Romans - Commentaries by Stanley Bruce Anstey

Outline of the Epistle to the Romans: God's Righteousness Declared in the Gospel, Romans 8:31-39: The Believer's Security in the Power and Love of God

Article from https://bibletruthpublishers.com/bible-truth-study-bible/btsb

Seven Questions

Chap. 8:31-39—As a cap on all that has been stated as to God's righteousness being declared in the gospel, Paul shows that while on our way to being glorified, we are divinely preserved and cared for along the way. Seven questions are raised as to our security, and the Lord's love behind all His present dealings with us in the trials and tribulations we pass through. Since He has stopped at nothing to save us—not even sparing His own Son—He is going to make sure that we arrive with all that He has purposed for us.

The courtroom setting that Paul used in chapters 1-3 is seen here again. Only now a remarkable change has taken place. The accused—who once stood in the place of a guilty sinner—is seen justified. He stands before the bench, and a call goes out for any accusers to step forward. But there are none! How could there be? If God has justified the ungodly, no charge can be justly brought against him.

Paul's first question is, "What shall we say to these things?" Can anybody find fault with this great plan of salvation? God has shown Himself to be just and righteous and loving in all of His movements to secure salvation and blessing for man.

The second question is, "If God be for us, who can be against us?" Note: Paul does not say, "What can be against us?" but "Who can be against us." He repeats this a number of times throughout these questions, indicating that it is not the groaning creation that is in view here, but the forces of evil ordered by the devil. Is there any man or devil who can stop God from bringing to fruition that which He has purposed for the blessing of men? The answer is that if God (who is a trillion times greater than any creature in the universe) is "for us," then there are none who can hinder His plan! (1 John 4:4) Job said, "I know that Thou canst do all things, and that no purpose of Thine can be thwarted" (Job 42:2).

The third question is, "He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?" If God has gone to such lengths to bless us—even to the point of not sparing His own Son—we can be sure that He will come through with our final deliverance and give us "all things," which will be when Christ takes the inheritance at His Appearing (Eph. 1:14).

The fourth question is, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth." No one can bring a charge of sin against us because we have been justified by God Himself. God has removed us from the place of a sinner and has set us in a new position in Christ with a new life that has not sinned, nor can sin. Thus, no just charge can be justly brought against us!

The fifth question is, "Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God." This question is a quote from Isaiah 50:9, where Christ is seen as having completed the work of atonement and God having raised Him to His right hand. Christ is seen there challenging His foes (particularly the accuser of the brethren, Satan—Rev. 12:10) to find anything which they could condemn Him with, since God has justified Him in all that He accomplished in making atonement. Paul applies this to us. Since we are "in Christ"—which is to be in Christ's place before God—no condemnation can be leveled against us! Condemnation must first reach Christ before it can reach us. This is marvellous grace indeed!

Paul adds, "Who maketh intercession for us." Christ is now on high interceding for us, for attacks from the enemy of our souls will inevitably come against us. Since attacks against our security in Christ would be futile, Satan aims his attacks at our state of soul and our communion with God. But Paul shows that we have Christ as our intercessor, who undertakes to maintain us in communion with God in spite of these attacks. This is a reference to Christ's present work as our High Priest and our Advocate.

The sixth question is, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" Paul again asks if there is any such force powerful enough to cause Christ's love to depart from us. Note: he doesn't say, "Who shall separate us from the enjoyment of the love of Christ?" Sad to say, there is much in this world that can separate us from our enjoyment of Christ's love, and this being the case, there are many Christians who are not enjoying His love. Christ's love for us is one thing, and enjoying it is another. With the provision that God has made for us in the path of faith, there is no reason why we shouldn't be living in the constant enjoyment of His love (2 Peter 1:3).

Seven Outward Forms of Trial Can Do Nothing To Disturb Our Blessing in Christ

- Chap. 8:35—The seventh question is, "Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?" These are seven forms of trials that we face in this world.
- "Tribulation"—trials in general.
- "Distress"—mental anguish, fears, and phobias.
- "Persecution"—suffering for Christ's sake.
- "Famine"—lacking food.
- "Nakedness"—lacking the basic necessities of life.
- "Peril"—dangers of any kind.

• "Sword"—martyrdom.

He concludes that none of these things can separate us from the love of Christ. In fact, trial, if taken in the spirit of submission, actually draws us closer to Christ and makes Him more precious!

Paul quotes Psalm 44:22 to show that while pressure and trial are on every side of us, and we might look like we are "accounted as sheep for the slaughter," we are actually the gainers from the trials we pass through. He says, "Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us" (vs. 37). A conqueror is one who stands fast and overcomes in a trial or adverse situation. To be "more than a conqueror" is to not only stand fast in testing, but to gain from the trial. The conqueror takes away much spiritual spoil from the situation, in the way of valuable spiritual lessons learned. Hence, the Christian who is in a right state profits from these adverse circumstances. David recognized this and said, "In pressure Thou hast enlarged me" (Psa. 4:1). There are at least ten positive things that result from the trials that the Lord's people pass through, if they are taken rightly:

• They are opportunities for God to show His power and grace by sustaining His people in times of trouble, and thus manifest His glory (Job 37:7; John 9:3; 11:4).

• Through them we are brought to know the love of God in a deeper way, and thus we are drawn closer to the Lord (Rom. 5:3-5).

• Through them we are conformed morally to the image of Christ (Rom. 8:28-29), and thus they work toward our moral perfection (James 1:4).

• If we are walking in paths of unrighteousness, they are used by God to correct our spirits and our ways, and thus produce in us the peaceable fruit of righteousness (Heb. 12:5-11).

• Through them our faith is strengthened (2 Thess. 1:3-4).

• They teach us dependence (Psa. 119:67-68, 71).

• They wean us from earthly things and thus turn us heavenward; as a result, the heavenly hope burns more brightly in our hearts (Luke 12:22-40).

• They draw brethren closer to one another (Job 2:11; 6:14; 1 Chron. 7:21-22).

• The lessons we learn by going through trials enable us to sympathize with others more effectively (2 Cor. 1:3-4).

• They capacitate us for the theme of praise in the coming glory (2 Cor. 4:15-17).

Ten Invisible Forms of Danger That Can Do Nothing To Affect Our Blessings in Christ

Chap. 8:38-39—Paul has spoken of outward visible dangers that we encounter in the path of faith, he passes on now to enumerate invisible dangers that work behind the scenes. He mentions ten such unseen things that could be ranged against us, and shows that none of them can thwart the purpose of God in completing our salvation, and "separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

• "Death"—If death should overtake us, we lose nothing. Believers who die before the Lord comes are still said to be "in Christ" (1 Thess. 4:16). Thus, our position before God and all that we have in Christ is intact and secure. In fact, we only gain if death were to occur (Phil. 1:21).

• "Life"—All the trials and tribulations that come with life in this world cannot take away from us what we have in Christ. Even if we fail under testing, nothing is changed.

• "Angels" (fallen)—The Satanic powers of evil and darkness working in heavenly places (the realm of spiritual activity) to bring railing accusations against us, can do nothing to stop our forward progress.

• "Principalities (Satanic)—The Satanic powers of evil working on earth to separate us from Christ.

• "Powers"—Men in places of human government using their authority to condemn the believer, can do nothing to change our salvation in Christ.

• "Things present"—Daily fears.

• "Things to come"—Fears of what might overcome us in the future.

• "Height"—Things in heaven.

• "Depth"—Things on, or under, the earth.

• "Any other creature"—Nothing that God has created can sever our bond with Christ.

Thus, the chapter begins with “no condemnation” (vs. 1) and ends with no separation (vs. 39); in between we have no (credible) opposition (vs. 31), and no (credible) accusation (vs. 33).

F. B. Hole summarized the first eight chapters of Romans in this way: "We may sum up these things by saying that the Christian—according to the thoughts of God—is not only forgiven, justified, reconciled, with the Spirit shedding abroad in his heart the love of God; but also he sees the divine condemnation of sin and the flesh in the cross, he finds that his own vital links before God are not with Adam fallen, but with Christ risen. Consequently, he is in Christ Jesus, with the Spirit dwelling in him, in order that, controlling him and filling him with Christ, as an Object bright and fair before his eyes, he may walk in happy deliverance from the power of sin and be gladly fulfilling the will of God. Nothing less than this is what the gospel proposes. What do we think of it? We pronounce it magnificent!" (Paul’s Epistles, Vol. 1, p. 32)

Technical Terms Used in Paul's Doctrine Regarding Sin

- "Death by sin" (Rom. 5:12)—This refers to how sin has come into the creation and has spoiled everything, and thus the whole creation has the curse of death on it.
- "Dead to sin" (Rom. 6:2)—To be separated (positionally) from the whole order of sin under the headship of Adam by the death of Christ (Rom. 6:2; 7:6; Col. 2:20; 3:3).
- "Justified from sin" (Rom. 6:7)—In Christ's death we have had an honourable discharge (judicially) from our connections with the old master (sin), and therefore, we cannot be charged with sins, self-will, lust, etc., because all such cannot be charged to a dead man.
- "Sin dead" (Rom. 7:8)—A person being unaware of the presence and activity of his sin-nature because he is totally identified with it, and therefore, is carried along unconsciously by its force.
- "The law of sin" (Rom. 8:2)—A universal principle working in every man's sin-nature that causes him to move according to its appetites and desires.
- "Dead because of sin" (Rom. 8:10)—The members of our bodies are held powerless through practically applying the principles of deliverance.
- "Dead in sins" (Eph. 2:2)—Lost sinners, without divine life, living their lives in pursuit of their sinful desires and ambitions, in separation from God.

Summary of Contrasting Couplets

- Two heads of races—Adam and Christ (chap. 5:12-21).
- Two masters—sin and righteousness (chap. 6:1-23).
- Two husbands—the Law and Christ (chap. 7:1-6).
- Two principles of life—(chap. 8:1-17).

DISPENSATIONAL—Chapters 9-11

Outline of the Epistle to the Romans: God's Righteousness Declared in the Gospel, Romans 8:18-39: Deliverance From the Presence of Sin

Chapter 8:18–39

Thus far in the epistle, Paul has shown that believers on the Lord Jesus Christ have a past deliverance from the penalty of their sins and also a present deliverance from the power of sin. He now shows that the fullness of God's salvation for the believer also includes a future deliverance from the very presence of sin in us. This has to do with the eradication of the sin-nature from the believer by being glorified like Christ. Paul has alluded to this in verse 17. This final aspect of deliverance, which will be ours at the coming of the Lord (the Rapture), is so immense that its effects will reach even to the creation itself—but this won't happen until the Appearing of Christ, seven years after the Rapture. At that time, men, animals, and plant life will be delivered from "the bondage of corruption" (vs. 21).

Since the fall of man (Gen. 3), the whole creation has been blighted with the disease of sin, and the effects of it can be seen everywhere. Everything is suffering from what sin has brought into the world—sickness, hunger, sorrow, violence, death, etc. God has promised not to leave the creation in this state indefinitely and will intervene to reverse the effects of sin at the Appearing of Christ. While the whole creation will experience the benefits of this deliverance, it will not be to the same degree in which Christians will experience it. Paul shows in this passage that believers' souls will be rid of the sin-nature and their bodies will be glorified! These are things that men on earth and the lower creation will not experience in the Millennium.

The Support of Two Divine Intercessors

While the believer waits in hope of this future deliverance, he is seen under all the support and strength of two divine Intercessors: the Spirit of God here below (vs. 26), and Christ on high (vs. 34). Moreover, since the believer is still on earth, he is seen encountering trials from two directions: firstly, from being in the groaning creation (vss. 20-30), and then secondly, from opposition to the gospel testimony (vss. 31-39).

Paul takes up this final aspect of deliverance as follows:

- The deliverance that will be brought to believers and to the lower creation (chap. 8:18-23).
- The believer's comfort and encouragement in the present time of suffering, while waiting for the promised deliverance (chap. 8:24-28).
- The purpose that God has in allowing trials that result from living in a scene affected by what sin has wrought in the creation (chap. 8:29-30).

The Coming Glory and the Deliverance It Brings

Chap. 8:18-30—Since this final aspect of deliverance has to do with future events, in order to understand it properly, we need to have some knowledge of these things. The prophetic Scriptures indicate that the Lord's coming has two phases. First, He will come to call away all Christians from the earth—taking them to heaven (John 14:2-3; 1 Thess. 1:10; 4:15-18). Bible teachers call this the Rapture—a Latin equivalent to "caught up" (Acts 8:39; 2 Cor. 12:2-4; 1 Thess. 4:17; Rev. 12:5). Then, there will be a terrible time of trouble on the earth called the Tribulation (Matt. 24:21; 2 Thess. 2:2-4; Rev. 3:10), which will be a period of about seven years (Dan. 9:27). After this, the second phase of

the Lord's coming will occur (the Appearing) when He will come from heaven with His saints to judge the world and set up His millennial kingdom (Matt. 24:29-30; 1 Thess. 3:13; 4:14; 2 Thess. 1:7-10; 2:8; Jude 14-15). We mention this because certain parts of the coming deliverance will occur at the Rapture and certain others at the Appearing. For instance, the Christian will get his deliverance from the presence of sin at the Rapture by being glorified at that moment (1 Cor. 15:51-56; Phil. 3:20-21). The creation, however, must wait for the Appearing of Christ before being delivered. At that time, it will be given a release from the effects of sin—"the bondage of corruption."

Chap. 8:18—Paul ended the previous section speaking of Christians as "heirs" and "joint-heirs" with Christ. As such, we are waiting for Him to come and take possession of our inheritance at His glorious Appearing, whereupon we will reign with Him over it in the kingdom. In this section, Paul takes up where he left off in the previous section, mentioning "the sufferings of this present time." This is something which we all must face as we wait for the coming deliverance. As mentioned earlier, our sufferings come from two directions: from being connected with the creation that is under the bondage of corruption, and from our bearing witness for Christ in the way of testimony. These sufferings are normal to Christianity.

Since suffering is unavoidable, Paul proceeds to give us the means by which we will be able to endure it. He says, "For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in [to] us." Thus, we are to weigh the present sufferings that we experience in this "little while" that we are here on earth (Heb. 10:37) against the eternal glory that shall be revealed to us. If we "reckon" properly, as Paul does here, we will realize that what we experience here on earth is only temporary, and in comparison to what we will have, it is worth it, even if it were a thousand times more difficult. Therefore, in the measure in which we keep our eyes fixed on "the coming glory," we will be able to endure the sufferings of this present time.

Chap. 8:19—Paul proceeds to tell us when deliverance will be enacted upon the creation. He says, "The earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God." The "creature" refers to the whole creation. It includes men, animals, and plant life—essentially everything that we see on earth that has been affected by the corruption of sin. Paul says that the lower creation looks for a release from this bondage of corruption, but it couldn't be with any measure of intelligence, for it obviously doesn't know of Christ's coming. Nonetheless, the creation is waiting for that moment. Paul says that this deliverance will occur at the time of "the manifestation of the sons of God." This will be at the Appearing of Christ (2 Thess. 1:10; 1 John 3:2). We are "the sons of God" now (vs. 14), but we will be manifested as such before the world then. Today, men are doing everything they can to relieve suffering on earth. And, we are thankful for medical science, etc., but the suffering, the sickness, and natural death that is all around us will not be lifted until Christ appears.

Thus, Paul touches on two things in connection with the Christian's future:

- The glorification of the sons of God, which will occur at the Rapture (vss. 17-18).
- The manifestation of the sons of God, which will occur at the Appearing of Christ (vs. 19).

Chap. 8:20-22—He explains that the creation was "made subject to vanity," not of its own will, but through the failure of its federal head—Adam. But in spite of the failure of Adam, there is a "hope" of deliverance before the ruined creation in the Appearing of Christ.

Verse 21, as it reads in the KJV, could be misleading. It says that the creation will be "delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God." This implies that the lower creation will experience the same “glorious liberty” (glorification) that Christians will have, which is not true. The verse should read: "the liberty of the glory of the children of God." Thus, the creation will come into the liberty that will be brought to the children of God, in the sense of having a release from the corruption and suffering, etc., but it will not experience the glorification that the children will experience. The creation will have liberation but not glorification.

Chap. 8:23—In the previous verses, Paul has spoken of the future deliverance that is coming for the creation. Now, he comes to what Christians will experience in our deliverance from the presence of sin. As mentioned, it will be in a far greater way than that which the creation will have, receiving "the redemption of our body" (Eph. 4:30). This refers to our bodies being glorified and transformed into the likeness of the Lord's body of glory. This, as we have stated, will occur at the Rapture (1 Cor. 15:51-56; Phil. 3:20-21). At that time, our sin-natures will be eradicated from our bodies, and we will be rid of sin in us forever! We will also be raptured from the earth and thus taken out of the presence (the environment) of sin that is all around us now! Thus, we will have deliverance from the presence of sin.

