemned by the just judgment of God, and the condemnation itself is the abolition of that sin by His act of sacrifice — an act which is valid for every one that believes in Jesus who

accomplished it. We have died with Him and are alive through Him. We have put off the body of the flesh, the old man; we have become dead to the law by the body of Christ, our old man crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be annulled. I have no doubt that the full result will be the putting of sin out of the whole scene of heaven and earth, in that new heavens and new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. But here I speak of the state of conscience in respect of the glory of God.

What a marvelous deliverance! What a work for the glory of God! The moral import of the cross for the glory of God is a subject which, as we study it, becomes ever more and more magnificent — a never-ending study. It is, by its moral perfection, a motive for the love of the Father Himself with regard to Jesus. “Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I may take it again.”

What a perfect work for putting away sin from the sight of God (setting before Him in its stead that perfect work itself which removed the sin) and for delivering the sinner, placing him before God according to the perfect abolition of the sin and the value of that work in His sight! It is possible we may have known the forgiveness of sins before we go through Romans 7, and some have said that chapter 3 comes before chapter 7. But the subjects are quite distinct. In the first part we have God dealing in grace with the sinner as guilty for his justification, and that part is complete in itself: “we joy in God.” The second part takes up what we are, and experiences connected with it; but the work of chapter 7 is always essentially legal, the judgment of what we are, only hence in respect of what is in us, not of what we have done — struggle, not guilt. The form of experience will be modified. The soul will say, I hope I have not deceived myself, and the like. But it is always law, and so the apostle gives it its proper character in itself.

The practical result is stated in verse 4: “In order that the righteousness of the law,” its just requirement, “might be fulfilled in us who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit.” We are perfect before God in Christ without any righteousness by the law; but, walking according to the Spirit, the law is fulfilled in us, although we are not subject to it. He who loves has fulfilled the law. The apostle does not go farther in fruits of righteousness here, because the question was that of subjection to the law and man’s

fulfilling it. Grace produces more than this as in Ephesians, Colossians, and elsewhere, reproduces the character of God, not merely what man should be for God, but what Christ was. But here he meets the question of law, and shows that in walking by the Spirit we so fulfill it.

In this new nature, in the life of resurrection and of faith, that which the law demands is accomplished in us because we are not under it, for we walk according to the Spirit, and not according to the flesh. The things now in opposition are the flesh and the Spirit. In fact the rule, from the yoke of which as a system we are set free, is accomplished in us. Under the law sin had the mastery; being set free from the law, that law is fulfilled in us.* But it is the Spirit working in us and leading us which characterises our position. Now this character (for it is thus the apostle presents it) is the result of the presence, the indwelling of the Holy Ghost in us. The apostle supposes this great truth here. That is to say, writing to Christians, the fact (for it was a fact that is in question here) of the presence of the Holy Ghost, the Comforter, is treated as a well-known fact. It publicly distinguished the Christian as the seal and mark of his profession. The individual knew it for himself; he knew it with regard to the assembly. But in the latter aspect, we leave it aside here, for Christians individually are the subject. They had the Spirit; the apostle everywhere appeals to their consciousness of this fact. "After that ye believed ye were sealed." "Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law or by the hearing of faith?" etc. It is the individual moral effect, extending, however, to the resurrection of the body, which is here spoken of. The two things are connected: the acknowledged fact of the presence of the Holy Ghost; and the development of His energy in the life, and afterwards in the resurrection of the believer. This had been seen in Christ; resurrection itself was according to the Spirit of holiness.

[* Abstracting the flesh, the life by which we live is in fact Christ. He is our life, and, as to life, what we are before God is that by which we live here. Our life is hid with Christ in God, and Christ is our life down here. And therefore it is that John — who had displayed Christ as being this life — can say, "he that is born of God cannot sin, because he is born of God." It is the same Christ in us and in heaven. Practically this life is developed in the midst of the opposition of the flesh. Our weakness — guilty weakness — comes in, and it is quite another thing.]

We come then now into the practical effect, in the Christian on earth, of the doctrine of death with, and life through, Christ, realised by the dwelling in us of the Holy Ghost who has been given us. He is distinct, for He is the Spirit, the Spirit of God; nevertheless He acts in the life, so that it is practically ourselves in that which is of the life of Christ in us.

We will examine the apostle's teaching briefly on this subject.

He introduces it abruptly, as characterising the Christian — "us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." Those who are after the flesh desire the things of the flesh; those after the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. It is not a question here of duty, but of the sure action of the nature according to which a person subsists; and this tendency, this affection of the nature, has its unfailing result — that of the flesh is death, that of the Spirit is life and peace. Because the affection of the flesh is enmity against God. It has its own will, its own lusts; and the fact that it has them makes it not subject to the law of God — which, on the contrary, has its own authority — and the flesh cannot, indeed, be subject; it would cease to exist if it could be so, for it has a will of its own which seeks independency, not the authority of God over it — a will which does not delight either in what the law requires. Therefore those who are in the flesh, and who have their relationship with God as living of this nature, of this natural life, cannot please God. Such is the verdict on man, living his natural life, according to the very nature of that life. The law did not bring him out thence: he was still in the flesh as before. It had a rule for man, such as he is as man before God, which gave the measure of his responsibility in that position, but which evidently did not bring him out of the position to which it applied. So that man being in the flesh, the workings of sin were, by means of the law itself, acting to produce death.

But the principle of the believer's relationship with God is not the flesh but the Spirit, if the Spirit of God dwells in us. It is that which characterises our position before God. In His sight, and before Him, we are not in the flesh. This, indeed, supposes the existence of the flesh, but having received the Holy Ghost, and having life of the Holy Ghost, it is He who constitutes our link with God. Our moral existence before God is in the Spirit, not in the flesh or natural man.

Observe here, that the apostle is not speaking of gifts or manifestations of power, acting outside us upon others, but of the vital energy of the Spirit, as it was manifested in the resurrection of Jesus and even in His life in holiness. Our old man is reckoned dead; we live unto God by the Spirit. Accordingly this presence of the Spirit — all real as it is — is spoken of in a manner which has the force rather of character than of distinct and personal presence, although that character could not exist unless He were personally there. “Ye are in Spirit, if so be that Spirit of God dwell in you.”* The emphasis is on the word God, and in the Greek there is no article before Spirit. Nevertheless it plainly refers to the Spirit personally, for it is said “dwell in you,” so that He is distinct from the person He dwells in.

[* Note here, we are said to be in Christ in the beginning of the chapter, and in the Spirit here: so to have the Spirit of Christ, and then “if Christ be in you”; because it is by the Spirit we are in Christ. He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit (compare John 14). And this gives its true character to our life and place before God. In Christ and Christ in us constitutes, in many places in scripture, the christian position, known too by the Holy Ghost dwelling in us (compare John 14).]

But the force of the thing is this: there is nothing in man that can resist the flesh or bring man out of it; it is himself. The law cannot go beyond this boundary (namely, that of man to whom it is addressed), nor ought it, for it deals with his responsibility. There must be something which is not man, and yet which acts in man, that he may be delivered. No creature could do anything in this: he is responsible in his own place.

It must be God. The Spirit of God coming into man does not cease to be God, and does not make the man cease to be man; but He produces divinely in the man, a life, a character a moral condition of being, a new man; in this sense, a new being, and in virtue of the cleansing by Christ’s blood. He dwells — Christ having accomplished the work of deliverance, of which this is the power in us — in the man, and the man is in Christ and Christ in the man. But having thus really a new life, which has its own moral character, the man is, as such, before God; and in His sight, what he is in this new nature inseparably from its source, as the stream from the fountain; the believer is in the Spirit, the Holy Ghost being in consequence of Christ’s work active in, and the power of, the life He has given. This is the Christian’s standing before God. We are no longer in the flesh, but in

the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in us. There is no other means. And it is indeed the Spirit of Christ — He in the power of whom Christ acted, lived, offered Himself; by whom also He was raised from the dead. His whole life was the expression of the operation of the Spirit — of the Spirit in man. “Now, if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.” It is the true and only link, the eternal reality, of the new life in which we live in God.

We have to do with reality. Christianity has its realisation in us in a conformity of nature to God, with which God cannot dispense, and without which we cannot enjoy or be in communion with Him. He Himself gives it. How indeed can we be born of God, unless God acts to communicate life to us? We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works. But it is the Spirit who is its source and its strength. If any one has not the Spirit of Christ, if the energy of this spiritual life which was manifested in Him, which is by the power of the Spirit, is not in us, we are not of Him, we have no part in Christ, for it is thus that one participates in Him. But if Christ is in us, the energy of this spiritual life is in Him who is our life, and the body is reckoned dead; for if it have a will as being alive, it is nothing but sin. The Spirit is life, the Spirit by whom Christ actively lived; Christ in Spirit in us is life — the source of thought, action, judgment, everything that constitutes the man, speaking morally, in order that there may be righteousness; for that is the only practical righteousness possible, the flesh cannot produce any. We live only as having Christ as our life; for righteousness is in Him, and in Him only, before God. Elsewhere there is nothing but sin. Therefore to live is Christ. There is no other life; everything else is death.

But the Spirit has yet another character. He is the Spirit of Him who raised up Jesus from among the dead. This God did with regard to the Christ. If the Spirit dwells in us, God will accomplish in us that which He accomplished in the Christ,* because of this same Spirit. He will raise up our mortal bodies. This is the final deliverance, the full answer to the question, “Who shall deliver me from this body of death?”

[* Observe here, that Jesus is the personal name of Christ. Christ though it became so, is properly a name of position and office — the Anointed. He who raised up the Christ will quicken the bodies of those connected with Him.]

Observe here, that the Spirit is designated in three ways: the Spirit of God, in contrast with sinful flesh, with the natural man, the Spirit of Christ, the formal character of the life which is the expression of His power (this is the Spirit acting in man according to the perfection of the divine thoughts); the Spirit of Him that raised up the man Christ from among the dead. Here it is the perfect and final deliverance of the body itself by the power of God acting through His Spirit. Thus then we have got the full answer to the question, “Who shall deliver me?” We see that christian life in its true character — that of the Spirit, depends on redemption. It is by virtue of redemption that the Spirit is present with us.

In verses 10, 11, we have present death to flesh and sin, and actual resurrection; only, since there is nothing but sin if we live of our own natural life, Christ being in us, our life, we reckon even now, while still living, our body to be dead. This being the case, we have that which was seen in Christ (chap. 1:4) the Spirit of holiness and resurrection from the dead. We should observe how (thus far according to the force of the expression, “the Spirit is life”) the Person of the Spirit is linked with the state of the soul here, with the real life of the Christian. A little lower down we find Him distinct from it. We understand this: for the Spirit is truly the divine Person, but He acts in us in the life which He has imparted. “That which is born of the Spirit is spirit.” Thus it is indeed the Spirit who produces practical righteousness, good thoughts; but He produces them in me so that they are mine. Nevertheless I am entirely dependent, and indebted to God for these things. The life is of the same nature as its source according to John 3, but it is dependent; the whole power is in the Spirit. Through Him we are dependent on God. Christ Himself lived thus. Only the life was in Him, and no sin in the flesh to resist it: whereas, if God has given us life, it remains always true that this life is in His Son. “He that hath the Son hath life.” And we know the flesh lusts against the Spirit, even when we have it.

But to proceed with our chapter. The apostle concludes thus exposition of the spiritual life, which gives liberty to the soul, by presenting the Christian as being thus a debtor, not to the flesh, which has now no longer any right over us. Yet he will not say directly that we are debtors to the Spirit. It is indeed our duty to live after the Spirit; but if we said that we are debtors, it would be putting man under a higher law the fulfillment of

which would thereby be yet more impossible to him. The Spirit was the strength to live, and that through the affections which He imparts — not the obligation to have them. If we live after the flesh, we are going to die; but if by the Spirit we mortify the deeds of the body, we shall live. The evil is there, but strength is there to overcome it. This is the effect according to the nature of God and of the flesh. But there is another side of the subject — the relationship which this presence and operation of the Spirit gives us towards God. Instead then of saying “legal debtors to the Spirit,” the Spirit Himself is our power, by which we mortify the flesh and thus are sure of living with God; and we are the sons of God, being led of the Spirit. For we have not received a spirit of bondage to be again in fear (that was the condition of the faithful under the law), but a Spirit that answers to our adoption to be sons of God, and this is its power — a Spirit by which we cry, “Abba,

The apostle again connects the Spirit of God in the closest union with the character, the spirit, which He produces in us, according to the relationship in which we are placed by His grace in Christ, and of which we are conscious, and which in fact we realise by the presence of the Holy Ghost in us: He is in us a Spirit of adoption. For He sets us in the truth, according to the mind of God. Now as to the power for thus, as to its moral reality in us, it is by the presence of the Holy Ghost alone that it takes place. We are only delivered from the law and the spirit of bondage in that the Spirit dwells in us, although the work and the position of Christ are the cause. This position is neither known nor realised except by the Spirit, whom Jesus sent down when He had Himself entered into it in glory on high as man.* But this Spirit dwells in us, acts in us, and brings us in effect into this relationship which has been acquired for us by Christ, through that work which He accomplished for us, entering into it Himself (that is, as man risen).

[* Though ever walking as Son down here of course, and that not merely when publicly entering on His ministry and proclaimed such, as we know from what happened in the temple when He was about twelve years old. Indeed we are sons before we receive the Spirit of adoption. It is because we are sons the Spirit of the Son is sent into our hearts (Galatians 4). But Christ, entering into the full place of glory as man, according to the purpose of God through His work, received (Acts 2) the Spirit so as to confer it on us and associate us with Him there.]