Christians speak of getting "new" bodies at the Rapture, but this could imply that we are given another body altogether, which is not true. If Christians were to receive "new" bodies in this sense when the Lord comes, what need would there be of raising the bodies of the saints from the dead? Also, what need would there be of glorifying the bodies of the saints who will be living on earth when the Lord comes, if they are going to get new bodies? To avoid the possibility of anyone having this mistaken thought, Scripture is careful never to say that we get "new" bodies. Rather, it says that our bodies will be "changed" (Job 14:14; 1 Cor. 15:51-52; Phil. 3:21). This means that we will have the very same bodies in which we have lived—albeit, in an altogether different condition of glory (Luke 14:14; John 5:28-29; 1 Cor. 15:51-55; 1 Thess. 4:15-16, etc.). Paul said, "We shall all be changed" (1 Cor. 15:51). This includes the bodies of the saints who have died ("this corruptible") and also the bodies of the saints who are still living when the Lord comes ("this mortal"). The corruptible will “put on incorruption” and the mortal will “put on immortality”(1 Cor. 15:53-54).

Having "the first-fruits of the Spirit," which is the possession of a new life in Christ and our heavenly blessings in Him, we have a guarantee of the eventual "redemption" of our bodies. We can enjoy what is ours by the Spirit now, as a foretaste of what is before us. This does not make us immune to the suffering that is around us. To the contrary, being in our bodies in their present (unglorified) state, yet having the Spirit of Christ in us, we feel the suffering, and "groan within ourselves." This groaning is on account of what we feel personally in passing through this scene, and also by what we feel sympathetically, as we see others suffering. While the Christian groans, he is seen in this chapter as having the present "adoption" of sonship (vs. 15), and is awaiting a future "adoption" of his body into a glorified state (vs. 23).

Three Things That Sustain The Believer In This Present Time of Suffering

Chap. 8:24-30—Paul then gives encouragement in view of the suffering that we are passing through while we wait for our final deliverance. We “groan” (sigh) under these present circumstances, and it’s understandable (2 Cor. 5:4), but we shouldn’t grumble (complain) because God has made provision for us to endure this time of suffering. In this next series of verses, Paul touches on three things that God has given to sustain us in the way.

1) Our Hope

(Vss. 24-25)—The first thing is the hope of our future redemption. Paul says, "We are saved in hope." The KJV says that we are saved "by" hope, but it should read "in" hope. “Saved in hope” means that when we first trusted Christ as our Saviour, it was in view of our having this final aspect of redemption. Thus, when we were "saved" it was "in hope" of, or in view of, the full and final thing. God never intended that deliverance from the penalty of our sins should be an end in itself—wonderful as that is. He had before Him a complete salvation for His redeemed people. This great salvation includes not only what we have been saved from, but what we are saved for—to be Christ’s eternal companions. And, if we are going to live with Him in heaven, we will have to be glorified—thus the need for the redemption of our bodies. We have this precious knowledge on account of a revelation that was given to the Apostle Paul, who has in turn communicated it to the Church (1 Cor. 15:51-56).

As mentioned in chapter 5:2, “hope” in the Bible does not have the same meaning as it has today. In the modern use of the word, a person will speak of hope as something that he would like to see happen, but he has no guarantee that it will. This is not how Scripture uses the word. Hope, in Scripture, is always a thing of certainty, but it's deferred. The thing hoped for will definitely happen; we just don't know when. Hence, it is a deferred certainty.

Knowing the glorious future that lies ahead for us sustains us in the path, because the thing hoped for is steadfast and sure. In hope we have been saved, and in its power we live; and this gives us “patience” to wait for it. As we wait, we walk by faith and not by sight (2 Cor. 5:7). Paul reminds us of this: "But hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it." It has been said that faith and hope are good travelling companions for the Christian in his wilderness journey, and this is true. But at the coming of the Lord (the Rapture), we will part ways with those companions, and enter heaven with the Lord where love will abide alone. We will not need faith and hope there.

2) the Resource of Prayer & the Spirit’s Intercession

(Vss. 26-27)—The second thing that God has given to sustain us until the hour of our final redemption is the resource of prayer and the Spirit's helping intercession. Paul says, "Likewise, the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities [weakness]: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered." As we live and move in this scene, and pain and suffering are felt in varying degrees on account of the effects of the bondage of corruption, we can commit ourselves to prayer, which is an expression of our dependence on God in these trials. This is our refuge. The Spirit takes up our cause to “help” us in times of suffering, for oftentimes we don't know what we should pray for in certain situations, but He is able to perfectly express to God what we feel but are unable to articulate.

Oftentimes we have selfish motives behind our prayers without knowing it, and we ask unintelligently for things that are not the will of God. Perhaps we might see somebody suffering, and our human emotion and pity rises in us, and we ask something for them that would not be the best. But the Spirit of God knows the depth of our need and the needs of others, and makes intercession "according to the will of God." When God "searches" our hearts, He finds "the mind of the Spirit" formed there by the Spirit, though we are unable to express it.

That the Spirit is said to make “groanings” is indeed an incredibly comforting thing. It shows that He feels deeply for us in what we are passing through as we suffer in this groaning creation.

Thus, we have three "groanings" in this passage:

- The creation groans unintelligently (vs. 22).
- The Christian groans with a measure of intelligence (vs. 23).
- The Spirit groans with full intelligence according to the mind of God (vss. 26-27).

3) Knowing That the Providence of God Is Working Behind the Scenes for Us

(Vs. 28)—The third thing that we have, and can count on to encourage us, is the knowledge that the providence of God is working for us behind the scenes. Paul says, "We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose." While at times we may not know what to pray, we can still have confidence that God is in control of the situation. We may not be able to make sense of the things that have happened to us in life, but we know that God knows exactly what He is doing. Our lives, therefore, are not governed by chance, luck, or fate, but are controlled by a Person who loves us. What a wonderful thought this is! If we have the faith to believe this great fact, we will be comforted in times of suffering and sorrow.

"We know" is a technical expression used in many places in Paul's epistles. It denotes normal Christian understanding of truth, on account of the revelations that have been given to the Church through the apostles (1 Cor. 2:10-12). Using this expression as Paul does here, the Christian knows that God is in control of everything that is happening in his life, and that He is using it "for good" (Lam. 3:37). Note: he does not say, "All things are good." He says, "All things work together for good." This is because some things that happen to us may be bad, but God uses even those things to produce something good that we will take with us into eternity. Hence, we may not know what is happening to us, but we do know why it is happening—God is working out things in our lives that are "for" our good. These "things" may appear to us as a tangled mess of unexplainable details, but when the Lord comes, He will untangle it all for us, and explain the whys and wherefores, and it will all make sense then. The Lord does not promise, nor does the Apostle say, that it will be remedied here and now. But, nevertheless, faith can praise Him for it now.

God’s Ultimate Goal in Our Sufferings and Trials

Chap. 8:29-30—This leads Paul to speak of God’s intention in allowing suffering and trials in the life of the believer. His great aim is that we would be "conformed to the image of His Son." God loves and delights in His Son so much that He has purposed to fill heaven with redeemed persons who are just like His Son! In the day of our final redemption, we will be conformed to His image physically, having bodies like Christ's body of glory (Phil. 3:21). But, as we wait for that day, God is working to conform us to the image of His Son morally, so that we would be like Him in our walk and ways now. As "the Firstborn among many brethren," Christ is the Head of a new race of men that will be just like

Himself—morally and physically; and they will reign with Him in His millennial kingdom.

Verse 29, states clearly that God's purpose in connection with our lives centers in His Son. In verses 30-31, Paul refers to it as a chain of five links, having its beginning in the eternity past and its end in future glory. He shows that nothing can stop God from reaching His divine end with us, for no link in the chain can be broken! We are foreknown, predestinated, called, justified, and glorified.

- "Foreknow"—God knows everything about our lives long before the world was even made.
- "Predestinate"—God orders the eternal destiny of those whom He chooses in grace.
- "Called"—At a particular point in time God causes us to hear His voice by the call of the gospel and we respond by believing.
- "Justified"—Upon believing, God clears us from every charge against us by setting us in a new position before Him in Christ with a new life that has not sinned, nor can sin.
- "Glorified"—God's final work with us whereby our bodies are transformed into the likeness of Christ's body of glory.

Note the frequent use of the pronoun "He" all through this passage. It refers to God Himself, whose heart of love and grace is toward us, ordering all things for our blessing! Thus, His heart of love is the source of all our blessing. These things are mentioned in the past tense—even the last link which has to do with being glorified! Since we are not actually glorified yet, it is clear that Paul is not speaking of what is being worked out presently in time, but is viewing these things as they are according to God's eternal purpose. From that perspective, our glorification is seen as being an already completed thing.

Summary of the Different Operations Of the Spirit In Romans 8

In this chapter, we have a wonderful unfolding of truth concerning the Spirit of God and His many functions in a Christian.

- He empowers our walk (vss. 1-4). In this capacity, He is called "the Spirit of Life" because He causes us to live a life of holiness.
- He occupies us with the interests of Christ, which Paul calls "the things of the Spirit" (vss. 5-8). In this capacity, He is called "the Spirit."
- He forms Christ in us (vss. 9-10a). In this capacity, He is called "the Spirit of Christ."
- He causes us to live the resurrection life in fellowship with God (vs. 10b). In this capacity, He is called "the Spirit Life."
- He will quicken our mortal bodies (vs. 11). In this capacity, He is called "the Spirit of Him."
- He enables us to mortify the deeds of the body (vs. 13). In this capacity, He is called "the Spirit."
- He leads the sons of God (vs. 14). In this capacity, He is called "the Spirit of God."
- He causes us to know our liberty in the presence of God, whereby we cry "Abba, Father" (vs. 15). In this capacity, He is called "the Spirit of adoption."
- He bears witness that we are the children of God, and therefore, heirs of God (vss. 16-17). In this capacity, He is called "the Spirit Itself."
- He is the Firstfruits giving assurance that our full deliverance is coming (vs. 23). In this capacity, He is called "the Firstfruits of the Spirit."
- He is the Helper of our infirmities (vs. 26a). In this capacity, He is called again "the Spirit Itself."
- He is our Interceder in connection with all of our cares (vss. 26b-27). In this capacity, having the knowledge of the will of God, it is "the mind of the Spirit."

Outline of the Epistle to the Romans: God's Righteousness Declared in the Gospel, Romans 8:1-17: The Happy Results That Flow From Applying the Doctrine of Deliverance

Chapter 8:1-17

The Holy Spirit—the Power for Deliverance And Practical Sanctification

The experience of the man in the previous chapter ended with him rejoicing in his deliverance from sin and giving God thanks for it. While Paul told us how he reached this happy state—by looking away from himself to "Jesus Christ our Lord"—he didn't explain by what means it was effected. This is now taken up in chapter 8. In this chapter, Paul explains that the power for deliverance comes from the believer having the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Thus, he now enters upon a dissertation on the presence and the work of the Holy Spirit in a Christian.

Immediately upon entering the chapter, the reader will notice that the personal pronouns—"I," "me," "my," "myself"—used frequently in the struggle described in chapter 7, all but disappear. This is instructive. It tells us that the truth in chapter 8 is presented from the perspective of the lesson in chapter 7 being learned—namely, that self is no longer relied upon for the power to live a holy life. Thus, the struggle with the flesh is seen as over in this chapter. There is another thing that we cannot pass over without notice; the Spirit of God, who is not mentioned at all in chapter 7, is mentioned many times here. Paul uses several different expressions having to do with the Spirit to indicate various aspects of the Spirit's work in a believer.

The most significant of these changes that we notice, as we pass from the 7th to the 8th chapter, is that the man struggling in chapter 7 (though he has a new life) has neither power to live that life, nor an object for his heart. But in chapter 8, we have both—Christ on high is the believer's Object and the Holy Spirit is the believer's power. These two things characterize Christianity—a glorified Man (Christ) in heaven and the Spirit of God dwelling on earth in believers (John 7:39).

What Characterizes the Normal Christian Standing and State

The 8th chapter, therefore, outlines the characteristic traits of the Christian's standing and state, resulting from him being indwelt by the Holy Spirit and energized by His power. The believer is seen standing before God “in Christ” beyond condemnation, possessing a present deliverance from the power of sin, and waiting in hope for a future and final deliverance from the presence of sin, when the Lord will come and glorify him and take him to heaven. Thus, in this chapter we have a three-fold deliverance (or three deliverances) of the Christian:

- A past deliverance—having to do with being delivered from reaching condemnation in a lost eternity (vs. 1).

- A present deliverance—having to do with being freed from the law of sin and death, the evil principle in the flesh that hinders the believer from living a holy life (vss. 2-17).

- A future deliverance—having to do with the sin-nature being eradicated from the believer and his body glorified at the Rapture (vss. 18-30).

The chapter begins with no condemnation and ends with no separation from God and His love. It views the believer on earth, and thus found passing through two kinds of trials—that which comes from being part of the groaning creation (vss. 20-30), and that which comes from being a faithful witness for Christ (vss. 31-39). While the believer waits in hope of his future deliverance, he is seen under the support of two divine Intercessors: Christ in heaven (vs. 34) and the Holy Spirit on earth (vs. 26).

In verses 1-11, Paul delineates a number of new things that mark the full Christian standing and condition, which result from being indwelt with the Holy Spirit. We see at once that all is changed from what he described in chapter 7, as far as the person's state is concerned.

A New Position Before God in Christ

(Chap. 8:1)—The first thing that marks normal Christianity is that believers on the Lord Jesus Christ know their acceptance before God in Him. Paul indicates this in his opening statement: "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." The great point Paul emphasizes here is that, resulting from being justified, the believer is set in a new position before God where it is not possible for him to ever come into condemnation. He stands in the very place of acceptance in which Christ Himself stands! This is the meaning of being "in Christ"—it is to be in Christ's place before God. This assurance belongs to the believer as a result of resting in faith on the finished work of Christ, and believing what God's Word says about it. Verse 1 is essentially the conclusion of the truth that Paul has taught in chapters 1–5:11.

Note: Paul does not say (as some have supposed), "There is now no more condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." This would imply that believers were once under condemnation in their pre-conversion days, but they have escaped it through coming to Christ in faith for salvation. However, this is not correct. As mentioned in our comments in chapter 5:16, unbelievers are presently under judgment, but they are not under condemnation—at least not yet. Condemnation is a final, irrevocable thing, to which sinners in this world are heading, and will pass into (in a lost eternity), if they do not get saved.

Paul says that we have this assurance of never coming into condemnation "now" while we are here on earth. This is one of the outstanding reasons why the Spirit has been sent into this world; it is to give the believer to know with assurance his place of acceptance before God (John 14:20; Eph. 1:13; 4:30). It is normal Christianity.

The latter ten words of verse 1 (in the KJV) are not in most Greek manuscripts, and should not be in the text. If those words were in the text, then it would make the believer's justification and acceptance in Christ something that results from his walking according to the Spirit. This could not be right, because then our salvation would be a consequence of our works! This is contrary to everything that Paul has taught in chapters 3-5, where he shows that our salvation is not of works, but by grace alone. This phrase (the ten latter words of verse 1) actually belongs in verse 4, and is repeated there.

J. N. Darby notes that the line of truth which the Apostle develops in Romans does not go so far as to present what is ours positively "in Christ;" it only gives the negative side of it. It says that there is "no condemnation" to them who are in Christ Jesus; whereas, in Ephesians, Paul presents higher truth, declaring what we have positively “in Christ,” being blessed "with all spiritual blessings" in Him (Eph. 1:3).

A New Law (Principle) That Governs Our Walk

(Chap. 8:2-4)—The second thing which marks normal Christianity is that believers have a new law (principle) in them, through the indwelling Spirit, that empowers their lives and enables them to live above the propensities of the flesh. Paul says, "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made [set] me free from the law of sin and death." Verses 2-4 summarize what Paul has taught in chapters 5:12–7:25—namely, deliverance from the power of sin. Hence, in verse 1, we have acceptance, and in verse 2, deliverance. The fact that acceptance is mentioned first shows that we first need to be resting on the finished work of Christ and know our position before God in Christ (whereupon the Holy Spirit is received), before we can have the practical power of deliverance in our lives by the Spirit.

It is important to understand that the new life is a dependent life that needs power from the Holy Spirit to live according to the will of God. Having received the Spirit, there is now a new controlling power in the Christian that is greater than that in the sin-nature. It overrides the evil influence of the flesh, and enables the believer to live a holy life which the new life desires.

The scientific law of gravity illustrates this. As we know, every object is being pulled downward toward the center of the earth by the invisible force of gravity. It is universal; it happens over the entire earth. If we were to take a solid object in our hand—for sake of our illustration, a book—and hold it out over the ground, and let go of it, the book would fall to the ground. Regardless of how many times we did it, it would always fall to the ground. This is like our sin-nature; it wants to go in one direction—downward morally and spiritually towards sin. This evil principle in us is called, “the law of sin and death.” It is a universal principle that is present in every human being, and its end is always death.

Taking our illustration a little further: suppose we wanted to change matters so that when we released our grasp of the book it wouldn't fall to the ground under the power of gravity. So, to accomplish this, we attached to the book some balloons filled with helium gas, which is lighter than air. And, if we had enough of these balloons so that the lifting force from them was greater than the weight of the book, then when we let go of the book it would not fall but would rise in the air. We all understand why; the principle of gravity was not taken away or made inactive, but a more powerful, overriding principle has been brought to bear upon the book.

This illustrates what God has done with the believer in giving him the Holy Spirit. As we know, our fallen nature was not taken away when we were saved. We will not be rid of this enemy until the Lord comes. God has seen fit to leave us here in this world with the fallen nature still in us (and the state of our hearts is constantly tested by it), but He has made full provision for us to live above the power of that evil thing through another law working within us which Paul calls, “the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus.”