The apostle, we have seen, speaks of the Spirit in us as of a certain character, a condition in which we are, because He instils Himself into our whole moral being — our thoughts, affections, object, action; or, rather, He creates them; He is their source; He acts by producing them. Thus He is practically a Spirit of adoption, because He produces in our souls all that appertains to this relationship. If He acts, our thoughts, our affections, act also; we are in the enjoyment of this relationship by virtue of this action. But having thus identified (and it could not be otherwise) the Holy Ghost with all that He produces in us, for it is thus that the Christian knows Him (the world does not receive Him because it does not see Him, nor know Him; but ye know Him because He is with you, and dwells in you: precious state!) when the Holy Ghost Himself is the source of our being and of our thoughts, according to the counsels of God in Christ and the position which Christ has acquired for us — the apostle, I repeat, having spoken of the Spirit as characterising our moral existence, is careful to distinguish Him as a person, a really distinct existence. The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are the children of God. The two things are equally precious:* participation in the Spirit, as the power of life by which we are capable of enjoying God, and the relationship of children to Him; and the presence and authority of the Spirit to assure us of it.

[* We shall see, farther on, that the Epistle to the Colossians speaks only of life: the Ephesians, of the Holy Ghost.]

Our position is that of sons, our proper relationship that of children. The word son is in contrast with the position under the law, which was that of servants; it is the state of privilege in its widest extent. To say the child of such an one, implies the intimacy and the reality of the relationship. Now there are two things which the apostle lays open — the position of child and its consequences, and the condition of the creature in connection with which the child is found. This gives occasion for two operations of the Spirit — the communication of the assurance of being children with all its glorious consequences; and His work of sympathy and grace in connection with the sorrows and infirmities in which the child is found here below.

Having thus completed the exposition of the child's condition, he ends this account of his position in Christ with a statement of the certainty of the grace — outside himself — in God, which secures him in this position, and

guards him, by the power of God in grace, from everything that could rob him of his blessing — his happiness. It is God who gives it him, and who is its Author. It is God who will bring to a good end the one whom He has placed in it. This last point is treated in verses 31-33. Thus in verses 1-11, we have the Spirit in life; in verses 12-30, the Spirit as a power acting in the saint; in verses 31-33, God acting for, not in, us to ensure our blessing. Hence, in the last part, he does not speak of sanctification.

The first point then we have to touch on in this second part is, that the Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are the children of the family of God. That is to say, that as the Holy Ghost (acting in us in life, as we have seen) has produced the affections of a child, and, by these affections, the consciousness of being a child of God, so He does not separate Himself from this, but, by His powerful presence, He bears witness Himself that we are children. We have this testimony in our hearts in our relationship with God; but the Holy Ghost Himself, as distinct from us, bears this testimony to us in whom He dwells. The true freed Christian knows that his heart recognises God as Father, but he knows also that the Holy Ghost Himself bears His testimony to him. That which is founded on the word is realised and verified in the heart.

And, if we are children, we are heirs — heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ. Glorious position in which we are placed with Christ! And the witness of this is the first part of the Spirit's personal office; but this has its consequences here, it has its character here. If the Spirit of Christ is in us, He will be the source in us of the sentiments of Christ. Now in this world of sin and of misery Christ necessarily suffered — suffered also because of righteousness, and because of His love. Morally this feeling of sorrow is the necessary consequence of possessing a moral nature totally opposed to everything that is in the world. Love, holiness, veneration for God, love for man, everything is essential suffering here below; an active testimony leads to outward suffering. Co-heirs, co-sufferers, co-glorified — this is the order of christian life and hope; and, observe, inasmuch as possessors of the whole inheritance of God, this suffering is by virtue of the glorious position into which we are brought, and of our participation in the life of Christ Himself. And the sufferings are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us.

For the creature waits for the manifestation of the sons of God. Then shall its deliverance come. For, if we suffer, it is in love, because all is suffering around us. The apostle then explains it. It is our connection with the creature which brings us into this suffering, for the creature is subjected to misery and vanity. We know it, we who have the Spirit, that all creation groans in its estrangement from God, as in travail, yet in hope. When the glory shall set the children free, the creature will share their liberty: it cannot participate in the grace; this is a thing which concerns the soul. But glory being the fruit of God's power in outward things, even the creature shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption and partake in the liberty of the glory. For it is not the Will of the creature which made it subject (it has none in that respect); but it was on account of him who subjected it, on account of man.

Now the Spirit, who makes us know that we are children and heirs of glory, teaches us by the same means to understand all the misery of the creature; and through our bodies we are in connection with it, so that there is sympathy. Thus we also wait for the adoption, that is, the redemption of the body. For as to possession of the full result, it is in hope that we are saved; so that meanwhile we groan, as well as understand, according to the Spirit and our new nature, that all creation groans. There are the intelligence of the Spirit, and the affections of the divine nature on the one side; and the link with fallen creation by the body, on the other.* Here then also the operation of the Holy Ghost has its place, as well as bearing witness that we are children and heirs of God with Christ.

[* In this how much more perfect (all in Him was absolute) was the sympathy of Christ! For though capable of sympathy as truly a man, He was not linked in His own state with the fallen creation, as we are. He felt for it, a true man, but as man born of the Holy Ghost; we as above the flesh and by faith not in it, still in fact are linked with it in the earthen vessel we are in.]

It is not therefore creation only which groans, being in bondage to corruption in consequence of the sin of man; but we ourselves, who have the first-fruits of the Spirit — which God has given in anticipation of the accomplishment of His promises in the last days, and which connects us with heaven — we also groan, while waiting for the redemption of our body to take possession of the glory prepared for us. But it is because the Holy Ghost who is in us takes part in our sorrow and helps us in our infirmities; dwelling in us, He pleads in the midst of this misery by groans,

which do not express themselves in words. The sense of the evil that oppresses us and all around us is there; and the more conscious we are of the blessing and of the liberty of the glory, the more sensible are we of the weight of the misery brought in by sin. We do not know what to ask for as a remedy; but the heart expresses its sorrow as Jesus did at the grave of Lazarus — at least in our little measure. Now this is not the selfishness of the flesh which does not like to suffer; it is the affection of the Spirit.

We have here a striking proof of the way in which the Spirit and the life in us are identified in practice: God searches the hearts — ours; He finds the affection of the Spirit, for He, the Spirit, intercedes. So that it is my heart — it is a spiritual affection, but it is the Spirit Himself who intercedes. United to the creature by the body, to heaven by the Spirit, the sense which I have of the affliction is not the selfishness of the flesh, but the sympathy of the Spirit, who feels it according to* God.

[* “The will of” should not be inserted here.]

What a sweet and strengthening thought, that when God searches the heart, even if we are burdened with a sense of the misery in the midst of which the heart is working. He finds there, not the flesh, but the affection of the Spirit; and that the Spirit Himself is occupied in us, in grace, with all our infirmities: What an attentive ear must God lend to such groans!

The Spirit, then, is the witness in us that we are children, and thereby heirs; and He takes part in the sorrowful experience that we are linked with creation by our bodies, and becomes the source of affections in us, which express themselves in groans that are divine in their character as well as human, and which have the value of His own intercession. And this grace shows itself in connection with our ignorance and weakness. Moreover, if after all we know not what to ask for, we know that everything works together under God’s own hand for our greatest good* (v. 28).

[* Here read in the text, “but we know.” “We know not what to ask for as we ought, but we do know that everything works together for our good.”

This brings in, thirdly, another side of the truth — that which God does, and that which God is for us, outside ourselves, to assure us of all blessing. The Holy Ghost is life in us; He bears witness to our glorious position; He acts in divine sympathy in us, according to our actual position of infirmity

in this poor body and this suffering creation; He becomes, and makes us, the voice of this suffering before God. All this takes place in us; but God maintains all our privileges by that which He is in Himself. This is the last part of the chapter, from verse 28 or 31 to the end. God orders all things in favor of those who are called according to His purpose. For that is the source of all good and of all happiness in us and for us.

Therefore it is, that in this beautiful and precious climax, sanctification and the life in us are omitted. The Spirit had instructed our souls on these points at the beginning of the chapter. The Spirit is life, the body dead, if Christ be in us; and now He presents the counsels, the purposes, the acts, the operation of God Himself, which bless and secure us, but are not the life in us. The inward reality has been developed in the previous part; here, the certainty, the security, in virtue of what God is and of His counsels. He has foreknown His children, He has predestinated them to a certain glory, a certain marvelous blessing, namely, to be conformed to the image of His Son. He has called them, He has justified them, He has glorified them. God has done all this. It is perfect and stable, as He is who willed it, and who has done it. No link in the chain is wanting of all that was needful in order to bind their souls to glory according to the counsels of God.

And what a glory! what a position — poor creatures as the saved are — to be conformed to the image of the Son of God Himself! This, in fact, is the thought of grace, not to bless us only by Jesus, but to bless us with Him. He came down even to us, sinless, in love and righteousness, to associate us with Himself in the fruit of His glorious work. It was this which His love purposed, that we should have one and the same portion with Himself; and this the counsels of the Father (blessed be His name for it!) had determined also.

The result of all for the soul is, that God is for us. Sweet and glorious conclusion, which gives the heart a peace that is ineffable, and rest that depends on the power and stability of God — a rest that shuts out all anxiety as to anything that could trouble it; for if God be for us who can be against us? And the way of it shuts out all thought as to any limit to the liberality of God. He who had given His Son, how should He not with Him give us all things? Moreover, with regard to our righteousness before God, or to charges which might be brought against the saints, as well as with

regard to all the difficulties of the way, God Himself has justified: who shall condemn? Christ has died, He has risen, and is at the right hand of God, and intercedes for us: who shall separate us from His love? The enemies? He has already conquered them. Height? He is there for us. Depth? He has been there; it is the proof of His love. Difficulties? We are more than conquerors: they are the immediate occasion of the display of His love and faithfulness, making us feel where our portion is, what our strength is. Trial does but assure the heart, which knows His love, that nothing can separate us from the love of God which is in Jesus. Everything else is the creature, and cannot separate us from the love of God — a love of God, which has entered also into this misery of the creature, and gained the victory for us over all. Thus the deliverance, and liberty, and security of the saints by grace and power are fully brought out.

We have thus in three ways God's being for us unfolded: in giving, justifying, and no possible separation. Two triumphant questions settle the last two points, on which the heart might easily raise questions. But the two questions are put: Who shall condemn? Who shall separate? Who shall condemn when God Himself justifies? It is not said justified before God. God is for us. The second is answered by the precious fact that in all that might seem to do so, we have seen, on the contrary, His love proved. Besides it is the creature which might tend to separate, and the love is the love of God. The beginning of verse 34 should be read with 33.

We have advanced here to a fuller experimental state than in chapter 5, following on what unfolds the exercises of a soul learning what it is in itself, and the operation of the law, and what it is to be dead with Christ, and to be alive through and associated with Him, and coming out, as in Him before God, with the consciousness of God for it. But there is in chapter 5 more of the simple grace of God, what He is in His own blessed nature and thoughts, as above sin, towards the sinner. We have the Christian's place more fully with God here, but what God is simply in grace more fully in chapter 5. Chapter 5 is more what God is thus known through the work of Christ; chapter 8 more our place in Christ before Him. Blessed to have both!

There remained one important question to be considered, namely, how this salvation, common to Jew and Gentile, both alienated from God — this

doctrine that there was no difference — was to be reconciled with the special promises made to the Jews. The proof of their guilt and ruin under the law did not touch the promises of a faithful God. Was the apostle going to do away with these to place the Gentiles on the same footing? They did not fail also to accuse the apostle of having despised his nation and its privileges. Chapters 9, 10 and 11 reply to this question; and, with rare and admirable perfection, set forth the position of Israel with respect to God and to the gospel. This reply opens, in itself, a wide door to intelligence in the ways of God.

The apostle begins by affirming his deep interest in the blessing of Israel. Their condition was a source of constant grief to him. Far from despising them, he loved them as much as Moses had done. He had wished to be anathema from Christ for them.* He acknowledged that all the privileges granted by God until then, belonged to them. But he does not allow that the word of God had failed; and he develops proof of the free sovereignty of God, conformably to which, without trenching upon the promises made to the Jews, He could admit the Gentiles according to His election.

[* Read, "I have wished." Moses, in his anguish, had said, "Blot me out of thy book." Paul had not been behind him in his love.]

In the first place, this truth displayed itself in the bosom of Abraham's own family. The Jews alleged their exclusive right to the promises in virtue of their descent from him, and to have their promises by right, and exclusively, because they were descended from him. But they are not all Israel which are of Israel. Neither because they were of the seed of Abraham were they therefore all children. For in that case Ishmael must have been received; and the Jews would by no means hear of that. God then was sovereign. But it might be alleged that Hagar was a slave. But Esau's case excluded even this saving thought. The same mother bore both sons of one father, and God had chosen Jacob and rejected Esau. It was thus on the principle of sovereignty and election, that God had decided that the seed should be called in the family of Isaac. And before Esau and Jacob were born, God declared that the elder should serve the younger. The Jews must then admit God's sovereignty on this point.

Was God then unrighteous? He plainly declared His sovereignty for good to Moses as a principle. It is the first of all rights. But in what case had He

exercised this right? In a case that concerned that right of Israel to blessing, of which the Jews sought to avail themselves. All Israel would have been cut off, if God had dealt in righteousness; there was nothing but the sovereignty of God which could be a door of escape. God retreated into His sovereignty in order to spare whom He would, and so had spared Israel (justice would have condemned them all alike, gathered round the golden calf which they set up to worship) this, on the side of mercy; on that of judgment, Pharaoh served for an example. The enemy of God, and of His people, he had treated the claims of God with contempt, exalting himself proudly against Him — "Who is Jehovah, that I should obey him? I will not let his people go." Pharaoh being in this state, Jehovah uses him to give an example of His wrath and judgment. So that He shows mercy to whom He will, and hardens whom He will. Man complains of it, as he does of the grace that justifies freely.