Verses 3-4 indicate that in securing a means for the believer to live a holy life, free from the power of sin, God has not undertaken to do it through rehabilitating the flesh. This is not God's way of holiness. Christianity is not an overhaul of the flesh. From the fall of man to the cross of Christ, God had man in the flesh on probation. This was for about four thousand years, or forty centuries. (Forty, in Scripture, signifies testing.) During that period, the flesh was tested in man in every way, and it has proven to be worthless. The trial came to an end at the cross, where God judged that whole order of things after the flesh (chap. 6:6). Thus, God has "condemned sin in the flesh" and set it aside as worthless. It has been condemned because—as someone put it—"What cannot be mended must be ended!" Thus, God is no longer looking for fruit from man in the flesh, and deliverance from the power of sin surely will not come from the flesh, but through what God has accomplished in grace through Christ.

Notwithstanding, many Christians mistakenly think that when a person is born again, God performs a miracle in them whereby their human nature is renewed or re-made. They mistakenly call it regeneration (Titus 3:5). Since the word "regenerate" means to re-start something, they imagine that new birth is a regeneration of the old nature by infusing new life into it. Based on this mistaken belief, most Reformed theologians and many evangelical preachers teach that Christians do not have two natures, but rather, a "regenerated nature!" However, this makes regeneration and new birth to be nothing more than a rehabilitation of the flesh. The truth is the flesh cannot be improved. Scripture says that "it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be" (Rom. 8:7). The Lord taught this to Nicodemus. He said, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh" (John 3:6). That is, whatever men might do to improve man in the flesh—whether it is to introduce the influence of culture, education, religion, or to starve it, or flog it, etc.—the end result is that it is still nothing but sinful flesh. Therefore, the only thing to do with the flesh is to condemn it and set it aside, and that is exactly what God has done.

The point in verses 3-4 is that grace has succeeded in doing what “the (Mosaic) Law could not do”—that is, give man (the believer) the power to walk in holiness. Paul says that the Law was "weak through the flesh." This doesn't mean that there is something wrong with the Law, but that it couldn't produce anything good out of the flesh because the material (the sin-nature) was altogether bad. Note: it says God condemned sin in the flesh; He didn’t condemn the Law. There is nothing wrong with the Law; the problem is with the flesh.

Verse 4 shows that through what God has accomplished in grace, the believer is now able to fulfil "the righteous requirements of the Law," without being formally under the Law (W. Kelly Translation). This means that the Christian does the righteous things outlined in the Law, not because he has some legal commitment to the Law, but because in his normal occupation with Christ, the Spirit of God produces holiness in him.

A New Sphere of Life in Which We Live Unto God

(Chap. 8:5-7)—The third thing which Paul mentions that marks normal Christianity is that believers have a new sphere of life to live in, where the Spirit of God ministers the things of Christ to their souls, as they dwell in fellowship with God (John 16:13-15). We are indeed thankful that God has provided such an element for us to live in, in which our new nature is perfectly suited. If He had not done so, Christians would be like "fish out of water."

Vs. 5—Paul mentions two classes of men: "they that are after [according to] the flesh" and "they that are after [according to] the Spirit." This, of course, would be unbelievers and believers. These two classes of persons live in two different spheres of life, where they pursue two different objects of interest. Paul defines these different interests as: "the things of the flesh" and "the things of the Spirit." F. B. Hole said, "Paul is speaking abstractly. He is viewing the whole position according to the inward nature of things, and not of particular individuals, or their varying experiences." (Paul’s Epistles, vol. 1, p.) The things of the flesh would be earthly, natural, and worldly things and activities that man after the flesh goes in for. They hardly need to be enumerated here. As mentioned in our comments in chapter 6, the things of the Spirit are spiritual things having to do with the interests of Christ. They are things such as: reading the Scriptures, praying, attending Christian meetings for worship and ministry, singing hymns and spiritual songs, reading Christian literature, listening to recorded Christian ministry, teaching the truth, sharing the gospel, meditating on spiritual things as we go about our daily responsibilities, serving the Lord with good works, visiting, etc.

The "raven" and the "dove" that were let out of Noah's ark illustrate the appetites of the two natures in a believer (Gen. 8:6-12). The raven, when let loose, didn't return to the ark, but feasted on the carrion. Similarly, the flesh finds its objects of interest in the world that God has judged at the cross, and it is quite at home in it. The dove, when it was let loose, returned to the ark, for it had no appetite for those things. Similarly, the new nature, which finds its interest in divine things, has no appetite for the moral and spiritual death that marks the things of this world.

Vss. 6-7—Paul then shows us where occupation with the things in each of these spheres leads—one is to "death" and the other is to "life and peace." Needless to say, these are very different ends. Paul then goes on to explain why man in the flesh will never walk in holiness. He says, "Because the mind of the flesh is enmity against God." The flesh hates God, and is incapable of being "subject to the Law of God," even if it wanted to be! Thus, it will never live "according to the Spirit."

A New State Wherein Christ Is Formed in Us

(Chap. 8:8-10)—Paul also speaks of two different states in which men are in, as they live and move in these spheres. The first state he designates as: "in the flesh." He says, "They that are in the flesh cannot please God, but ye are not in the flesh." In stating this, he makes it clear that while unsaved men of the world ("they") are in the flesh, believers ("ye") are not. Let us keep in mind that he is speaking of what is characteristic of unbelievers and believers. He is not taking into consideration that believers may at times live in a state that is abnormal to Christianity. Christians may act in the flesh (in a fleshly way) at times, but what is characteristic of them is that they are not "in the flesh." Hence, Christians have the flesh in them, but they are not in the flesh! This might sound confusing, but these are two different things. One is referring to the sin-nature residing in the believer (which will be the case until the Lord comes, or until the believer dies), and the other is speaking of a fleshly state or condition, which Paul says emphatically that the believer does not live in (characteristically).

Moving on to complete his thought, Paul says that believers are "in the Spirit"—which is the other contrasting state. He qualifies this by adding, "If so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you," simply because it is not possible to live in the Spirit if one does not have the Spirit dwelling in him. Thus, Paul shows that there is such a thing as the Spirit being in the believer, as well as the believer being in the Spirit. Again, these are two different things. The Spirit dwelling in the Christian is connected with our new standing before God in Christ. All Christians have this indwelling (Eph. 1:13). In connection with this, Paul says, "If anyone has not the Spirit of Christ, he is not of Him." This does not mean that if a person doesn't have the indwelling Spirit that he is lost. He is simply stating that without the indwelling Holy Spirit, the child of God is not in the full Christian position, of which he is giving a sketch in this chapter. The man struggling in chapter 7 would be an example of someone in this abnormal state. He is born of God, and therefore, not lost; but he doesn't have the Spirit, and thus he is not in the full Christian position. Note: Paul does not say, “He does not belong to Him,” as some translations mistakenly state, for all souls (saved and lost) belong to Christ, on account of His purchase at the cross (Matt. 13:44 – "the field;" Heb. 2:9 – "every thing"). That is not the point that Paul is making here. He is saying that such a person, with whom God has begun a work in new birth, is not "of" Christ in the new creation order until he receives the Holy Spirit (Gal. 3:29; Heb. 2:11).

"In the Spirit" refers to a new spiritual state or condition that exists in Christians in which the Spirit forms the moral features of Christ in them. Paul uses the expression, "the Spirit of Christ," when he refers to this special work of the Spirit. Thus, being possessed of the Spirit of Christ, Christians become like Christ in their walk and ways. This formative power of the Spirit works in us when our hearts are absorbed with Christ and His things (2 Cor. 3:18), but Paul is not speaking of how it is accomplished here. He is simply stating that this work of the Spirit in believers is a characteristic thing of normal Christianity.

Vs. 10—Then, resulting from this work, Paul says, "And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness." Here, he uses the word "if" differently from how he used it in the previous verse. In verse 9, it is an if of condition; here it is an if of argument. "If," used conditionally, has to do with it's being a question of whether something is so or not. Whereas, when "if" is used in building an argument, it could be substituted with "since." Paul's point here is that since the Spirit of Christ has His rightful sway in the believer, and the character of Christ is formed in him by the Spirit, he is no longer ruled by his fleshly appetites and lusts. The believer's body is held as "dead" as the Spirit ministers to him what is really "life," thus energizing him to live in practical "righteousness." He causes us to live in the good of resurrection life in fellowship with God, and when acting in this capacity He is called "the Spirit life." Let us remember again, Paul is speaking of what characterizes the normal Christian state, not what certain believers may experience in their lives when their state is less than optimal.

A New Prospect of Being Glorified

(Chap. 8:11)—Paul goes on to a final point that marks normal Christian life. He says that since we have "the Spirit of Him" dwelling in us, His presence is an earnest of what is to come for us (2 Cor. 5:5). The same power, that "raised up Jesus from the dead" long ago, is going to "quicken" our "mortal bodies." Our bodies will be changed into a glorified condition (1 Cor. 15:51-56; Phil. 3:21). This quickening power will eradicate the flesh from our beings once and for all! Note: he doesn't say that our bodies will be raised from the dead, because the normal Christian hope is to be alive on earth when the Lord comes. Of course, if we were to die before the Lord comes, our bodies would be raised in a glorified state at that time.

A Summary of the Normal Christian State

Thus, in the first eleven verses of Romans 8, we see the believer set in a new position ("in Christ"), with a new power ("the law of the Spirit of life"), in a new sphere of life that has a new range of objects ("the things of the Spirit"), whereupon Christ-like features are formed in him ("Christ be in you"). In addition to this, the believer is seen with a hope before his soul of having his body being glorified ("quickened") like Christ's body of glory, so that he will be able to live and reign with Christ in heaven. This is what a Christian is!

The Practical Results that Flow From Walking In the Spirit

Chap. 8:12-17—Having presented the standing and condition of believers in normal Christianity, Paul goes on to speak of the practical side of these things, bringing in our responsibility.

Chap. 8:12—He tells us that in view of what God has done for us through the death and resurrection of Christ, the believer is now under no obligation to the flesh to live after the flesh. He says, "Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after [according to] the flesh." This, as Paul has already explained, is because Christ, our federal Head, has acted for us in severing Himself from the whole system of sin through death, and we (being part of His new creation race) are entitled to hold ourselves as being dead with Him (chap. 6:10). But more than this, we have been given the power to live above the evil inclinations of the flesh through "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus" in us (chap. 8:2). Therefore, we cannot rightfully say that we can't help living after the lusts of the flesh, because every provision has been made for us to live free of it.

Chap. 8:13—Paul then warns us of the disaster that will result in our lives if we choose to live in the sphere of the flesh. He says, "For if ye live after [according to] the flesh, ye shall die." The aspect of death here is a moral and spiritual separation from a life of communion with God (1 Tim. 5:6). (It couldn't mean that the believer loses his salvation, because that is an impossibility–John 10:28-29, etc.). Hence, Paul is saying that there will be a total failure in our Christian lives. The believer who chooses to live "according to the flesh" will not only have his "lifeline" of communion with God severed, but he will also incur disciplinary (governmental) judgments from God the Father (1 Peter 1:16-17; 3:10-12; 4:17-18). These are sent to correct the believer's wrong attitude toward sin (Heb. 12:5-11).

Paul then says, "But if ye through [by] the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live." This shows that the power to restrain the flesh comes from the Holy Spirit, and that that power will only be active in our lives if we live in the right sphere of life. Hence, to live victoriously over the flesh, we must live in (not visit occasionally) the new sphere of life where Christ lives unto God, and be occupied with "the things of the Spirit" that are there. When we live in this sphere, the Holy Spirit will be free to take of the things of Christ and to show them unto us (John 16:13-15), and He will also work to keep the flesh in check, as mentioned in verse 2. It is only then that we will be able to "mortify the deeds of the flesh" through His power. This is the principle of displacement that Paul touched on in chapter 6. It is essentially the same thing that he told the Galatians: "Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh" (Gal. 5:16). This is normal Christianity.

Looking at our lives, we may say, "That is not exactly the way it is with me. I can't say that I've known victory over the flesh in the proportion in which Paul describes." We might wonder why this is, because we know that we are saved, and thus we have the Spirit dwelling in us. However, it's one thing to have the Spirit of God present in us as the power for deliverance, and quite another to have Him there actually working for us in an on-going, daily deliverance. It shows that in order for the Christian to have the Spirit's power in his life, the Spirit must not only be resident, but He must also be president. This equates to what the Bible calls being "filled with the Spirit" (Eph. 5:18).

The case with many of us is that the Spirit's power is quenched because we are not occupied with "the things of the Spirit" (the interests of Christ). The Spirit of God desires to work through us, but He is often hindered in varying degrees from one Christian to another. It reminds us of what the servant of Abraham (who is a type of the Holy Spirit) said to Rebekah's mother and brother—“Hinder Me not” (Gen. 24:56). Sad to say, we often hinder the work of the Spirit by "quenching” and “grieving” Him. Simply put: quenching the Spirit is not doing something that the Spirit is leading us to do (1 Thess. 5:19), and grieving the Spirit is doing something He hasn’t led us to do (Eph. 4:30).

Our problem is that we want to surround ourselves with earthly, natural, and worldly things, and pursue them, and expect to have the benefit of the practical deliverance from the power of sin that the Spirit gives. But we can't live in the shade and enjoy the sunshine at the same time. If we pamper the flesh, we’ll hamper the Spirit! Someone might read this and say, "Oh, I see it now; what I need is more of the Spirit in my life!" But that is not what Paul is teaching here. We don't need more of the Spirit, because God does not give the Spirit in measures (John 3:34). Actually, it's the other way around—the Spirit needs to have more of us! But if we have our lives full of these extraneous things, there is little room practically for the Spirit to work. This again reminds us of Abraham's servant. He said to Rebekah, "Is there room in thy father's house for us?" (Gen. 24:23) We can see from this that practical Christian living really only works when we live consecrated lives. Consecration means, "fill the hands" or "both hands full" (Ex. 29:22-24). In our case, it is to have our lives full of Christ and His interests (chap. 12:6-8). If we do that, we will not lack the power of the Spirit.

Thus, by saying, "if" in this verse (13), Paul shows that the onus is now on the believer. God would have us to be responsibly exercised about having practical victory over the flesh. We have to make a conscious choice to live in the right sphere of life. It really comes down to a matter of our wills—in what sphere do I want to live and with what do I want to be occupied? F. B. Hole said, "It is possible for us to turn aside from minding the things of the Spirit, to mind the things of the flesh. And, in so far as we do, we come in contact with death rather than life and peace. But let us make no mistake about it; if we go in for the things of the flesh, we are not seeking things which are properly characteristic of the Christian, but rather what is wholly abnormal and improper."

Let us also note that Paul does not say, "Mortify the body." This would be asceticism. It is what monks did in flogging themselves, sleeping on beds of nails, etc., in their attempt to curb and control the flesh—but it didn't work. All such activity is not God's way to practical sanctification. Paul says, "Mortify the deeds of the body." It is the "deeds"—the sinful things that we may be inclined to do—that are to be mortified, not our bodies.

Led by the Spirit

Chap. 8:14—Paul shows that the normal Christian life of walking “according to the Spirit” results in being “led by the Spirit.” This leading of the Spirit is evidenced in various ways—in worship, in service, in practical matters of life, etc. Sad to say, Christians are not always in communion with the Lord, and thus, at times they will not be led by the Spirit, but that is an abnormality.

Sons of God

Chap. 8:15—One of the things that the Spirit of God particularly desires to lead us into is the enjoyment of our privileges as "sons of God." Paul says that we have not received “a spirit of bondage” to fear—as a slave might feel under his master's rule—but rather, we have received "the Spirit of adoption," which gives us the liberty of "sonship" (marginal reading). Thus, we have confidence and liberty in the presence of God to address Him as "Abba, Father," which is a privilege that only the Lord had! (Mark14:36) No angel or Old Testament saint has ever known this liberty. "Abba" suggests intimacy without familiarity, and "Father" indicates intelligence of communion.

There are four main passages in Scripture where the sonship of believers is mentioned, each emphasizing a different aspect of its blessedness. These are:

• A privileged position (Gal. 4:1-7). As sons of God, Christians have been set in a place of favour in the family of God which all other blessed persons in the family do not have; it is the very place that the Son Himself is in before God! Hence, they are called “the Church of firstborn ones” (Heb. 12:23)

• Special liberty (Rom. 8:14-15). As sons of God, Christians have free access into the presence of God, whereby they address Him as their Father; and they do it with an intimacy that no other blessed creature has ever known, crying, “Abba, Father.”

• Superior blessings and insight (Eph. 1:3-10). As sons of God, Christians have been given special blessings and intelligence in the purpose of God, which until this present day has been held a secret in “the Mystery” (Eph. 3:4-5, 9).

• Dignity. As sons of God, they are identified with Christ as His “brethren” in the new creation race of men—Christ being the Head of the race as the “Firstborn” (Heb. 2:10-13; Rev. 3:14; Rom. 8:29; Col. 1:18).

While Old Testament saints are blessed of God and are part of His family as His children, they are not in the position of sons. These things connected with adoption belong only to those who are in this favoured place of sons. Even angels don't have this lofty place! It is the highest conferred blessing that a creature could have in relation to the Father.