As to rights, compare those of God and those of the creature who has sinned against Him. How can man, who is made of clay, dare to reply against God? The potter has power to do as he will with the lump. No one can say to God, What doest Thou? God's sovereignty is the first of all rights, the foundation of all rights, the foundation of all morality. If God is not God, what will He be? The root of the question is this; is God to judge man, or man God? God can do whatsoever He pleases. He is not the object for judgment. Such is His title: but when in fact the apostle presents the two cases, wrath and grace, He puts the case of God showing long suffering towards one already fitted for wrath, in order to give at last an example to men of His wrath in the execution of His justice; and then of God displaying His glory in vessels of mercy whom He has prepared for glory. There are then these three points established with marvelous exactitude; the power to do all things, no one having the right to say a word; wonderful endurance with the wicked, in whom at length His wrath is manifested; demonstration of His glory in vessels, whom He has Himself prepared by mercy for glory, and whom He has called, whether from among the Jews or Gentiles, according to the declaration of Hosea.

The doctrine established, then, is the sovereignty of God in derogation of the pretensions of the Jews to the exclusive enjoyment of all the promises, as being descended from Abraham; for, among his descendants, more than one had been excluded by the exercise of this sovereignty; and it was

nothing less than its exercise which, on the occasion of the golden calf, had spared those who pretended to the right of descent. It was necessary therefore that the Jew should recognise it, or else that he should admit the Idumeans in full right, as well as the Ishmaelites, and renounce it himself, the families of Moses and Joshua alone perhaps excepted. But if such was the sovereignty of God, He would now exercise it in favor of the Gentiles, as well as Jews. He called whom He would.

If we look closely into these quotations from Hosea, we shall find that Peter, who writes to converted Jews alone, takes only the passage at the end of chapter 2, where Lo-ammi and Lo-ruhamah become Ammi and Ruhamah. Paul quotes that also, which is at the end of chapter 1, where it is written, "In the place where it was said unto them, Ye are not my people, there shall they be called — not 'my people,' but' the children of the living God.'" It is this last passage which he applies to the Gentiles called by grace.

But further passages from the prophets amply confirm the judgment which the apostle pronounces by the Spirit on the Jews. Isaiah declared formally that, if God had not left them a little remnant, they would have been as Sodom and Gomorrah; numerous as the people were, a little remnant only should be saved; for God was cutting the work short in judgment on the earth. And here was the state of things morally: the Gentiles had obtained the righteousness which they had not sought, had obtained it by faith; and Israel, seeking to obtain it by the fulfillment of a law, had not attained to righteousness. Why? Because they sought it not by faith, but by works of law. For they had stumbled at the stumbling-stone (that is, at Christ), as it is written, "I lay in Sion a stumbling-stone and rock of offense: and whosoever believeth in him shall not be ashamed."

Having touched on this subject, the apostle, who deeply loved his nation as the people of God, pours out his heart with respect of the doctrine which was a stumbling-stone to them. His desire, the aim of his heart's affection, was their salvation. The object of his affections, they were clothed in his eyes with their zeal for God, ignorant as it was; ignorant, alas! on the side of that which God taught. Being ignorant of God's righteousness, they sought in their zeal to establish their own

righteousness, and did not submit themselves to that of God. For Christ is the end of law for righteousness to every believer. There was found the righteousness of God, there the stumblingstone to Israel.

Nevertheless the apostle establishes his argument clearly and firmly. He establishes it on his own part; but Deuteronomy supplies him with an unexpected proof of the great principle. He quotes a passage from that book which speaks on the subject of Israel's condition, when they should have broken the law and be suffering its consequences. "Secret things," the lawgiver had said, "belong to our God; but those that are revealed" are for the people. That is to say, the law was given as a condition to the enjoyment of the blessing, plainly and positively; what God might do in grace, when Israel should be under the consequences of the broken law, remained in the secrecy of His supreme will. Upon this, however, another principle is distinctly revealed, namely, that when the fulfillment of the law was impossible, and when Israel had been driven out of their land for having broken it, if then their heart turned to God in that far country, He would accept them. It was all over with the law as a condition of relationship with God. Israel was driven out according to the chapter we are looking at (Deuteronomy 30) was Lo-ammi, no longer the people of God. The testimony of God was nevertheless addressed to them: they might turn to Him in spirit, and by faith. It was no longer the law, it was faith. But, says the apostle, if so, it is Christ who is its object. No Jew would have denied that the testimony of God was the hope of every true Israelite when all was ruined.

This passage then in Deuteronomy — when Moses has done with the law, and has supposed other counsels of God, and on them founds the principle of turning in heart to God when all is over with regard to the law, and Israel is in a place where it would be impossible to keep it, being in captivity among the Gentiles — this passage has remarkable significance in the argument of the apostle; and its being quoted is an extraordinary proof, that in his reasonings it is the Holy Ghost who acts. It is the apostle who introduces Christ; but the combination of the truths of the different positions of Israel, of the law, and of the return in heart when they were lost under the law a combination of which Christ was the key-stone and alone could be — exhibits a comprehensive view of the oneness of all God's ways, morally and in His dispensations, of which the Spirit of God

alone is capable, and which evidently expresses His thoughts. See Deuteronomy 29 (at the end) and 30.

The word of faith then set forth as being the hope of Israel, was that which the apostle announced — that if any one confessed with his mouth the Lord Jesus, and believed in his heart that God had raised Him from the dead, he should be saved. Precious, simple, and positive assertion! and born out, if that were needed, by the testimony of the Old Testament: “Whosoever believeth in him shall not be ashamed.” The words heart and mouth are in contrast with the law. In the case Deuteronomy supposes, Israel could not fulfill the law; the word of their God, Moses told them, could be in their heart and in their mouth. Thus now for the Jew (as for every one) it was the belief of the heart.

Observe, it does not say, If you love in your heart, or, If your heart is what it ought to be towards God; but, If you believe in your heart. A man believes with his heart, when he really believes with a heart interested in the thing. His affections being engaged in the truth, he desires, when grace is spoken of, that that which is told him should be the truth. He desires the thing, and at the same time he does not doubt it. It is not in his having part in it that he believes, but in the truth of the thing itself, being concerned in it as important to himself. It is not the state of his affections (a very serious consideration, however, in its place) that is the subject here, but the importance and the truth of that which is presented by the word — its importance to himself, as needing it for his salvation, a salvation that he is conscious of needing, that he cannot do without — a truth of which he is assured, as a testimony from God Himself. God affirms to such a one that salvation belongs to him, but it is not that which he has to believe in as the object of faith; it is that of which God assures every one who does believe.

Moreover thus faith is manifested by the proof it gives of its sincerity — by confession of the name of Christ. If some one were convinced that Jesus is the Christ, and refused to confess Him, his conviction would evidently be his greater condemnation. The faith of the heart produces the confession of the mouth; the confession of the mouth is the counterproof of the sincerity of the faith, and of honesty, in the sense of the claim which the Lord has upon us in grace. It is the testimony which God requires at the outset. It is to sound the trumpet on earth in face of the enemy. It is to

say that Christ has conquered, and that everything belongs in right to Him. It is a confession which brings in God in answer to the name of Jesus. It is not that which brings in righteousness, but it is the public acknowledgment of Christ, and thus gives expression to the faith by which there is participation in the righteousness of God, so that it may be said, 'He believes in Christ unto salvation; he has the faith that justifies.'