Children of God

Chap. 8:16—The "witness" of the Spirit also works to make us conscious of our relationship with God as "the children of God." Thus, we are both sons and children. It is not some good feeling that we have in our hearts, but the assurance that we are His children because we are in fellowship and communion with Him.

Heirs of God

Chap. 8:17—Since the Spirit bears witness to the fact that we are children of God, we know, therefore, that we are also "heirs of God." This brings the inheritance into view, for an heir is one who has the prospect of an inheritance (Eph. 1:11). The Christian's inheritance is every created thing. What a vast inheritance this is! Paul adds that we are "joint-heirs with Christ" over the inheritance. We are going to reign with Him over it all in the day of His public manifestation, which will begin at His Appearing (Eph. 1:14, 18).

Suffering With and For Christ

In the meantime, while we wait for the Lord to come, we "suffer with Him." This is an aspect of suffering that is a direct result of having the Spirit of Christ (vs. 9). As mentioned earlier, this special function of the Spirit forms Christ in us. And, one of the Christ-like features being formed in us is the feelings of Christ. As He looks out over the scene where sin has had its effects, He suffers in sympathy with His creatures as they suffer under the bondage of corruption (vss. 20-23). As sons of God and children of God, we have been made vessels of the sympathies of God. Having a link in our bodies to the suffering creation and having the Spirit of Christ in us, in our little measure, we suffer "with" Christ sympathetically.

This aspect of suffering is not the same as suffering "for" Christ (Phil. 1:29; Acts 5:41; 9:16, etc.). Suffering for Christ has to do with bearing reproach and persecution on account of the gospel testimony. We can avoid this kind of suffering by refusing to confess Christ before men. There is a type of this kind of suffering in the story of David and Jonathan. David is a type of Christ and Jonathan is a type of the believer. When Jonathan identified himself publicly with David, Saul and those who followed him were infuriated, and Saul even threw a javelin at Jonathan—his own son! (1 Sam. 20:30-34; 2 Timothy 3:12) Hence, suffering for Christ is an elective thing, whereas suffering with Christ is not.

Paul comforts us with the fact that we can be assured that our suffering will end one day in our being "glorified together" with Christ. As mentioned in our comments on verse 11, glorification involves not only a change in our bodies, but also includes the eradication of our sin-natures. This shows that there is such a thing as the Christian reaching sinless perfection, but it will not occur until the Lord comes (the Rapture).

Paul's Twelve Men: The Scriptural Meaning and Application of Some Technical Terms in Paul's Doctrine, "Wretched Man"and a "Man in Christ", A

In Romans 7:24, Paul says, “O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” And then in 2 Corinthians 12:2 he says, “I knew a man in Christ ... ” These two terms appear to be in contrast to one another, and we will take them up in this way. The “wretched man” defines a person lacking deliverance, and “a man in Christ” is one who knows deliverance in Christ.

A WRETCHED MAN

The “wretched man,” in Romans 7:14-25, is a born again soul who is not yet resting in faith on the finished work of Christ. He, therefore, is not in the full Christian position before God, nor does he have the indwelling Spirit (Rom. 8:9).

In this passage, the Apostle describes an earnest soul in this state, who is trying to keep the flesh under control and to live a holy life, but failing miserably (vss. 18-21). He has two natures, which are depicted in the “I” that delights to do good (vs. 22) and the “I” that does evil (vs. 23); but he lacks the power to “perform that which is good.” When a soul is burdened with the desire to be holy but feels powerless, he becomes filled with dismay and wretchedness. He hates the evil that he does, being unable to restrain the flesh. He lacks deliverance because he is looking within himself for the power.

While in this wretched state, a person will often make the most destructive mistake of turning to the law for deliverance. Assuming that the law is the answer, the person will set it before his soul as a standard for his life. If it is not the Law of Moses, it will be some self-imposed standard of holiness. But either way, it is not the way of deliverance. As a result, he only makes himself more miserable. God will provide it in the Person of His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, but he must first learn the lesson that the power for deliverance is not found in himself.

A MAN IN CHRIST

Romans 8:1, says, “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus.” Here the Apostle describes the full Christian position of “a man in Christ.” The chapter unfolds the normal Christian state of being “in the Spirit” (vs. 9), and “led by the Spirit” (vs. 14). The struggle as depicted in chapter 7 is over, and the believer is seen as having a present deliverance from sin within (vss. 1-4), and awaiting a future deliverance from the presence of sin all around him—at the Lord’s coming (vss. 18-23).

Deliverance from the miserable state in Romans 7 into the happy state of Romans 8 does not come until the person’s self-confidence and self-hope is shattered and he looks outside of himself for deliverance from the lusts of his sin-nature. Note, he does not say, “O wretched man that I am, WHAT shall deliver me ... ?” He says, “O wretched man that I am! WHO shall deliver me ... ?” (vs. 24) This shows that deliverance is not found in a philosophy or in a self-help program, but in a Person—the Lord Jesus Christ. It’s significant that all the while the man struggles with the flesh, as seen in Romans 7, the Spirit of God is not once mentioned. But the moment he looks away from himself to a Deliverer and sees his place “in Christ,” the Spirit of God is mentioned many times, as noted in Romans 8. The man in Romans 8 is seen as sealed with the Spirit and in the full Christian position and is enjoying a state of peace and deliverance.

Second Corinthians 12:1-3 describes the state of “a man in Christ” who knows deliverance in his soul and is enjoying communion with God. The wretched man is occupied with himself (Rom. 7:14-24). “I,” “me,” “my,” are mentioned some 40 times! But the man in Christ is so thoroughly occupied with Christ and heavenly things that he has lost track of himself. He was not conscious of whether he was in the body or out of it! The woman in Luke 13:11 is a picture of one in the wretched condition. She was “bent” over, and as a result, all she could see was herself. But when the Lord touched her, she was lifted up and able to look into His face. Consequently, she no longer saw herself.

Some Practical Considerations

While the struggle in Romans 7:14-25 is technically not a Christian experience, many Christians experience it in a modified form. We say modified because the man described in Romans 7 is viewed as not having the Holy Spirit, which is normal to every true Christian. The struggle with the flesh that Christians often experience is more properly described in Galatians 5:16-17. It says, “For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.” This is referring to a Christian who has the Spirit but isn’t walking “in the Spirit” (vs. 16). The struggle in Romans 7 is between the flesh and the new nature in a child of God, whereas the struggle in Galatians 5 is between the flesh and the Spirit in a believer who is not walking in the Spirit. (Nor should we connect the spiritual struggle in Ephesians 6:10-18 with that in Galatians 5. They are different. Ephesians 6 describes a struggle that results when a Christian walks in the Spirit, whereas Galatians 5 is a struggle that results when he doesn’t walk in the Spirit.)

We all know too well what it is to have a lack of spiritual power and not be able to say no to sin in our lives, even though we have the Spirit in us. Why is this so? Because: It’s one thing to have the Spirit of God in us, and it’s quite another to have Him there acting for us in a present on-going way. The sovereign side of deliverance is the gift of the Spirit, but the responsible side of it is that we must let the Spirit fill us so that His power will be present to keep the flesh down.

In Romans 8:5-13, Paul explains that there are two domains, or spheres, in which a person can live: a sphere that pertains to “the flesh” and a sphere that pertains to “the Spirit.” He says, “They that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh” (vs. 5a). To “mind” something means “to pay attention to it.” He doesn’t go into specifics as to what these things are, but we all know what kind of things the flesh goes in for. This is the sphere where the lost man lives: he knows no other domain. But it’s possible for Christians to live in that sphere too.

Then he says, “They that are after the Spirit [do mind] the things of the Spirit” (vs. 5b). This is the sphere where God intends the Christian to live. Again, Paul doesn’t give us specifics as to what these things are. Simply put, they are those things that have to do with the interests of Christ. It would be studying the Scriptures, praying, singing hymns that make melody in our hearts, going to Bible meetings, calling or writing to fellow Christians to encourage them, visiting people with a word of encouragement, sharing the gospel, passing out gospel tracts, doing good works for necessary uses, etc.

The point the Apostle is making here is that these two spheres are exactly the opposite of each other. Their interests are poles apart. One serves the interests of self, and the other the interests of Christ. A road, so to speak, branches out from each that leads away from the other. One leads to what is truly “life and peace,” and the other leads to “death” (vs. 6).

Then in verses 12-13, Paul draws a sobering conclusion, “For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify [put to death] the deeds of the body, ye shall live.” His point here is that we can choose which sphere we want to live in. He says, “If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die.” This is a solemn word. If we choose to live in the sphere of the flesh, it will lead to moral death in our lives. The way that Paul uses death here is different from most other places in the Bible. The Apostle is not talking about physical death, but moral death in the believer’s life, which inevitably results in failure. Death, as we know, always carries the idea of separation. In this verse, it refers to a separation, or a breach, in our link of communion with God. The point here is simple; if we live in the sphere of the flesh we can expect that it is going to bring forth death. But he also says, “If ye through the Spirit do mortify [put to death] the deeds of the body, ye shall live.” This means that if we chose to live in the sphere of the Spirit, we will have plenty of power to live a holy life for the glory of God. This is what it is to be filled with the Spirit (Eph. 5:18). It means that if we live in the right sphere, the flesh will not get a foothold on us. In Galatians 5:16, Paul speaks of the same thing, saying, “Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.”

The reason that we lose the battle to this inward enemy is that we spend too much time in the wrong sphere, minding the things of the flesh. We may ask ourselves, “In which of these two spheres do I live? What primarily occupies my life? Is it those things that pertain to the interests of Christ, or is it fleshly things?” It’s been said that “if we pamper the flesh, we will hamper the Spirit.” Therefore, it is time that we started living in the right sphere, and experienced the power of God and joy of Christian living in our lives.

Outline of the Epistle to the Romans: God's Righteousness Declared in the Gospel, Romans 7:7-25: A Parenthesis

Chapter 7:7-25

The Experimental Process Through Which a Soul Passes in Learning to Apply the Principles of Deliverance

At this point in the text a lengthy parenthesis is inserted to show us that getting deliverance from the power and workings of the sin-nature is not obtained by our own strength. This is an important lesson to learn, and in most cases, it is learned slowly. This slowness stems from not understanding that we have not only done bad things, but that we ourselves are thoroughly bad. We must learn that there is nothing in us, naturally speaking, that can empower us to holy living, and therefore, it is pointless to look within for deliverance from sin. The problem is that we are slow to give up on ourselves as being powerless. We think that there is still something good in us—even if it is but a little—and consequently, we try to help the process. But it is a formula for failure. Therefore, it is necessary for us to have some practical experience as to the true badness of our flesh, and thus turn away from ourselves to Christ for practical deliverance. In this parenthesis, Paul illustrates the experimental process through which a person passes in learning to give up on himself, and to apply God's principles of deliverance (as given in chapter 6)—which lead to deliverance and practical sanctification.

The Purpose of The Law

Paul has just taught us that believers on the Lord Jesus Christ are not under the Law because they are dead with Christ (chap. 7:1-6). Many Christians accept this truth intellectually, but believe that even though they are not under the Law formally, it is a good rule of life to follow for holy living. With good intentions, they may attempt to live by the Ten Commandments, or by some other self-imposed set of rules. This is well meaning, but it is not God's way of practical sanctification.

The person who reasons on this line has not learned what Paul has taught us in chapter 7:5—namely that all such efforts are counter-productive and only excite the flesh. Since we not only need to learn this truth doctrinally, but also practically, Paul demonstrates this process in this parenthesis in verse 7-25.

This whole parenthetical passage is written in the first person singular to emphasize the fact that each believer must learn for himself that deliverance from the power of sin is not found in self-effort. Verse 14a is an exception because it is speaking of what is normal Christian knowledge—"We know that the Law is spiritual." As a rule, in the epistle, when Paul speaks of what is common to Christians—either in our standing and state, or our knowledge—he will say, "We have" (chap. 5:1, 2, 11, etc.) or "we know" (chap. 7:14; 8:22). Apart from this one exception, the Apostle uses "I" throughout this passage in portraying the personal experiences of a man, though a child of God, that are not normal Christian experiences.

Who is the Person in the Struggle Described in Romans 7?

Many think that Paul was referring to his own personal experience, because he speaks in the first person. But this could not be so because he says, "I was alive without the Law once..." (vs. 9). Paul was never in that position before he was saved; he was brought up as a strict Pharisee who lived from birth under the Law (Acts 23:6; 26:5; Phil. 3:5). If it is not Paul himself, who then is he referring to? Is it an unbeliever? No, it couldn't be an unbeliever because he says, "I delight in the Law of God after the inward man" (vs. 22). Such a desire could only be that of a person with a new nature—that is, someone who has been born again. Is he then speaking of a Christian? Not exactly. While this person is born of God, and therefore, is a child of God, the state in which he is in is certainly not that of a Christian. He says, "I am carnal, sold under sin" (vs. 14). To be in bondage to sin, as this person is, could hardly be a Christian state. A Christian is one who is resting on the finished work of Christ in connection with his sins, and he knows that they are gone. He is thus indwelt with the Holy Spirit, and as a result, he has peace with God and deliverance from sin. This parenthesis does not describe a person in that happy condition.

Quickened But Not Yet Saved

What kind of a person is Paul describing then? It is a quickened soul (a child of God) who does not yet have peace or deliverance, because he is not sealed with the Spirit. The work of God has begun in his soul, but that work is not complete. Hence, the person is quickened, but is not yet saved. As already mentioned, "saved," in the Pauline meaning of the word, when applied to our eternal salvation from the penalty of our sins, has to do with a believer being at rest in his soul through trusting in the finished work of Christ and being sealed with the Holy Spirit (Eph. 1:13). This hypothetical person, described in Romans chapter 7, is not there yet. Strange as it may sound, he is neither saved nor lost! This may come as a bit of a shock to evangelical Christians who teach and preach that all men are either saved or lost, and there is nothing in between. However, this is what Scripture teaches.

Concerning this man in Romans 7, C. H. Brown said, "He is half saved!" He is safe so far as his eternal destiny is concerned (because he has divine life), but he is not saved—in the Pauline sense of the word. Cornelius is a real life example of a person in this in-between state. Before Peter met him, he was not lost. He was evidently born of God, being a God-fearing man, a devout man, and a man whose prayers were respected before God (Acts 10:2-4); he was a man of whom the Lord said to Peter that He had cleansed (Acts 10:15, 28). But he was not saved! This is clear from the fact that Peter was to tell him "words" whereby he and all his house could be "saved" (Acts 11:14).

In this state described in Romans 7, the person struggles to keep the requirements of the Law (or some self-imposed set of rules), but fails because his old nature gets the better of him. His problem is that he is seeking deliverance through his own efforts, and this, he has to learn by experience, is not possible.

"Born Again" and "Saved" Are Not Synonymous Terms

Scripture distinguishes "born again" (quickened) from "saved." Born again has to do with the impartation of divine life to a person (John 3:3-5; James 1:18; 1 Peter 1:23); it is the beginning of God's work in a soul; whereas, salvation is the completion of that work, and is confirmed as such by the believer being sealed with the Spirit (Eph. 1:13). Deliverance from the power of sin, as we will see, is connected with a soul being saved in the full Christian sense of the word.

J. N. Darby said, "An inward quickening is never treated in Scripture as salvation; the idea of regeneration has been lost. Cornelius was quickened beyond a doubt, but was told to send to Peter to hear words whereby he might be saved....I cannot say that a man is saved unless his conscience is purged. The Church has lost the thought of being saved. People think it is enough to be born anew. Regeneration is confounded with having life....A desire after holiness would be one evidence of a quickened soul. I do not say he is saved; Scripture does not say so" (Collected Writings, vol. 28, p. 368).

W. Kelly said, "Indeed I think a great vice at the present moment is making salvation too cheap and too common a word. You will find many evangelicals constantly saying when a man is converted that he is saved: whereas it is probably quite premature to say so. If truly converted, he will be saved, but it is unwarrantable to say that every converted person is saved, because he may still be under doubts and fears. 'Saved' brings one out from all sense of condemnation—brings one to God consciously free in Christ, not merely before God with earnestness of desire after godliness. A soul is not converted unless brought to God in conscience; but then one might be more miserable and all but despairing in this state. Does Scripture allow us to call such a one 'saved?' Certainly not. He who is 'saved' is one who being justified by faith has peace with God....Hence, it is a mistake to regard as saved any person who has not been brought into happy relationship with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Lectures Introductory to the Study of the Minor Prophets, pp. 375-379).

The person whom Paul hypothetically describes in this passage in Romans 7 is in the state which Mr. Darby and Mr. Kelly speak. He is, as to his experience, between being born again and being saved. Note: there is no mention here of him trusting in the finished work of Christ or of having the indwelling seal of the Spirit. In fact, you cannot read this passage without being struck with the marked absence of these two things. Yet there is unmistakable evidence that he is born of God—e.g. verse 22.

Four Discoveries

As mentioned, in this passage Paul describes the process through which a quickened soul passes in getting deliverance. It is really a series of four discoveries that a person makes in getting saved—though he may not be completely conscious of it. (We say this because those saved in childhood usually do not experience this struggle to any significant degree, before trusting in the work of Christ, and often go through a similar form of it sometime after they are saved, which Galatians 5:16-17 describes. It is similar but not exactly the same. Galatians 5 describes a person with the Holy Spirit, whereas in Romans 7 the person does not have the Spirit.)