I have entered here a little more into detail, because this is a point on which the human heart perplexes itself; and perplexes itself so much the more because it is sincere, as long as there is any unbelief and self-righteousness remaining. It is impossible that an awakened soul should not feel the necessity of having the heart set right and turned to God; and hence, not submitting to the righteousness of God, he thinks to make the favor of God depend on the state of his own affections, whereas God loves us while we are yet sinners. The state of our affections is of all importance; but it supposes a relationship already existing, according to which we love. We love too because we are loved of God. Now His love has done something — has done something according to our necessities, and according to the divine glory. It has given Jesus; and Jesus has accomplished what was required, in order that we may participate in divine righteousness; and thus He has placed every one who (acknowledging that he is a lost sinner) believes in Him, in the secure relationship of a child and of a justified soul before God, according to the perfection of the work of Christ. Salvation belongs to this soul according to the declaration of God Himself. Loved with such love, saved by such grace, enjoying such favor, let it cultivate affections suitable to the gift of Jesus, and to the knowledge it has of Him and of His goodness.

It is evident that, if it is "whosoever" believes in Jesus, the Gentile comes in as well as the Jew. There is no difference; the same Lord is rich unto all that call upon Him. It is beautiful to see this form of expression, "There is no difference," repeated here. The apostle had used it before with the addition "for all have sinned." Sin puts all men on a level in ruin before God. But there is also no difference, "for the same Lord over all is rich unto all," for every one who calls upon His name shall be saved.

On this declaration, the apostle founds another argument; and by it he justifies the ways of God that were accomplished in his ministry. The

Jewish scriptures declared that every one who called upon the name of the Lord should be saved. Now, the Jews acknowledged that the Gentiles did not know the name of the true and living God. It was needful therefore to proclaim Him, in order that they might call upon Him, and the whole ministry of the apostle was justified. Accordingly it was written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace." For, in dealing with these questions among the Jews, he naturally rests on the authority of their own scriptures.

But he applies this principle for evangelisation to the Jews as well as to the Gentiles (for the law was not the announcement of good news). He quotes Isaiah to the same purpose. It was in a proclamation — a truth thus publicly preached — that Israel had not believed; so that there ought to be faith in a truth thus preached, in the word proclaimed. Verse 18 presents some difficulty. It is certain that the apostle intends to explain that a proclamation of the truth on God's part had taken place. Israel was without excuse, for the report had even gone out everywhere, the words which announced God unto the ends of the earth. The testimony then was not confined to the Jews The Gentiles had heard it everywhere. This is plain. But does the apostle merely borrow the words (which in the passage quoted apply to the testimony of creation), or does he mean to speak of the testimony of nature itself? I believe that he uses the passage to show that God had the Gentiles in view in His testimonies; that he wishes quietly to suggest this to the Jews by a quotation from their own scriptures, that not only have they, the Jews, heard, but that the testimony has gone everywhere, and that this was in the mind of God. Paul does not quote the passage as a prophecy of that which was taking place; he borrows the words, without that form of speech, to show that this universal testimony was in the mind of God, whatever might be the means employed. And then, stating the thing with more precision for the Jew, he adds, Did not Israel know? Was not the nation apprised of this extension to the Gentiles, of the testimony of this proclamation of grace to them, of the reception of the testimony by the Gentiles, so as to bring them into relationship with God? Yes; Moses had already said, that God would provoke Israel to jealousy by a people without knowledge. And Isaiah had spoken boldly, formally declaring that God should be found by a nation that sought Him not; and to Israel, that all day long He had

stretched forth His hands to a rebellious and gainsaying people; in a word, that the Gentiles should find Him, and Israel be perverse and disobedient. Thus, the testimony born to their relative positions — although the apostle approaches it gradually and quietly — is distinct and formal: the Gentiles received; Israel at enmity.

Hereupon the question is immediately raised, has God then rejected His people? To this chapter 11 is the answer. The apostle gives three proofs that it is by no means the case. Firstly, he is himself an Israelite; there is a remnant whom God has reserved, as in the days of Elias — a proof of the constant favor of the Lord, of the interest He takes in His people, even when they are unfaithful; so that when the prophet, the most faithful and energetic among them, knew not where to find one who was true to God besides himself, God had His eyes upon the remnant who had not bowed the knee to Baal. Secondly, the call of the Gentiles, and their substitution for Israel, was not the definitive rejection of the latter in the counsels of God; for God had done it to provoke Israel to jealousy. It was not, then, for their rejection. Thirdly, the Lord would come forth out of Sion. and turn away the iniquities of Jacob.

That which the apostle, or rather which the Holy Ghost, says on this point requires to be looked at in more detail.

The apostle, in quoting the case of Elias, shows that when Israel was in such a state that even Elias pleaded against them, yet God had not rejected them, He had reserved for Himself seven thousand men. This was the election of sovereign grace. It was the same thing now. But it was by grace, and not by works. The election then, has obtained the blessing, and the rest was blinded. Even as it was written, “God hath given them the spirit of slumber,” etc.

Had they then stumbled that they should fall? No! But through their fall salvation is come to the Gentiles to provoke Israel to jealousy — a second proof that it was not for their rejection. But if their diminishing and fall was a blessing to the Gentiles, what should not the fruit be of their restoration? If the first-fruits are holy, so is the lump; if the root, the tree also. Now, as to the continued chain of those who enjoy the promises in this world, Abraham was the root, and not the Gentiles; Israel, the natural stock and branches. And here is that which happened in the good olive-tree

of promise in this world, of which Abraham was the root (God Himself the source of leaf and fruit), and Israel the stem and the tree. There had been some bad branches, and they had been cut off; and others from the Gentiles grafted in, in their place, who thus enjoyed the richness natural to the tree of promise. But it was on the principle of faith that they, being of the wild olive-tree, had been grafted in. Many of the Israelite branches, the natural heirs of the promises, had been cut off because of their unbelief; for when the fulfillment of the promises was offered them, they rejected it. They rested on their own righteousness, and despised the goodness of God. Thus the Gentiles, made partakers of the promises, stood on the principle of faith. But if they abandoned this principle, they should lose their place in the tree of promise, even as the unbelieving Jews had lost theirs. Goodness was to be their portion in this dispensation of God's government, with regard to those who had part in the enjoyment of His promises, if they continued in this goodness; if not, cutting off. This had happened to the Jews; it should be the same with the Gentiles if they did not continue in that goodness. Such is the government of God, with regard to that which stood as His tree on the earth. But there was a positive counsel of God accomplished in that which took place, namely, the partial blinding of Israel (for they were not rejected) until all the Gentiles who were to have part in the blessing of these days should have come in. After this Israel should be saved as a whole; it should not be individuals spared and added to the assembly, in which Israel had no longer any place as a nation; they should be saved as a whole, as Israel. Christ shall come forth from Sion as the seat of His power, and shall turn away iniquity from Jacob, God pardoning them all transgressions.