These discoveries are depicted in the latter half of chapter 7 as follows:

1) He Discovers the Presence and Activity of the Sin-Nature in His Soul

(Chap. 7:7-13)—In the previous section of the epistle, which has had to do with sins, Paul explained that the Law enlightens the consciences of men and shows them that they have sinned (Rom. 3:19-20). It bears witness to the fact that all have sinned and have come short of the glory of God (chap. 3:23; 1 Tim. 1:8-10; James 2:9-10). Now in this section of the epistle, which has been dealing with the subject of sin (the evil nature in man), Paul shows that the Law will also cause a quickened soul to detect the presence of the sin-nature in himself, and thus make him conscious of what he is before God in his sinful state.

Chap. 7:7-8—As mentioned, the first work of God in our souls is the impartation of divine life through new birth (quickening), whereby we become conscious of God in a new way. As a result of having divine life, there will be a genuine seeking after God and after holiness. If a person has had an upbringing in which he has been exposed to the Law—as Paul assumes here—he will earnestly try to meet the demands of the Law. Having limited light, he will assume that law-keeping is the way to obtain holiness, not knowing that it is not God's way of practical sanctification.

Since law-keeping is not God's way of holiness, we might conclude that the Law is useless, even sinful. Paul anticipates this mistaken assumption and says, "What shall we say then? Is the Law sin? God forbid [Far be the thought]. Nay, I had not known sin (the evil nature), but by the Law: for I had not known lust, except the Law said, Thou shalt not covet. But sin, taking occasion [getting a point of attack] by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence [lust]." This shows that the Law certainly has a use. The tenth commandment which Paul quotes here, stands apart from the other nine in that it does not address an evil action, but rather a lust in the heart. We are convicted by this commandment, without having done any specific act of sin, and thus we are made to realize that we have a nature that is corrupt. While the Law surely addresses acts of sin (evil deeds), we hardly need it to tell us that we have done wrong because we have a conscience. But the conscience will not reveal to us our inward state of sin. The Law, on the other hand, causes the awakened soul to discover the presence of his evil nature.

J. N. Darby remarked, "The law has its use, namely, in bringing out the consciousness of what we are—of our state. Was it the fault of the law, this dominion of sin, while we were under it? Nay, it was the fault of sin, and the lust which the law condemned. 'But that,' says the apostle, 'I had not known, unless the law said, Thou shalt not lust.' If he had murdered, he would have known the fact; his natural conscience would have taken cognisance of it. But we are not treating of sins now (as before observed), but of sin. I had not known that, unless the law had dealt with its first movements as evil. Many have committed no crimes—have neither murdered, stolen, nor committed adultery; but who has never lusted? The object here is to detect the evil nature by its first motion—lust. Not, indeed, what we have done, but what we are" (Collected Writings, vol. 26, pp. 158-159). Thus, if we allow the tenth commandment of the Law to search us, it will show us what we are before God as to our nature.

Paul says, "For without the Law sin [was] dead" (vs. 8b). That is, before the Law has its action on a person’s soul, he is unconscious as to the presence and activity of his sin-nature. In that state he is not aware of the workings of sin within because his conscience has not been crossed by the authoritative voice of God's holy demands. The person lives according to the irresistible energy of sin and is carried along unconsciously by its force. In that state, it is not possible for him to be sensible to the presence of the sin-nature, because he is “absolutely identified” with it.

Chap. 7:9-10—He says (hypothetically), "For I was alive without the Law once." That is, in the state of being "sin dead," he was alive to life here on earth under the dictates of sin, but quite unconscious of its power and bondage. But when God began to work in his quickened soul, everything changed. He says, "But when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died." When the authoritative voice of God in the Law came home to his quickened soul, it stirred sin into action—"sin revived." The Law drew a line and forbade him to step over it. It said, "Thou shalt not covet." Sin promptly responded by stepping over it, and he lusted in his heart after the very thing the Law forbade. And, as a consequence of breaking the Law, the Law condemned him to death as a transgressor, and thus he says, "and I died." He concluded, "The commandment, which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death." That is, the Law sets life before us, saying, "This do, and thou shalt live" (Luke 10:28), but since he did not keep its demands, it condemned him to death.

M. C. G. said, "Like a bather dreamily drifting with the current. The force of the current, while thus floating down with it, he is not sensible of, since he is temporarily and absolutely identified with it. Every movement of that current is his movement; to him its living energy is but a dead and unknown quantity. But while thus listlessly enjoying the passing moments, a voice from the bank reaches him with earnest authoritative warning as to the falls that lie hidden from view, towards which the treacherous current is surely carrying him. And now what? Put again into terms of Scripture, 'When the commandment came, sin revived, and I died.' The warning being heeded, listlessness is banished in a moment. The swimmer, alarmed by his suddenly discovered danger, endeavours by straining every muscle to make headway against the tide that once carried him perfectly undisturbed on its bosom; its living energy he has now become perfectly conscious of; it lives in irresistible power to him now, and with it the sentence of death, for self-effort is proved to be all unavailing, 'I died'" (The Christian Friend, vol. 23, p. 157).

Chap. 7:11-13—Paul says (hypothetically) that sin had totally "deceived" him by making him insensible to his deplorable condition. It also, by the 10th commandment, "slew [killed]" him. The question is: "Who is to blame for this death?" We might think that if the Law provokes lust in the soul and causes death, then surely it must be an evil thing. Far from being evil, Paul says that the Law is "holy, and just, and good." Thus, the Law is not at fault in this death. He then asks, "Was then that which is good made death unto me?" That is, was it the Law that died? He answers, "God forbid [Far be the thought]." The Law had not died; it was he who died! The Law (particularly the 10th commandment) only makes sin to "appear" as it truly is; it brings to light the true character of the sin-nature as being "exceeding sinful."

Thus, the Law will not only cause a man to discover that he has sinned, but if understood properly, it will also show him that his state is exceeding sinful too. J. N. Darby said, "The law applies to man in the flesh; but we have died, we are not in the flesh: when we were, it applied. It applied to flesh provoked sin, and condemned the sinner. But he died under it, when he was under it—died under it in Christ." (Collected Writings, vol. 10, p. 10) This shows that the Law serves a purpose; in condemning lust in the human heart, it manifests the fact that all men have a sin-nature—for who has not lusted? And, in a person's failure to keep the Law, it condemns him to death. But having worked death in him, the Law then has no more application to him, for it has nothing to say to a dead man. Thus, he is free from it! (Chap. 6:7) This

knowledge is important in the process of gaining deliverance, for it will not be through the Law. It detects lust, but it cannot deliver a person from it.

2) He Discovers That He Has No Power in Himself to Control His Sin-Nature

(Chap. 7:14-19)—Having discovered the presence and activity of the sin-nature in our souls, we are often slow to accept the true character of the flesh—that it is incorrigibly bad. Since this is the case, we have to learn this sad fact by experience—and it can be bitter and awfully humbling.

Being a quickened soul, the person seeking deliverance will have a genuine desire to please God, and he will respond with an honest effort of trying to control the activity of his sin-nature. Having at this stage of his experience limited light as to the principles involved in God's way of deliverance, he will think that it is his duty to fight the flesh to keep it down. Thus, a struggle begins in earnest. But invariably, in fighting it, he discovers—as Philip Melancthon (Martin Luther's closest friend) found—that, as he said, "Old Adam is too strong for young Philip!" While Melancthon's use of "Adam"—substituting it for the flesh—is not doctrinally accurate, we well understand what he meant.

The actual picture portrayed in these verses is that of a person (as to his conscience) being under the Law, and struggling in the flesh to keep the Law's demands—but continually failing. Instead of finding deliverance by fighting the flesh, the more he struggles, the more it brings him into captivity. He finds no deliverance on that line. In his failure to meet the demands of the Law, he rightly justifies the Law, stating that it is "spiritual" (vs. 14); the problem, he rightly concludes, is with himself—he is "carnal" and "sold (as a slave) under sin (his master)."

Vss. 15-18—Paul describes the struggle: "For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that I do. If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the Law that it is good....for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not." (Before proceeding, let us keep in mind that this is not a struggle to be forgiven, justified, and saved from the penalty of one's sins. Rather, it is a struggle for deliverance from the activity of his sin-nature within. Hence, he is not looking for deliverance from sin’s eternal penalty, but from sin’s present power.) There are good things that he wants to do, but he ends up not doing them. And, there are bad things that he doesn't want to do; those he ends up doing! Through repeated failures, he becomes frustrated and extremely unhappy with himself because he keeps doing the things that he hates, and he cannot find the power to stop!

F. B. Hole said, "Let us recall what we learned in chapter 6, for there we were shown the way. Realizing by faith that we are identified with Christ in His death we understand that we are to reckon ourselves dead to sin and alive to God, and consequently, we are to yield ourselves and our members to God for His will and pleasure. Our souls fully assent to this as right and proper, and we say to ourselves, with considerable enthusiasm perhaps, 'Exactly! That is what I'm going to do.' We essay to do it, and lo! we receive a very disagreeable shock. Our intentions are of the best, but we somehow are without power to put these things in to practice. We see the good and approve of it in our minds, yet we fail to do it. We recognize the evil of which we disapprove, and yet we are ensnared by it. It is a very distressing and humiliating state of affairs." (Paul's Epistles, vol. 1, p. 28)

We see from this that desiring to do the good things enjoined in the Law is not enough to give a person power to do them. His desire is right, but he lacks the power. His problem is that he is trying in his own strength to keep the Law and to do what is right and good. This is seen in the repeated use of the first-person pronouns—I, me, my, myself—which occur over 40 times in this parenthesis! Someone said, "He has had an overdose of vitamin I." His mistake is that he is expecting something from himself that will effect this deliverance—or at least help in it. Essentially, he is trying to do it in the flesh, but doesn't realize that well-meaning flesh is still the flesh. He is trying to accomplish something that God has declared to be an utter impossibility—namely, to make the flesh "subject to the Law of God" (chap. 8:7). It shows us that a person might be quite clear in his understanding that deliverance from the penalty of one's sins cannot be secured by his own efforts, but somehow think that deliverance from the power of indwelling sin is something that he can effect through his own effort. The truth is that all aspects of God's salvation—past, present, and future—are by His grace, and by that alone.

As mentioned, the problem is that the person portrayed here is looking in the wrong place for the power for deliverance. He needs to learn that the remedy is not in himself, but in Another. Sad to say, this mistake lies at the bottom of much of today's Christian psychology and counseling. It focuses on the person and his or her problem, which doesn't solve the problem, and in some cases, exacerbates it. There will be no victory through introspection. What the person needs is to get his eyes off himself. However, he will not give up on himself, and cease to look there for the solution, until he understands his true badness. He needs to understand that not only has he done bad things (sins), but that he himself (sin) is thoroughly bad. This is an important lesson to learn, and often painful. J. N. Darby said, "This lesson of no strength is a great deal more humbling to learn than that of the fact that certain sins have been done in some past time of my life." H. Smith said, "The fact that we have no strength is perhaps, the hardest and most humiliating truth to learn." But learn it, we must.

We might ask, "How does a person learn his utter badness?" The answer is, "By trying to live a good and holy life." This is actually the reason why God allows a person seeking deliverance to go through this struggle. In the process, the person is allowed to try everything humanly possible (in his own strength) to get victory over the flesh. In doing so, he will find that there is nothing in him that can do it, and only then will he begin to look elsewhere for help. The more earnestly he tries in the flesh to do what is right and good, the better the lesson will be learnt—for then, the sooner he will find out the truth about himself, and give up looking within. In connection with this, J. N. Darby said, "Study these four words well: 'the flesh profiteth nothing'" (John 6:63). When we have learnt this to some degree, we will say with conviction, "For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh), dwelleth no good thing" (vs. 18), and cease to look internally for the solution. Note: he does not say, "I do no good thing," but "in me...is no good thing." This, again, shows that this is not a question of what we have done (sins), but what we are (sin). Knowing this great fact about ourselves is an important place to get to in our souls, because there can be no real progress in holiness until we've learned it. This knowledge in itself is not what brings deliverance, but it is necessary in the process.

This truth—that there is no good in man in the flesh—is something that sets Christianity apart from all other religions in the world. The religions of the world teach that there is some good in every man. They think that even though man does bad things, he is inherently good. “The gospel of God” (chap. 1:1), on the other hand, announces that man in the flesh is so incurably bad that God does not attempt to repair or rehabilitate man’s fallen nature. Instead, He starts anew by imparting a new life and nature through new birth, and then works with it in believers to bring them into blessing. As a matter of fact, both natures (the old and the new) cannot be improved! The old nature is so bad that it can’t be improved; therefore, God condemns it (Chap. 8:3), and the new nature which is the very life of Christ, is so good and perfect that it also can’t be improved! The false religions of the world operate on the mistaken premise that man is inherently good and teach that

religion and religious practice is what man in the flesh needs—and it (they think) will bring out the good in man, and the world will be a better place as a result. However, the Bible teaches that it's not religion that fallen man needs; it's a new life with a new nature!

Thus, the man portrayed here learns that not only is there no good thing in him—that he is completely sinful—but also that he has no strength to control the flesh—that he is completely helpless. The whole problem with the man described in this parenthesis is that he is looking for something good in that which God has condemned as being no good (chap. 8:3). While he may have mentally assented to the truth that "there is none that doeth good, no, not one" (chap. 3:12; Eccl. 7:20), he evidently hasn't learned that "in me, (that is, in my flesh), dwelleth no good thing" (vs. 18). This shows that acknowledging certain truths (and even articulating them) is not necessarily the same as knowing them. The word "know" in this verse is "oida" in the Greek, which denotes an inward conscious knowledge, rather than a mere superficial knowledge. Hence, there is a difference between intellectually understanding this truth about ourselves, and knowing it from having a practical realization of it. A case in point is illustrated in a group of students in a Bible school who were studying the fall of man. When the teacher came in, they said to him, "We have found the original sin in the Bible!" He replied, "But have you found it in your hearts?" This is the lesson that is being learned by the man in this chapter.

3) He Discovers That He Has Two Natures

(Chap. 7:20-23)—In the process of the struggle, he makes another discovery—that he has two conflicting natures. He says, "Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. For I delight in the Law of God after the inward man: but I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members." Thus, he identifies two opposing principles at work in his soul, and he is able to clearly distinguish them: there is the “I” that delights to do good, and the “I” that does evil. People call this a split personality, but the Bible indicates that it's because those born of God have two natures. This makes them the most unique of all God's creatures. Angels, fallen men, and all the animals in the lower creation have only one nature, but Christians have two! One of his natures is lower than that of a beast, and the other is higher than that of an angel!

Resulting from this discovery, the man then sees himself as separate and apart from that evil principle in him. He says, "It is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me." It is not that he is refusing to take responsibility for the sinfulness of his fallen nature and excusing himself; he is simply identifying the evil principle that dwells in him as being a distinct thing. (Of course, if and when the old nature acts, we must take ownership of the sins that we do and confess them as our sins – 1 John 1:9). In doing this, the man in this struggle comes to a point where he no longer calls the old nature "I." Instead, he calls it, "sin that dwelleth in me" (vs. 20), "evil is present with me" (vs. 21), "another law in my members" (vs. 23), and "the flesh" (vs. 25). While saying these things, he continues to call the new nature "I." This indicates a progress in his understanding which corresponds with what Paul has taught in chapter 6 in connection with our identification with the death of Christ, our federal Head. Namely, that we have a right to no longer reason from the position of our old Adam standing and our old fleshly nature, but from our new standing in Christ and our new nature

4) He Discovers That There Is a Divine Person Outside Himself Who Can Deliver Him

(Chap. 7:24-25)—Seeing the flesh as a separate entity apart from himself, but still being saddled with it, we have a picture in this man of the new life and nature abhorring the old, and longing to get away from it. He speaks of the old nature and its corruption as though he had a decomposing human body strapped to his back. The new life is anything but happy in this state. This leads him to cry out, "O wretched man that I am!"

Having learned that there can be no help from within, he looks away from himself to someone to deliver him from this condition. He says, "Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" It is not simply that he looks for deliverance, but for a deliverer. This is important, for if we simply look for deliverance, we might be inclined to try some self-help program, or look for some “key” thought that we think will give us instant victory over the flesh. Many honest believers have been confused about this, and have gone about seeking deliverance from the flesh through asceticism, legalism, etc. But let us note that the question is not, "How shall I be delivered?" but "Who shall deliver me?"

When all self-hope and self-effort to live a godly life is shattered, and he looks to “Jesus Christ our Lord” in faith, he finds deliverance. Consequently, he exults in thanksgiving to God; "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord." This then shows us that deliverance does not come from our prayers, or through our knowledge of Scripture, or by trying to turn away from evil thoughts, scolding ourselves, etc., but in simply looking away from ourselves to Christ, and being filled with Him and His interests. As regards victory over this inward enemy (the flesh), we need to understand that all that needs to be done has already been done by the Lord Jesus Christ.

Vs. 25—Having experienced deliverance through looking to Christ, he says, "So then with the mind I myself serve the Law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin." This last statement in the parenthesis is mentioned to show that the soul that gets deliverance still has two natures, and will have these two conflicting principles in him until the Lord comes, or until he dies. Some Christians (the Salvation Army Holiness Movement, Methodism, etc.) mistakenly think that upon getting deliverance, the sin-nature gets "burned out" of the believer. However, it is a mistake to think that the flesh is removed from us when we get deliverance from sin. This aspect of deliverance is not from the presence of sin, but from the power of sin. Note again: he uses “I” when speaking of the new nature, but refuses to use it in referring to the old nature. He calls his old nature "the flesh," but will not own it as “I.”