This is the third proof that Israel was not rejected. For while enemies, as concerning the gospel at the present time, they are still beloved for the fathers' sakes. For that which God has once chosen and called He never casts off. He does not repent of His counsels, nor of the call which gives them effect. But if the counsel of God remains unchangeable, the way in which it is accomplished brings out the marvelous wisdom of God. The Gentiles had long continued in the disobedience of unbelief. God comes in grace. The Jews opposed themselves to the actings of grace. They lose all right to the promises through this unbelief, so that they must receive the effect of the promise on the footing of pure mercy and the sovereign grace

of God,* in the same way as the poor Gentile. For He had shut them all up in unbelief, that it might be pure mercy to all. Therefore it is that the apostle exclaims, O depth of wisdom and knowledge! The promises are fulfilled, and the pretension to human righteousness annihilated; the Jews who have lost everything receive all on the true ground of the goodness of God. Their apparent loss of all is but the means of their receiving all from sovereign grace, instead of having it by virtue of human righteousness, or an unforfeited promise. All is grace: yet God is ever faithful, and that in spite of man's unfaithfulness. Man is blessed; the Jew receives the effect of the promise; but both the one and the other have to attribute it to the pure mercy of God. There is nothing about the assembly here: it is the tree of promise, and those who in virtue of their position have part successively in the enjoyment of the promises of earth. The unbelieving Jews were never cut off from the church, they were never in it. They had been in the position of natural heirs of the right to the promises. The assembly is not the Jews' own olive-tree according to nature, so that they should be grafted into it again. Nothing can be plainer: the chain of those who had a right to the promises from Abraham was Israel; some of the branches were then cut off. The tree of promise remains on the earth: the Gentiles are grafted into it in place of the Jews, they also become unfaithful (that is to say, the case is supposed), and they would in their turn be cut off, and the Jews be reinstated in the old olive-tree, according to the promises and in order to enjoy them; but it is in pure mercy. It is clearly not by the gospel they get the blessing; for, as touching the gospel, they are enemies for the Gentiles' sake; as touching election, beloved for the fathers' sake.

[* Verse 31 should be translated, "Even so these the Jews] have now been unbelieving with regard to your mercy, in order that they should receive mercy" (or that they should be the objects of mercy)"your mercy," that is to say, the grace in Christ which extended to the Gentiles. Thus the Jews were the objects of mercy, having forfeited all right to enjoy the effect of the promise. God would not fail to fulfill it. He bestows it on them in mercy at the end, when He has brought in the fullness of the Gentiles.]

Remark further here an important principle: the enjoyment of privileges by position makes us responsible for them, without saying the individual was born again. The Jewish branch was in the tree of promise and broken off: so the Gentiles. There was nothing vital or real; but they were in the place

of blessing, “partakers of the root and fatness of the olive tree,” by being grafted in.

These communications of the mind of God end this portion of the book, namely, that in which the apostle reconciles sovereign grace shown to sinners (putting all on a level in the common ruin of sin) with the especial privileges of the people of Israel, founded on the faithfulness of God. They had lost everything as to right. God would fulfill His promises in grace and by mercy.

The apostle resumes the thread of his instructions, by taking up — as he does in all his epistles — the moral consequences of his doctrine. He places the believer at the outset on the ground of God’s mercy, which he had fully developed already. The principle of grace that saves had been established as the basis of salvation. The ground of all christian morality is now laid in this fundamental principle: to present our bodies as a sacrifice, living, holy, acceptable to God — an intelligent service, not that of the hands, not consisting in ceremonies which the body could perform — a simple but deep-reaching and all-efficacious principle. This was for man personally. As to his outward relationships, he was not to be conformed to the world. Neither was this to be an outside mechanical nonconformity, but the result of being renewed in mind, so as to seek for and discern the will of God, good and acceptable and perfect; the life being thus transformed.

This connects itself with the end of chapter 6. It is not those sitting in heavenly places, imitators of God as dear children, but men on earth set free by the delivering power of redemption and grace, yielding themselves up to God to do His will. The exhortation follows the character we have seen to be that of the epistle.

Thus the christian walk was characterised by devotedness and obedience. It was a life subjected to the will of another, namely, to the will of God; and therefore stamped with humility and dependence. But there was absolute devotedness of heart in self-sacrifice. For there was a danger, flowing from the power that acted in it, of the flesh coming in and availing itself of it. With regard to this, every one was to have a spirit of wisdom and moderation, and to act within the limits of the gift which God had dispensed to him, occupying himself with it according to the will of God;

even as each member has its own place in the body, and should accomplish the function which God has ascribed to it. The apostle passes on insensibly to all the forms which duty assumes in the Christian, according to the various positions in which he stands, and to the spirit in which he ought to walk in every relationship.

It is in chapter 12 only that the idea of the assembly as a body is thus found in this epistle; and that, in connection with the duties of the members individually — duties that flowed from their positions as such. Otherwise it is the position of man in his individual responsibility before God, and this met by grace, and then the delivered man, that is set before us in the Epistle to the Romans. The directions given by the apostle extend to the Christian's relationship with the authorities under which he is placed. He recognises them as accomplishing the service of God, and as armed with authority from Him, so that resisting them would be resisting that which God had established. Conscience therefore, and not merely force, constrained the Christian to obey. In fine he was to render to every man that which was due to him in virtue of his position; to leave nothing owing to any one, be it of whatever character it might — excepting love — a debt which never can be liquidated.

Among themselves Christians are exhorted not to seek the high things of this world, but to walk as brethren with those of low degree: a precept too much forgotten in the assembly of God — to her loss. If the Christian of high degree requires that honor according to the flesh should be paid him, let it be done with good will. Happy he who, according to the example of the King of kings and to the precept of our apostle, knows how to walk in company with those of low degree in their journey through the wilderness. Now love is the fulfilling of the law; for love works no ill to his neighbor, and so fulfills the law.

Another principle acts also on the spirit of the Christian. It is time to awake. The deliverance from this present evil age, which the Lord will accomplish for us, draws nigh. The night is far spent, the day is at hand — God knows the moment. The characteristics which marked its approach in the days of the apostle have ripened in a very different way since then, although God, with a view to those whom He is gathering in, is still even now restraining them. Let us then walk as children of the day, casting off

the works of darkness. We belong to the day, of which Christ Himself will be the light. Let our walk be in accordance with that day, putting on Christ Himself, and not being studious of that which is in accordance with the will and the lusts of the flesh.

From the beginning of chapter 14 to the end of verse 7 in chapter 15 another point is taken up, to which the different positions of the Jew and Gentile gave rise. It was difficult for a Jew to rid himself of the sense of difference between days and between meats. A Gentile, having abandoned his whole religious system as idolatrous, held to nothing. Human nature is liable in this respect to sin on both sides — a want of conscience, an unbridled will, and a ceremonial conscience. Christianity recognises neither of these things. It delivers from the question of days and meats by making us heavenly with Christ. But it teaches us to bear with conscientious weakness, and to be conscientious ourselves. Conscience cannot — has not a right to — prescribe a new thing to us as a duty, but it may, through ignorance, hold to a traditional thing as obligatory. In reality we have entire liberty, but we ought to bear with weakness of faith in another, and not put a stumbling-block in his way. The apostle gives three directions in this respect: First, to receive the weak, but not for the discussion of questions that have to be settled; second, not to judge our brother, since he is Christ's servant, not ours; and every one must give account of himself to God; third, to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves; to walk in the spirit of love, and, if we are in a higher state, to show it by receiving one another, as Christ has received us, to the glory of God, which eclipses man and his petty superiorities, and which kindles charity and makes it ardent, earnest in seeking the good of others — taking us so out of self, and beyond little things, that we are able to adapt ourselves to others, where the will of God and His glory are not in question.