The old sin-nature may still beckon to us, but we have power not to yield to it. We can be deaf to its commands, blind to its enticements, and insensible to its power. An allegory has been used to illustrate this: a sailing crew with their captain are at sea, and for some reason the captain loses his mind and goes berserk. The crew cannot have him as their captain in that state, for he is liable to take the ship off course and drown them all. Hence, they remove him from his post and lock him up in his cabin, and appoint another captain. In his crazed state, through the window of his cabin the old captain still calls out orders to his crew, but they don't listen because they don't regard him as their captain any longer, and do not yield themselves to his bidding. They have yielded themselves once-and-for-all to the new captain.

When Does a Person Go Through This Experience In His History With God?

J. N. Darby said, "Some Christians would oblige souls to have the experience of chapter 7, in order for the salvation of chapter 5 to be true. It may come before. When it does, and acceptance in Christ is seen in simplicity, all the subsequent Christian life is of assured grace, save cases

of special discipline. But the acceptance of chapter 5 may be known by itself first (but then, justification and forgiveness applies to what we have done, and is not our being the righteousness of God in Christ): but if so, self-knowledge and our place in Christ must be learned afterward" (Collected Writings, vol. 26, p. 145).

He also said, "I do not believe you ever get out of Romans 7 till you get into it; Perfectionists say that you can jump over it. The fact is, that you cannot get into justification and be delivered from sin till you find there is no hope for you" (Collected Writings, vol. 34, p. 407).

Three Different Soul Conflicts

While Romans 7 is not a Christian experience, properly speaking, many Christians experience it in a modified way. Oftentimes they are experiencing the struggle mentioned in Galatians 5:16-17, which is similar, and think that it is the Romans 7 experience. There is, however, a difference in these two soul conflicts. Romans 7, describes a conflict between the two natures in a child of God struggling against each other. This is because he doesn't have the indwelling of the Spirit. Whereas in Galatians 5:16-17, the person is seen as having the Spirit, and the struggle is between the flesh and the Spirit. This conflict results from a believer not walking in the Spirit, because he is in a poor state of soul. Both of these conflicts are not normal Christianity.

Ephesians 6:10-18 describes a third soul conflict which is normal to Christianity. It portrays a believer, not only having the Spirit, but also walking in the Spirit—thus he is in a good state of soul and thus enjoying his heavenly portion in Christ. This being the case, the Satan and his emissaries are arrayed against him in an effort to spoil his enjoyment of those things.

Paul's Twelve Men: The Scriptural Meaning and Application of Some Technical Terms in Paul's Doctrine, "Old Man" and the "New Man", The

This first couplet has to do with racial terms involving the moral orders connected with the fallen human race under Adam (Rom. 5:12), and the new creation race of men under Christ (Rev. 3:14).

THE OLD MAN

The "old man" is found in three places in Paul's epistles—Romans 6:6; Ephesians 4:22; Colossians 3:9. It is an abstract term that describes the corrupt state of the fallen race of Adam—its depraved moral character. The "old man" is the embodiment of every ugly feature that marks the fallen human race.

The "Old Man" Has Been Crucified With Christ

Romans 6:6 says, "Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be destroyed [annulled], that henceforth we should not serve sin." We learn from this that God has passed judgment on the "old man" at the cross of Christ (Rom. 8:3). The scene of this judgment is not in the soul of the believer; it is something that has taken place at the cross.

Paul adds, "That the body of sin might be annulled." He uses the word "body" here, not to signify our physical bodies, but to describe a thing in its entirety. Similarly, we might say, "the body of scientific knowledge," or "the body of medical knowledge," etc. The "body of sin" has been "annulled" (not "destroyed" as in the KJV), because man after the flesh is still very much alive in the world and has not been destroyed yet. Paul could not have been referring to the human body in this verse because Scripture never calls the human body (which is a creation of God) a sinful thing. The human body has been affected by sin, but is not sinful in itself. If our bodies were sinful, God would not beseech us to present them to Him for use in His service (Rom. 12:1). The KJV translates Philippians 3:21—"our vile body," which in today's English conveys the thought of something being disgusting and sinful. However, when that translation was made (400+ years ago) it simply meant "of little worth" (James 2:2). To avoid this misunderstanding, it has been better translated, "Our body of humiliation."

The Christian Has Professedly Put Off the "Old Man" in His Confession of Christ

Not only has our "old man" (the depraved moral character of fallen man) been judged at the cross, but Ephesians 4:22 and Colossians 3:9 tell us that it has been "put off" by the believer (positionally) when he was saved, and hence he is no longer associated with it. As part of our Christian confession (in taking the name of Christ and making a profession of being a Christian), we have, by our profession, confessedly "put off" everything to do with the corrupt state of the "old man."

The subject in Ephesians 4:17–5:21 has to do with the believer walking worthy of His calling by manifesting a complete character change before the world. This is because it is the mind of God that there would be a continuation of the moral beauty of Christ in this world during the time of His absence, through the members of His body. This is the force of the expression, "Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Col. 1:27). Hence, Ephesians 4:22-24 speaks of the "old man" as having been put off and the new man as having been put on. It is in view of restoring the moral "likeness" of God in men (believers), which was lost in the fall (Gen. 1:26; Eph. 4:24). This has been accomplished in the new creation race of which Christ is the Head (Gal. 6:15; 2 Cor. 5:17; Rev. 3:14). Colossians views things from the side of renewing "the image" of God in man, which has been marred in the fall (Col. 3:10). This has to do with man being a proper representation of God on earth. Again, this has been accomplished in the new order of manhood under Christ.

In Ephesians 4:17-19, Paul describes the fallen, corrupt character of the Gentile world out of which the Ephesians had been saved. He tells them that such a lifestyle is now wholly inconsistent with their calling in Christ. He says, "Ye have not so learned the Christ" (vs. 20 – J. N. Darby Trans.). "The Christ" is a term used in Paul's epistles to denote the spiritual union of the members of Christ's body to Him who is the Head in heaven (1 Cor. 12:12-13 – J. N. Darby Trans.). His point here is that we must first know our calling in "the Christ," which the first three chapters of the epistle unfold. It is only then that we can properly be "taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus" (vs. 21). "Jesus" is the Lord's manhood name. When it is used alone, without His usual titles of Lord and Christ, it refers to Him as He walked as a Man in this world. The order in verses 20-21 is, therefore, important to note; we first must know our place in "the Christ" before we can walk as "Jesus" did in this world. Many earnest Christians do not know their calling in "the Christ," and are trying to live like "Jesus" did in places and positions in this world that are wholly inconsistent with their calling. As a result, the Spirit of God does not identify with it in any appreciable way. A Christian trying to behave like Jesus while holding an office in government is one example.

Putting Off the “Old Man” is Not a Daily Christian Exercise

In Ephesians 4:25-32, we have exhortations based on what is true in our Christian profession concerning the “old man” and the “new man.” Unfortunately, the KJV translates verses 22-24 as though they were an exhortation to the Christian—as if it is something that we are to do in our lives practically. However, putting off the old man is not a Christian exercise; it is something that has been done when we took our stand with Christ. Verse 22 should read, “Having put off according to the former conversation, the old man ... ” And verse 24 should read, “Having put on the new man ... ” This putting off and putting on is not accomplished through a process of self-discipline or education in the believer’s life; it is something that we have done by identifying ourselves with the Christian confession in this world.

The “Old Man” is Not Synonymous With “The Flesh”

The “old man” is a term that is often used synonymously with “the flesh” (our fallen sin-nature) by most Christians, but this is incorrect. J. N. Darby remarked, “The old man is being habitually used for the flesh incorrectly.”

When we look more carefully into Scripture, it will be abundantly clear that the “old man” and “the flesh” are not the same, and therefore cannot be used interchangeably. If the “old man” were the flesh, then this passage (Eph. 4:22-23) is telling us that we have put off the flesh, which is clearly not true. The “old man” is never said to be in us, but the flesh most certainly is. F. G. Patterson said: “Nor do I find that Scripture will allow us to say that we have the old man in us—while it teaches most fully that we have the flesh in us.”

Nor is it correct to speak of the “old man” as having appetites, desires, and emotions, as does “the flesh.” Oftentimes Christians will say things like, “The old man in us desires those things that are sinful.” Or, “Our old man wants to do this or that evil thing ... ” Such statements are confusing the old man with the flesh. H. C. B. G. said, “I know what a Christian means who loses his temper, and says it is ‘the old man,’ yet the expression is wrong. If he said it was ‘the flesh,’ he would have been more correct.”

The “Old Man” is Not Something That Has Died in the Believer

Some speak of the “old man” as being dead. But again, this misunderstanding suggests that it was something living in the believer, but has died. It is, rather, a character description of our old state, not a living entity that has died in us.

Hence, the “old man” is not a living thing in a person with sinful appetites, desires, and emotions, but an abstract term describing the corrupt state of the fallen race of man, which God has judged at the cross, and the believer has put off in identifying himself with the Christian confession.

We Are Not Told to Reckon the Old Man Dead

Since the "old man" refers to the corrupt state of the human race, and has been judged at the cross and put off by the believer, there is no exhortation in Scripture for Christians to reckon the “old man” dead (as people often say). This again, supposes that it is something living in us (i.e. the flesh), and that we need to regard it as not being so.

This does not mean that we don’t need to be exercised about allowing the fallen nature to act. Scripture says that we are to “reckon ourselves to be dead indeed unto sin” (Rom. 6:11). As mentioned earlier, every doctrinal truth is to have a practical bearing on our lives. The force of the verses that follow, in Ephesians 4, show that the believer is to no longer manifest the characteristics of the “old man” in his life, but rather, to manifest those of the “new.” This is the point of the exhortation in Ephesians 4.

The “Old Man” is Not Adam Personally

We would also add that the “old man” is not Adam personally, but what is characteristic of his fallen and corrupt race. To see the “old man” more clearly we must look at the fallen race under Adam as a whole, for it is unlikely that any one person would be marked by all the ugly features that characterize that corrupt state. For instance, one person in the fallen race may be characterized by being angry and deceitful, but he may not be immoral. Another person may not be known for losing his temper, nor for being deceitful, but he is terribly immoral. However, taking the race as a whole, we see all the ugly features that compose the “old man.”

The “Old Man” is Not Our Old Position Before God

Nor should we view the “old man” as our old Adam position before God before we were saved. Our old position is denoted in the term, “In Adam” (1 Cor. 15:22), and our new position, now that we are saved, is “In Christ” (Rom. 8:1). “In Christ,” means to be in Christ’s place before God. Christ has been accepted for us, and the measure of His acceptance is ours. We are as accepted as He is! Scripture confirms this, saying, “As He is, so are we in this world” (1 John 4:17).

In Paul’s epistles, our old condition is designated by the term, “In the flesh” (Rom. 7:5; 8:8-9), and our new condition by the term, “In the Spirit” (Rom. 8:9; Gal. 5:16, 25). However, while we are no longer “in the flesh,” the flesh is still in us and will operate if we don’t walk in the Spirit. And when it operates, it will manifest the ugly features of the “old man.”

THE NEW MAN

This term is found in Ephesians 4:24 and Colossians 3:10. Like the “old man,” the “new man” is also an abstract expression denoting the new order of moral perfection in the new creation race of men under Christ. The old man is characterized by being “corrupt” and “deceitful,” but the new man is characterized by “righteousness” and “holiness” (vss. 22-24). The “new man” is the new state that characterizes the new race of men under Christ. This new moral order of manhood first came into view “in Jesus” when He walked here in this world (vs. 21).

The “New Man” is Not Christ Personally

As the “old man” is not Adam personally, likewise the “new man” is not Christ personally, though His life characterized everything that the new man depicts. Mr. George Davison said, “The new man is not Christ personally, but it is Christ characteristically.” Every moral feature of the “new man” was seen in Him in perfection.

This new creation race of men did not begin until Christ rose from the dead to become its Head. As “the Firstborn from among the dead” (Col. 1:18), He has sent the Spirit of God into this world to link believers (“many brethren”) to Himself in the new creation race who are of that same order of manhood (Rom. 8:29). We are “all of one” with Him, being of the same order of manhood in this new race (Heb. 2:10-13). The “new man” is not exactly the same as “the one new man” in Ephesians 2:15, which refers to the union of believing Jews and Gentiles in one body to Christ in heaven. The “new man” is a description of that new moral order of manhood in the new creation race.

The “New Man” is Not the New Life in the Believer

As the “old man” is an abstract term, and not referring to a living thing in us with appetites and desires, likewise the “new man” is not something living in us. This is a widespread misunderstanding among Christians. Comments such as, “The new man in us needs an object to look to ... ” or, “We need to feed on things that will satisfy the new man,” are confusing the “new man” with our new life and nature, which quite definitely has desires and appetites.

Since the “new man” is patterned after the image of Him who created him (Col. 3:10), being part of the new creation race, we are fully able now to represent Christ here in this world. The features of the “new man” will be seen in us when we walk in the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23). In order that we would manifest the characteristics of the “new man,” God has given us a perfect example in “Jesus” (Eph. 4:21) and the necessary power in “the Spirit” (Eph. 5:18). If we look at the life of Jesus as our pattern and are filled with the Holy Spirit, we will surely manifest these characteristics in our lives.

The Christian’s Separation From the Evil Order of the “Old Man” by Walking After the “New Man”

The emphasis of Paul’s exhortation in the latter verses of Ephesians 4 is that we would put into practice what is true in fact. If we have put off the “old man” and put on the “new man,” then let us be done with that old corrupt lifestyle and live after what characterizes the new man. Paul mentions a number of transitions that should naturally result in the life of the believer as he walks in “righteousness and true holiness.” They are:

Honesty instead of falsehood (vs. 25).

Unabating righteous anger against evil instead of indifference to evil (vss. 26-27).

Giving to others rather than stealing from them (vs. 28).

Speaking with grace to others rather than using corrupt communication (vs. 29).

Kindness rather than bitterness (vss. 31-32).

Tenderheartedness [compassion] rather than heat of passion (vss. 31-32).

Showing grace to others rather than being wrathful, clamorous, injurious, and malicious (vss. 31-32).

In Colossians 3, Paul mentions ten moral characteristics of the “new man” that should be seen in the saints as they exhibit the truth of “Christ in you, the hope of glory” (Col. 1:27).

Compassion (vs. 12).

Kindness (vs. 12).

Lowliness (vs. 12).

Meekness (vs. 12).

Longsuffering (vs. 12).

Forbearance (vs. 13).

Forgiveness (vs. 13).

Love (vs. 14).

Peace (vs. 15).

Thankfulness (vs. 15).

Some Practical Considerations

As mentioned earlier, it is the mind of God that there would be a continuation of the moral beauty of Christ in this world in the time of His absence through the members of His body. We can be exercised about whether we are manifesting Christ in our walk and ways. Our tendency is to be inconsistent in this in the various spheres of life. We are to manifest the features of the “new man” in our lives—not just in one sphere, but in all the spheres in which we move.

The children of Israel were to have a “ribbon of blue” on the borders of their garments (Num. 15:38-39). The color blue, in Scripture, is a type of what is heavenly. For us, it would mean that we are to manifest a heavenly character in our lives. Deuteronomy 22:12, tells us that those fringes were to be on “four corners” of their garments. This suggests, typically, the four different dimensions in which we live—our life at work or school, our life with our brethren in the assembly, our life at home with our family, and our personal life when we are alone. We can ask ourselves, “Is my life consistent on all these fronts?” Let us remember that the world is looking for hypocrisy in the Christian. Any little inconsistency is enough for them to cast their stones of criticism at Christ whom we represent.

Suppose that the character of our lives before the world when we go to school or work was written on a wall of a room, and the character of our lives before our brethren in the assembly was written on another wall of the same room, and how we behave at home with our families was written on another wall, and then what we do in our personal lives when we are alone was written on another wall. If someone came into that room and read what was written on those four walls, would they think that they were reading about four different people or the same person?

Outline of the Epistle to the Romans: God's Righteousness Declared in the Gospel, Romans 5:12-7:6: The Doctrine of DeliveranceFrom Sin

Chapters 5:12–7:6

The doctrine of deliverance involves: understanding certain things that have been accomplished in the death of Christ, reckoning in faith upon those things, and yielding ourselves to God in the sphere of life where Christ lives unto God, by which we are enabled to live a sanctified life in the power of the Holy Spirit.

The Origin of the Sin-nature

Chap. 5:12—Paul begins his dissertation on deliverance from sin by going back to the very beginning and explaining how the human race became plagued with the fallen sin-nature (the flesh) in the first place. He says, "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin: and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." Thus, Paul traces the origin of the sin-nature in the human race back to Adam's transgression in the garden of Eden. He and his wife (Eve) were created sinless, but with a free will. Sadly, they exercised their wills and chose to disobey God, and thereby, became sinners possessing fallen sin-natures. Thus, "sin (the nature) entered into the world" at that time.

Why Did God Allow Sin to Enter the World?