Many important principles are brought forward in these exhortations. Every one shall give account of himself to God. Everyone, in these cases, should be fully persuaded in his own mind, and should not judge another. If any one has faith that delivers him from traditional observances, and he sees them to be absolutely nothing — as indeed they are — let him have his faith for God, and not cause his brother to stumble.

No one lives to himself, and no one dies to himself; we are the Lord's. The weak then regard the day for the Lord's sake; the others do not regard it because of the Lord. This is the reason therefore for not judging. He whom I judge is the Lord's. Therefore also I should seek to please my brother for his edification — he is the Lord's; and I should receive him, as I have been received, to share in the glory of God which has been conferred on him. We serve Christ in these things by thinking of the good of our brother. As to the energy of a man's faith, let him have it between himself and God. Love is the ruler for the use of his liberty, if it is liberty, and not the bondage of disregarding. For the converse of this principle, when these observances are used to destroy liberty in Christ, see Galatians 4, where the apostle shows that, if the observance is taught as a principle, it is really turning back to Paganism.

These instructions close the epistle. From chapter 15:8, it is the exordium, the personal circumstances of the apostle, and salutations.

In verses 8 to 12, he sums up his thoughts respecting God's dealings with the Jew and the Gentile in the advent of Jesus. He was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to accomplish the promises made to the fathers. For to the Jews God had made promises; but none to the Gentiles. To the latter it was not truth that was in question: but by grace they might through Jesus glorify God for His mercy. For them the apostle quotes passages from Deuteronomy (that is to say, from the Law), from the Psalms, and from the Prophets.

In verse 13, he turns affectionately to the Romans to express his desires for them, and his confidence in the blessing they had received from God, which enabled them mutually to exhort one another, while expressing at the same time his boldness in some sort, because of the grace God had given him, to be the minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles by fulfilling a public function with regard to them; being, as it were, a priest to offer up the Gentiles as an offering acceptable to God, because sanctified by the Holy Ghost (see Numbers 8:11). This was his glory before God. This sanctification by the Holy Ghost was that which took the place of sanctification by birth, and it was well worth it.

Moreover he had accomplished his task from Jerusalem round about to Illyricum; not where Christ had been preached before, but where they had

not yet heard of Him. This had prevented his coming to Rome. But now that there was no more place for him, according to the Holy Ghost — nothing more in those parts for him to do, and having long desired to see them, he thought to visit them on his way to Spain. For the moment he was going to Jerusalem with the collection made in Macedonia and Achaia for the saints.

We see that his heart turns to the Jews; they occupied his thoughts; and while desiring to put the seal of performance on the grace which this collection betokened, he was pre-occupied with them as Jews, as those who had a claim: a mingled feeling perhaps of one who was anxious to show that he did not forget them; for, in fact, he loved his nation. We have to learn whether, in executing this service (properly that of a deacon), pleasing as it might be, he was at the height of his mission as apostle. However that might be, the hand of God was in it to make all things work for the good of His beloved servant and child, as well as for His own glory. Paul had a presentiment that it would not perhaps turn out well, and he asks the prayers of the saints at Rome, that he might be delivered from the hands of the wicked, and see their face with joy. We know how it ended: the subject was spoken of when we were considering the Acts. He saw them indeed at Rome; he was delivered, but as a prisoner; and we do not know if he ever went to Spain. The ways of God are according to His eternal counsels, and according to His grace, and according to His perfect wisdom.

Never having known the Roman Christians as an assembly, Paul sends many personal salutations. This was the link which subsisted. We see how touchingly his heart dwells upon all the details of service which attached him to those who had rendered it. He who by grace had searched into all the counsels of God, who had been admitted to see that which could not be made known to man here below, remembered all that these humble Christians — these devoted women — had done for him and for the Lord. This is love; it is the real proof of the power of the Spirit of God; it is the bond of charity.

We have also here a precious and most perfect rule for our walk, namely, to be simple concerning evil, and wise unto that which is good. Christianity alone could have given such a rule; for it provides a walk that

is positively good, and wisdom to walk in it. As Christians we may be simple concerning evil. What a deliverance! While the man of the world must needs acquaint himself with evil, in order to avoid it in this world of snares and of artifice, he must corrupt his mind, accustom himself to think of evil, in order not to be entrapped by it. But soon there should be entire deliverance — soon should Satan be trodden under their feet.

We see also that the apostle did not write his letters himself, but employed a brother to do it. Here it was one named Tertius (v. 22). Deeply concerned at the condition of the Galatians, he wrote himself the letter addressed to them; but the salutation at the end of this, as of other epistles, was in his own hand in order to verify the contents of the epistle. (1 Corinthians 16:21; 2 Thessalonians 3:17, in which the feigned epistle alluded to in 2 Thessalonians 2 gave occasion to state this proof, which he always gave, that an epistle was truly his.) We see likewise, by this little circumstance, that he attached a solemn and authoritative character to his epistles, that they were not merely the effusions of a spiritual heart, but that in writing them he knew and would have others understand, that they were worthy of consideration and of being preserved as authorities, as the expression and exercise of his apostolic mission, and were to be received as such; that is to say, as possessing the Lord's authority, with which he was furnished by the power of the Holy Ghost. They were letters from the Lord by his means, even as his words had also been (1 Thessalonians 2:13, and 1 Corinthians 14:37).

We have yet to observe, with regard to the three verses at the end of the epistle, that they are, as it were, detached from all the rest, introducing, in the form of a doxology, the suggestion of a truth, the communication of which distinguished the apostle's teaching. He does not develop it here. The task which the Holy Ghost accomplished in this epistle, was the presentation of the soul individually before God according to the divine thoughts. Nevertheless this connects itself immediately with the position of the body; and the doctrine respecting the body, the assembly, cannot be separated from it. Now the apostle informs us distinctly, that the mystery, the assembly, and the gathering together in one of all things under Christ, had been entirely unknown: God had been silent on that subject in the times which were defined by the word ages, the assembly not forming a part of that course of events, and of the ways of God on earth. But the

mystery was now revealed and communicated to the Gentiles by prophetic writings — not “the writings of the prophets.” The epistles addressed to the Gentiles possessed this character; they were prophetic writings — a fresh proof of the character of the epistles in the New Testament.

He who has understood the doctrine of this epistle, and of the writings of Paul in general, will readily apprehend the significance of this postscript. The epistle itself develops with divine perfection and fullness how a soul can stand before God in this world, and the grace and righteousness of God, maintaining withal His counsels as to Israel.