People have often asked, "Since God is all-powerful and all-loving, why did He allow sin to enter the world?" It's true He could have stepped in and stopped Adam and Eve from sinning, but God knew that He would receive more glory and believers would receive more blessings (through Christ's death and resurrection) than if sin had never entered. We (believers) are in a supremely more blessed position in Christ than we could ever have been in an unfallen race under Adam. Also, there are certain aspects and characteristics of the Persons of the Godhead that we would not know if sin had not come in. For instance, we would not know God as "the God of all grace" (1 Peter 5:10). If sin had not entered, grace would not have abounded over sin (Rom. 5:20). Nor would we know God as "the God of My mercy" because in a sinless state we would never do anything wrong that would call for His mercy (Psa. 59:17). Also, we would not know Him as "the God of all comfort" because we would never be in a situation of sickness, sorrow, or suffering where we would need His tender comforts (2 Cor. 1:3-4). We will probably not have a definitive answer as to why God allowed sin to enter the world until we get to heaven. While we wait for that day, faith realizes that God's "ways [are] past finding out" (Rom. 11:33) and accepts that "His way is perfect" (Psa. 18:30). This gives us the confidence to leave these hard questions in His hand, knowing that "the Judge of all the earth" would never do anything but what is "right" (Gen. 18:25).

Who Sinned First?

Looking at the Genesis 3 record of the fall, we would conclude that it was the woman who brought sin into the world, but Paul says here that it was by the “man” (chap. 5:12). This shows that he couldn't have been speaking of what happened chronologically. Clearly, Eve sinned before Adam, and Satan and his angels had sinned before her. (This latter point can be seen in the fact that Satan was in the garden lying to and deceiving Eve before she had sinned.) It is clear, therefore, that Paul was speaking of Adam in his role as the representative head of the human race. God had put him in the garden in the place of head of the creation (Gen. 2:15-17), and thus, he was held responsible for sin entering the world. (W. Reid said, "The word 'head' is not used in the chapter [Romans 5], but the truth of it is there" – The Bible Herald.)

Adam's nature was corrupted by his fall and it has been passed on to each successive generation of his posterity (Psa. 51:5). But not only that, the consequence of the sin-nature being in the creation was also passed on to his posterity—namely, death. Paul says, "...and death by sin: and so death passed upon all men." (The effects of sin and death have also been passed upon the whole lower creation—the animals and plants, etc.—but that is not his subject here. See chapter 8:20-22.)

Federal Headship

Paul adds, "For that all have sinned." The margin in the KJV says, "In whom all have sinned." If this alternate reading can be used, it shows that Paul was not so much emphasizing the fact that all men are guilty for having sinned personally (which certainly is true – chap. 3:23), but that Adam's disobedience made a whole race of sinners (vs. 19). When he fell, he became the head of a fallen race (Gen. 5:3). This phrase ("all have sinned") is in the Aorist tense in the Greek, indicating that Adam's disobedience had a once-and-for-all effect on the race that would develop under him. This shows again that Paul was viewing Adam as the federal head of the human race. Subsequently, men have proved that they have the same nature as their "first father" because they have all sinned like him (Isa. 43:27). J. N. Darby said, "It is by one man's disobedience the many (all men) were made sinners, not their own sins. Of sins each has his own: here it is a state of sin common to all" (Synopsis of the Books of the Bible, on Romans 5:12). Thus, the presence of sin (the fallen nature) and death in the human race are not the result of men's personal sins, but rather the outcome of the action of Adam, the federal head of the race.

Federal headship has to do with a person in a responsible place as the head, acting for and on behalf of those under him. It could be as the head of state, the head of a family, the head of a corporation, etc. For example, when the president of a country signs a bill into law, as the head of state he acts for all the citizens of that country, and when the law is passed, it is binding on all in the country. The epistle to the Hebrews gives an example of federal headship in a family. The writer speaks of Abraham acting in that role. He says that Levi paid tithes to Melchizedek in the tithes that Abraham gave to Melchizedek, even though at that time Levi was not yet born in Abraham's posterity—which happened about 200 years later (Heb. 7:9-10). Nevertheless, Levi is said to have been "yet in the loins of his father" when Melchizedek received tithes from Abraham, and thus, Abraham acted for, and on behalf, of Levi (and his posterity) as the family's federal head.

Two Federal Heads

In a parenthesis (vss. 13-17), Paul shows that federal headship applies to both Adam and Christ. Each is the head of a race of men, and their actions as such have had a great effect upon their races.

Chap. 5:13-14—Paul begins with Adam. He shows that as head of the human race, Adam acted for the race (negatively), and his posterity is viewed as having acted with him, even though they did not exist at the time of his action. Thus, when Adam sinned, he constituted a whole race of sinners (vs. 19). This does not mean that we are responsible for Adam's sin, nor does it mean that we are responsible for having the sin-nature.

Even before the Law was given, in the days "from Adam to Moses" (about 2500 years), when men had no direct command from God, as Adam did, "death reigned." Men in those days had "not sinned after the similitude [likeness] of Adam's transgression" in breaking a known command, yet the effects of sin were still felt by them in that they all died—with the exception of Enoch (Heb. 11:5). Adam had received a direct (oral) command from God (Gen. 2:16-17), so his disobedience was a definite transgression. But, men in those early days (before the Law was given) did not have a legal code from God; their only guide was their consciences. Since there was no stated command from God during that period, no transgression could be "imputed [put to account]" against sinners. Paul's point here is that, regardless of whether there was a stated law or not, sin was in the world, and this can be proved by the fact that death held its sway over the entire race during that time—they all died.

Paul then says that Adam is a "figure of Him that was to come" (vs. 14b). This refers to Christ. It shows that He is also an Adam—that is, the head of a race of men. In fact, as Head of His race, Christ is called "the last Adam" (1 Cor. 15:45). He is the "last" Adam because no further races of men are forthcoming from God. This new race under Christ is perfect; there is no need, therefore, for God to bring another race of men into existence after it. Christ's race is altogether new and different in character from Adam's, being a "new creation" of God (2 Cor. 5:17; Rev. 3:14). The two headships of the two races are distinguished in Scripture by the technical phrases: "in Adam" and "in Christ" (1 Cor. 15:22).

Christ became the Head of His new creation race in resurrection, and thus He is "the Firstborn among many brethren" (Rom. 8:29; Col. 1:18; Heb. 1:6; 2:11-13; Rev. 1:5). "Firstborn," in this sense, does not refer to being first in birth order in a family, though the Lord was that (Matt. 1:25), but to being first in rank and position, having a place of pre-eminence among others. "Firstborn" is used in a number of places in Scripture in this way. (Compare Genesis 25:25 with Exodus 4:22; 1 Chronicles 2:13-15 with Psalm 89:27; Genesis 48:14 with Jeremiah 31:9). As the "Firstborn," the Lord is "not ashamed" to call those of His race His "brethren," because they are of the same kind as He, and thus they are entirely suited to Him (Gen. 1:25; 2:21-23; Heb. 2:11).

Chap. 5:15—Paul reasons, "But shall not the act of favour be as the offence?" The answer is, "Yes." Just as surely as Adam's "offence" as federal head affected the whole race under him, Christ's "act of favour" as the federal Head of His race has affected all under Him. This is a great similarity between Adam and Christ; by one act, each has left an imprint on his race, though both races were not in existence at the time of their actions. This is emphasized in Paul's double use of the word "many." The first "many" in verse 15 refers to all under Adam's headship who became subject to death as a result of his transgression. This would be the whole human race. The second "many" refers to all who are part of the new creation race under Christ. This would be believers only.

The Offence and the Free Gift Contrasted

Chap. 5:15b—Paul then contrasts the vast difference between "the offence" of Adam and "the free gift" by Christ. This is emphasized by Paul's use of the phrase, "Much more..." Adam's offence has had an enormous negative effect on the race under him, whereas Christ has had an enormous positive effect on His race. Paul states that through "the offence of one many are dead," but "the free gift in grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many." This contrast couldn't be greater.

Condemnation and Justification Contrasted

Chap. 5:16—A second contrast that he brings forward is that Adam’s act has brought in "judgment unto condemnation," whereas Christ’s act has brought the "many offences" of sinners who believe unto "justification [judicial righteousness]." Paul uses the word "but" to offset these two things.

In saying, "judgment unto condemnation," he shows that these two things are not synonymous: one precedes the other. His use of "unto" indicates this. W. Scott said, "Judgment and condemnation do not mean the same thing. Condemnation is future and final. Judgment precedes it." All under Adam are presently under the sentence of judgment, but they are not under condemnation—at least, not as yet. Condemnation is a final and irrevocable thing that will be the portion of all who pass out of this world in their sins without faith. Some Bible versions translate "judgment" as "verdict" to indicate that it is the sentence that has been passed upon man, not the actual execution of the punishment. J. N. Darby states in the footnote of his translation in Luke 20:47 that the word "judgment" is "the sentence passed on the thing charged as guilt, the charge itself as ground of judgment; not the fact of condemnation." He also said, "We all know, if we know anything, the difference between past sins (or present) and the evil nature [sin]; the fruit; and the tree. If it is asked, 'Is a man condemned for both?' I should say, that he is lost, rather than condemned" (Collected Writings, vol. 34, p. 406).

It's true that John 3:18 says, "He that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God," but it is a mistranslation in the KJV. It should read "judged" rather than condemned.

"The world," "the flesh," and "the devil" are irrevocably under condemnation (1 Cor. 11:32; Rom. 8:3; 1 Tim. 3:6), but men who are alive today in this world are not. They are, however, lost and under the sentence of judgment, and if they don't turn to God in faith, they will be condemned to a lost eternity. In the light of this doctrinal distinction, we can see that the hymn which says, "Once we stood in condemnation, waiting thus the sinner's doom...." (L. F. #200) is not accurate, because Scripture teaches that all who are under condemnation are unrecoverable. The great thing about "justification" and being "in Christ" (our new position before God under our new Head) is that it is now impossible for us to ever come into "condemnation" (chap. 8:1).

The Reign of Sin and Death and the Reign Of Righteousness in Life Contrasted

Chap. 5:17—A third contrast Paul points out is the difference between the reign of sin and death and the reign of righteousness in life. He says that in Adam "death reigned," but now for "those who receive the abundance of grace," (that is, believers) "the gift of righteousness shall reign in life." Again, he uses the phrase, "much more" to mark this distinction. Through Adam's offence, sin and death have ruled supreme over all in Adam's race ever since. On the other hand, as a result of what Christ has accomplished for believers connected with Him under His headship, righteousness reigns in "life." This is an incredible reversal. The members of Adam's race are seen as slaves to sin, dying under that tyrannical master (sin). On the other hand, the members of Christ's new race are seen as rulers, reigning in life and liberty! These are two opposing states. It is true that "righteousness shall reign" in every way in the millennial kingdom of Christ (Isa. 32:1), but Paul is referring to righteousness reigning now in the life of the believer. He will expand on this in verse 21.

Summarizing the contents of the parenthesis, we see that:

- The gift abounds over the offence.
- Justification abounds over condemnation.
- Life abounds over death.

The Transfer of the Believer From Adam To Christ—Positionally

Chap. 5:18-19—Having closed the parenthesis in the final verses of the chapter, Paul shows that believers have been transferred from Adam's headship and race to Christ's headship and race. In the parenthesis he made contrasts, but now he proceeds to make some comparisons between the two using the words, "so" or "so also."

He says, as Adam's "one offence" has had its effect "towards all men to condemnation," "so" also Christ's "one" act of "righteousness" has been extended "towards all men for justification of life." There are two "alls" here. Unlike the two "manys" in verse 15, which were contrasting the two races of men, these two "alls" refer to the same people—the entire human race. Adam's act has brought something "towards all men" and so has Christ's act.

Unfortunately, the KJV translates this verse as if the free gift of righteousness has come "upon all men," and this has led some to believe that all men will be saved in the end. (Romans 11:32 and 1 Corinthians 15:22 are also used to teach this error.) This erroneous doctrine is called Universalism. However, that phrase should be translated "towards all men," which means that it has been made available to all, but not necessarily realized by all.

The "one" act of "righteousness" that Paul speaks of here refers to Christ's whole life and death, viewed as one unbroken act of obedience. A. H. Rule said, "Every act, word, and thought from first to last was obedience, so that His whole life and death are looked at as one unbroken act of obedience" (Selected Ministry of A. H. Rule, vol. 1, p. 138.) This act of Christ towards the human race is "unto justification of life" for those who believe. This term (justification of life) refers to believers being set in a new position before God where He no longer sees them as sinners, but also as having a new life that has not sinned, and cannot sin.

He says, "By one man's disobedience" many were "made sinners, so also by the obedience of One many are made [constituted] righteous" (vs. 19). Scholars tell us that "made [constituted]" is a legal word that has the thought of being appointed. Hence, in being "constituted righteous," those who believe do not become instantly righteous in a practical sense, but rather that God appoints them as righteous by placing them in Christ's race under Christ's headship. (In the Greek, the verb "constituted" is used in the future tense to indicate that it includes all future generations of believers in the race.) Thus, by Christ's one act of obedience, believers have been transferred from Adam's headship to Christ's. This means that the foregoing blessings connected with Christ's new race are accrued to believers.

Chap. 5:20—Paul then explains that the Law was brought in to reveal sin as being exceedingly sinful. Those under the Law who have failed to keep the Law can be justly charged with definite transgressions, because they have had specific commands from God in the Law stating what they were and were not to do. As a result, "they like Adam have transgressed" a known command of God (Hos. 6:7). Furthermore, both the "offence" and "grace" have abounded in opposite directions—with grace abounding "much more." Thus, the entrance of sin into the world has become an opportunity for God to magnify His grace by rising over it all.

Two Spheres of Life

Chap. 5:21—Paul concludes his treatise on the two headships by stating that, as a result of their two acts, there now exists two corresponding spheres of life in which men live: one under Adam's headship that pertains to death, and the other under Jesus Christ our Lord that pertains to life. This is seen in the fact that both "sin" and "grace" are said to "reign," which implies that they both have a sphere of dominion in which they exercise their authority. Paul says, "As sin hath reigned unto death, even so grace might reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord."

Since these two things reign, they can, in a sense, be viewed as kings or masters. "Sin" reigns in a scene of "death." Essentially, this is the world and all that pertains to it. On the other hand, "grace" reigns "unto eternal life." Eternal life is not only in the believer (John 3:15-16, 36), but it is also a sphere of life in which the believer is to live in fellowship with the Father and the Son (John 17:3; 1 Tim. 6:12, 19). As to this latter aspect of eternal life, Mr. Darby said that it is "an out-of-this-world condition of things" in which the believer lives by the Spirit. Paul is alluding to the final aspect of eternal life here, when we are taken to heaven. It is an environment of life that is perfect and entirely free from sin—where light, love, and fellowship with the Father and the Son is all and in all. The good news is that, by virtue of the indwelling Spirit of God, we have life eternal now and can live in that sphere of life now while we are here on earth (John 4:14; 1 John 5:11-13). This is essential to the subject of deliverance from sin before us in this section of the epistle.

In summary, as believers on the Lord Jesus Christ, we have been transferred positionally from Adam's headship to Christ's. Thus, we are no longer viewed as under that old headship and connected with its corresponding state; we are now part of the new race of men under Christ (2 Cor. 5:17) and thus identified with that new sphere of life under His headship. Hence, for the believer, the reign of sin and death has been met by the reign of life in Christ.

Outline of the Epistle to the Romans: God's Righteousness Declared in the Gospel, Romans 5:12-8:17: Deliverance From the Power of Sin

Chapters 5:12–8:17

In this next subdivision of the epistle, Paul unfolds the second aspect of deliverance announced in the gospel—deliverance from the power of sin. This has to do with God's way of freeing the believer from the workings of his old sin-nature (“the flesh” – Rom. 7:5), so that he is able to live a holy life for the glory of God. This subdivision, therefore, could be called, "God's Way of Practical Sanctification," because it presents God’s way and God’s power for holy living (See chapter 6:19, 22 “sanctification” – RSV, NRSV, ASV, NASB, ESV, J. Green's Interlinear, F. W. Grant, C. E. Stuart, etc.). Chapters 3:21–5:11 and chapters 5:12–8:17 could be differentiated as:

- JUSTIFICATION—makes a person judicially righteous.
- SANCTIFICATION—makes a person practically righteous.

The Difference Between Sins and Sin

Up to this point in the epistle, Paul has been speaking about “sins” and God's deliverance from the just judgment of them. But now he shifts to speak of “sin” and God's deliverance from its power. (H. Smith points out that the word “sin” appears only twice in chapters 1–5:11, but in this next section of the epistle it occurs no less than 34 times!) Knowing the difference between these two terms is essential to understanding this aspect of deliverance.

- “Sins” (plural) refer to the evil deeds which we have done. God's remedy for sins committed is in Christ's death for us. That is, by faith in the blood of Christ, whereupon we are redeemed (Rom. 3:24; Eph. 1:7), forgiven (Rom. 4:7; Heb. 9:22), justified (Rom. 5:9), and reconciled (Rom. 5:11; Col. 1:20-22). (Note: the blood of Christ is mentioned in each of these references.)
- “Sin” (singular) refers to the fallen nature in man (the flesh). God's remedy for the activity of sin in a believer's life is in our death with Christ. That is, faith's application of the death of Christ, whereby we are delivered from being linked to sin (Rom. 6:7) and delivered from the power of sin's activity by the Spirit of God (Rom. 8:2).

Hence, “sins” are evil actions, and “sin” is the evil nature. The first is what we have done, and the second is what we are. It could be said that “sins” are manifestations of “sin;” or that “sins” are the product of “sin;” or that “sins” are the fruit of a bad tree and “sin” is the root of that bad tree. Let us also remember that “sin” is more than just the old sin-nature; it is that evil nature with a will in it that is determined to gratify its lusts. Another difference between these two things is that “sins” can be “forgiven” by the grace of God (chap. 4:7), but “sin” is not forgiven, but rather, is “condemned” under the judgment of God (chap. 8:3).

In stating these distinctions between sins and sin, let us keep in mind that the subject in this section of the epistle is not deliverance from the presence of sin in us, but from the power of sin over us. Deliverance from the presence of sin in us will only happen if we die or the Lord comes—the Rapture. The great thing we learn here—which should come as good news to every believer struggling with the sin-nature—is that God’s salvation announced in the gospel not only promises deliverance from the judgment of our sins, but also deliverance from the power of sin working in our lives.

“Through,” “With,” and “In” Christ

As we transition into this new subdivision, there is another interesting difference to point out. In chapters 3:21–5:11, we are told what we have "through" (sometimes translated "by" in KJV) Christ (chap. 5:1, 2, 9, 10, 11). Whereas in chapters 5:12–8:17, Paul tells us what we have "with" and "in" Christ.

The Need for Deliverance From Sin

Not long after being saved, the believer will find his fallen sin-nature asserting itself in his life in some sinful way. Thus, he will discover that he still has the same old carnal nature that he had before he believed on the Lord Jesus Christ. Oftentimes it will come as a considerable shock when a new convert realizes that he still is capable of all kinds of evil. However, he must learn that being forgiven, justified, and reconciled does not mean that Christians can no longer sin. Contrary to what he may have thought, his fallen nature has not been removed or improved by his conversion to God. He must learn that if it is allowed free rein in his life, he could commit any conceivable sin.

When God saved us, He could have glorified us immediately, and thus, we would be rid of the fallen sin-nature and never sin again. He could also have taken us straight home to heaven the moment we believed, and we would be spared many painful and humbling experiences with the flesh. However, divine wisdom has chosen to leave us in this world to walk the path of faith with the fallen sin-nature in us, but also, with a means of rendering it inactive.

Favour and Freedom

It is not God's intention to leave those whom He has forgiven, justified, and reconciled in this world under the dominion of their fallen sin-natures, without power to walk uprightly and in liberty before Him. The gospel does not offer an exemption from sin's penalty, and then leave the believer to continue in this world under sin's power. In this next section of the epistle, Paul shows that God has provided a way of full deliverance for the believer from the workings of the indwelling sin-nature, thus enabling him to live a holy life for the glory of God. This is included in the good news of the gospel. Therefore, as mentioned earlier, this subdivision presents to us God's way of practical sanctification.

In chapters 3:21–5:11, we have seen the believer placed before God in a position of "favour" (chap. 5:2); now in chapters 5:12-8:39, we have God's way of "freedom" from sin unfolded (chap. 6:18). It is one thing to stand before God in all the favour of the new position in which justification sets us, and quite another to walk before men in freedom from sin through the power of the Holy Spirit.

The truth unfolded in these two sections of the epistle take the believer from sin’s depravity to God’s salvation—but from different perspectives. It is not that the believer gets saved twice; the truth developed here is one. It is taken up in the epistle consecutively because these things, as far as experience is concerned, are usually learned separately. Moreover, if Paul took them up at the same time, the reader

would likely get confused; God’s way is to go over it twice. W. H. Westcott stated, “These two sections of the epistle, properly speaking, run together like parallel lines; though the Spirit of God takes up each separately. The second section is always needed for a continual enjoyment of the first. Still, they are not often learnt at once and at the same time.” (A Letter to Rome, p. 10).

Sinless Perfection

Some have misunderstood this aspect of deliverance and have imagined that Paul is teaching that a believer can reach a state of sinless perfection while here on earth. Scripture most definitely teaches that sinless perfection will be the portion of every Christian, but it will not occur until the coming of the Lord (the Rapture). At that moment, the fallen sin-nature will be eradicated and "this mortal shall have put on immortality" (1 Cor. 15:54). Let us, therefore, understand that freedom from sin's presence in the believer none can have so long as we are on earth, but freedom from sin's power all can have through applying the principles that Paul is about to unfold.

A Brief Outline of Deliverance From the Power of Sin Presented in This Subdivision

- Chapters 5:12–7:6 present the doctrine of deliverance from sin.

- Chapter 7:7-25—A PARENTHESIS—illustrating the experimental process through which a person passes in learning to apply the doctrine of deliverance.

- Chapter 8:1-17 presents the happy results that flow from faith's application of the principles of deliverance.

Outline of the Epistle to the Romans: God's Righteousness Declared in the Gospel, Romans 5:1-11: The Great Results of Justification and Reconciliation

Chapter 5:1-11

The first eleven verses of chapter 5 complete the subject of God acting in righteousness to secure blessing for the ungodly sinner who believes. Predicated upon the pivotal word, "Therefore," Paul proceeds to delineate the great results or benefits accrued to the believer through justification.

The thought of rejoicing or exulting runs throughout the eleven verses. This is lost somewhat in the KJV, which uses three different English words to indicate the Greek word "kauchaomai." The word is translated "rejoice" (vs. 2), "glory" (vs. 3), and "joy" (vs. 11) in the KJV, but the J. N. Darby Translation translates it as "boast" in all three places. Other translations render it "rejoice" or "exult." This is surely a fitting conclusion to the whole subject of God's grace in dealing with our sins to bring us into blessing.

In this series of verses, Paul touches on at least seven great things that the believer has consequent upon being "justified by faith." These things are not temporal or conditional, but abiding and eternal. Each is stated in the present tense ("we have") indicating that they are a present possession of the believer—with the exception of verses 9b and 10b which look on to what God will do for the believer in the future. All are spoken of with utmost certainty.

Chap. 5:1-2—The first three things that Paul mentions go together and have to do with the believer's present position and future prospect. They tell us what God has done for us in regard to our whole history—past, present, and future.

- As to our past—we have been "justified" (vs. 1).

- As to the present—we "stand" in a position of "favour" with God (vs. 2a).

- As to the future—we have a "hope" (a deferred certainty) of being glorified (vs. 2b).

Peace With God

(Chap. 5:1)—Paul says, "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God." This is an external "peace" that exists between God and the believer as a result of being justified by faith. It is an outward, prevailing condition of peace between two parties that were once alienated. A breach has come between God and man through sin, but that barrier has been removed for the believer. Similarly, when two nations are at war, there is no peace. But if peace is made between them, the war is over; hostilities cease and foes are changed to friends. This is just what has happened with the believer through faith in the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. There no longer exists a separation between us and God; a condition of peace now prevails.

Some people think that the sinner needs to make his peace with God. They will say, "Make your peace with God." But this is not what the Bible teaches. It tells us that we cannot make peace with God because we are not able to offer to the claims of divine justice what is necessary to make it. Thankfully, the Bible teaches that this peace has already been made for men by Christ's finished work on the cross. Colossians 1:20, states that Christ has "made peace through the blood of His cross." Thus, all we have to do is to believe God's testimony concerning that fact, and being justified we have "peace with God."

This peace is an objective reality, not a subjective feeling. It is not an inward peaceful feeling in the soul of the believer, as some Christians have imagined. Peaceful feelings can come and go, depending on the believer’s circumstances and his state of soul, but they have no part in his justification and his peace with God. Peace with God is an abiding condition in which the believer dwells with God. It is sure and is as perfect as its foundation—the death and resurrection of Christ. Hence, Paul is not speaking of our enjoyment of peace here, but rather of the fact that we have peace with God. It is a peace that does not depend upon our state of soul—i.e. our walk. It cannot be lost by our shortcomings and failures in the path of faith, because it is an eternally settled thing. It is inseparably connected with our position before God. Hence, we do not have more of this peace by walking in communion with the Lord, nor do we have less of it when we don’t. (An inward state of peace and rest in the soul is mentioned in chapter 8:6 and is a result of the believer knowing deliverance—but that is not the subject here.) This peace, therefore, belongs to all believers, even though some of them have been hindered from enjoying it, because they do not rest in

faith on what God has said about their security in Christ. As a result, they can occasionally be troubled about their sins. Ed. Dennett said, "The words, 'we have peace,' do not of necessity mean that we enjoy it; for there are doubtless many justified ones before God who know but little of this peace."

"Peace With God" and the "Peace of God"

"peace of God"

"Peace with God"

standing;

"peace of God"

state.

“peace of God”

“peace with God.”

Three Parts to Our Standing in Peace

A. P. Cecil pointed out that there are three parts to our standing in peace. We have:

- Peace with God (Rom. 5:1)—A Godward external peace.
- Peace of resurrection life (Rom. 8:6)—An inward peace resulting from knowing and experiencing deliverance.
- Racial peace (Eph. 2:14)—An outward peace toward fellow believers who have been saved out of different nationalities and placed together in the one body of Christ.

All three aspects of peace belong to us the moment we believe the gospel and are sealed with the Holy Spirit.

A New Standing in the Favour of God

(chap. 5:2a)—Paul proceeds with another great result of justification. He says, "By whom also we have access by faith into this grace [favour] wherein we stand." This refers to the believer being given a new standing in the presence of God.

The Greek word "prosagogen" translated "access" in this verse (in the KJV) has the thought of a person's introduction into something. Here in this passage it has to do with the believer's formal introduction into a new standing of "favour" before God. J. N. Darby remarked that this place of favour in which we have been set is "our acceptance in grace, which He has freely bestowed upon us in the Beloved." Thus, it is the same standing that Christ Himself has before God, for we are “accepted in the Beloved” (Eph. 1:6). Paul says that this new position (standing) which all believers are in, is entered upon "by faith" in the Lord Jesus Christ—i.e., when a person gets saved. It is a once and for all thing resulting from being “justified in Christ” (Gal. 2:17).

This "access," therefore, is not a matter of Christian practise—i.e. entering the presence of God for daily fellowship, prayer, and worship, as stated in Ephesians 2:18 and 3:12, etc.—but rather, the believer's initial access (or entrance) into his new standing before God. In the Greek, the word ("access") is in the perfect tense, indicating that Christ has achieved a complete and an abiding access for us in the presence of God by His entrance there. This new standing in favour before God, which Christ has accessed for us is perfect, permanent, and inviolable, because it is measured by Christ's perfect and permanent acceptance. It is a positional thing; it has nothing to do with our walk or our personal faithfulness. Whether we are the youngest Christian or the oldest, a devoted Christian or a careless Christian, we all equally have this standing before God. Our state of soul (Phil. 2:20), on the other hand, fluctuates depending upon whether we walk according to the Spirit or after the flesh. At times our spiritual state may be good and at other times it may be poor, but our standing never changes.

A Hope of the Glory of God

(chap. 5:2b)—Paul passes on to another result of justification: "We rejoice in hope of the glory of God." As mentioned earlier, this has to do with the believer's future glorification. Being justified by faith, Christians have a "hope" of being glorified like Christ (chap. 8:30). When this takes place, we are going to be perfected—spirit, soul, and body. The fallen sin-nature will be eradicated from our beings, and we will be transformed physically to be like Christ (Phil. 3:21). This will happen to every Christian, whether they know much about their glorious future or not. Paul is not speaking of whether believers are living in the enjoyment and anticipation of this glorious future, but simply that we have a glorious future.

"Hope," in the sense that it is used in Scripture, is a deferred certainty. It is expectancy with assurance. In the modern usage of the word, we speak of hope as something that we would like to see happen, but we have no guarantee that it will take place. This is not how Scripture uses the word; in Scripture hope is always a thing of certainty. "The hope of the glory of God" that Paul is speaking about here is a thing that will definitely happen—we just don't know when.

Glorification is the wonderful culmination of God's work in us and with us. Before grace reached us, we were sinners who had "come short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23). Now, by being justified by His grace, we have the hope of being glorified like Christ. It is a deferred certainty, viewed as a completed thing in the purpose and counsel of God: "Whom He justified, them He also glorified" (Rom. 8:30). The actuality of glorification will take place at the Rapture: "We await the Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour, who shall transform our body of humiliation into conformity to His body of glory" (Rom. 8:17; Phil. 3:21). Revelation 21:11 sees the Church in the end (during the Millennium) reigning with Christ "having the glory of God." Today, we have this glorious end as a hope. When we believed the gospel and received the Lord Jesus Christ as our Saviour, we were put in hope of our eventual glorification. Paul refers to this later in the epistle, stating that we have been "saved in hope" (Rom. 8:24). Our glorification is "part and parcel" with our salvation, being the final phase of it (Rom. 13:11).

We see from this that our future is bright and secure. In view of this wonderful prospect, it is fitting that believers should "exult [boast]."

Spiritual Education in the School of God

(chap. 5:3-8)—As alluded to earlier, the first three things that Paul has touched on in chapter 5 have to do with the position and prospect of believers. Now in verses 3-8, he moves on to speak of things that have to do with our pilgrimage and pathway.

Paul says, "And not only so, but we glory [boast/rejoice] in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience [endurance]; and patience [endurance], experience; and experience, hope: and hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us." In these verses, the believer is seen passing through trials and tribulations in the pathway of faith, and profiting spiritually from those experiences. This shows that after we are justified by faith, God enrolls us in His school where we are taught divine lessons in and through the experiences of life. Being intensely interested in the moral and spiritual development of His children, immediately upon being saved God begins a work in us to conform us to the image of His Son (Rom. 8:29). His love is such that He does not leave us in the state in which He finds us, but undertakes to effect a moral renovation of our beings, using the external pressure of trials and tribulations in life to accomplish it. This is another benefit resulting from being justified by faith.

The aspect of spiritual teaching in view here is not the intellectual side of the truth—what we might call "book learning." While written ministry is valuable and useful for building up the saints in the most holy faith (Jude 20), these spiritual lessons are not learned through that medium. These lessons have to do with the development of Christian character, and they can only be learned through the "tribulations" (trials) of life. J. N. Darby remarked that "trial cannot in itself confer grace, but under God’s hand it can break the will and detect hidden and unsuspected evils, and that if judged, the new life is more fully developed and God has a larger place in the heart. Also, by it lowly dependence is taught; and as a result, there is more distrust of self and the flesh, and a consciousness that the world is nothing, and what is eternally true and divine has a larger place in the soul." Hence, tribulations (trials) have a way of disconnecting us from our material resources and positions in life, and connecting us more consciously with what is spiritual and eternal. Through trials we learn valuable lessons about ourselves and about our great God; we learn of our own insufficiency and of His all-sufficiency. And these things lead to a deeper appreciation of the love of God and a more intimate relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ.

The wilderness journey of the children of Israel typifies this aspect of our spiritual education. In fact, these verses in Romans 5 have often been called, "The Christian's Wilderness Journey." At the Red Sea, the Lord took Israel out of Egypt, but in the wilderness, He took Egypt out of Israel—or at least that was His desire. The first is an act; the second is a process. Similarly, when the Lord picks us up and saves us, He has much to do in us in the way of removing things which are inconsistent with His character (Psa. 139:3; Prov. 25:4). Oftentimes there are worldly motives and principles in us that we may not be aware of, which He undertakes, with divine care and precision, to remove through the pressure of trials. God did not bring sin, sorrow, and trouble into the world, but now that those things are here, He uses them to teach us important lessons in His school—lessons of obedience, dependence, etc.

Vs. 3—Paul, therefore, states, "We glory [boast/rejoice] in tribulations." This is faith speaking from the perspective of what characterizes normal Christian experience. In actuality, our state may be poor, and we may complain rather than rejoice when trials come our way, but he is not speaking of an abnormal Christian state here. Paul says, "we rejoice," not because Christians like trials, but because we know that all such trials and tribulations work to our spiritual advantage (Rom. 8:28; 2 Cor. 4:17)—toward our spiritual growth and progress. Under His divine teaching, we are able to profit from the experiences that we pass through in life, and this is why Christians can rejoice at such times (James 1:2). This being the case, knowing that these things have been allowed of God for our spiritual profit, when we meet trials, instead of saying, "How can I get out of this?" we should be saying, "What can I get out of this?" God would have us to be exercised about the trying things that come into our lives and to profit spiritually from them.

Paul then speaks of a chain of positive things that result when trials are taken properly from the hand of God in faith. He says, "Tribulation worketh patience [endurance]." Endurance has the thought of perseverance in the path of faith—that is being able to carry on in the face of opposition. Since everything about Christianity is contrary to the course of the world, the Christian must live his life against the stream, and the important quality of "endurance" or steadfastness is needed. Trials have a way of deepening our convictions about the things we believe, and thus prepare us mentally to endure opposition in our stand for those things.

Vs. 4—Paul adds a second thing—"and endurance, experience." Enduring a trial with the Lord, the believer gains practical experience with the ways of God. "Experience" means "practical proof." It refers to the process of learning in the pathway of faith, whereby we gain experimental knowledge of God and His ways. We prove by experience that He is as good as His Word. Each experience with God strengthens our confidence in God. We learn in a practical way of His tender mercies and care, and we cherish those experiences and reflect on them, and will one day take them with us on to heaven. A younger brother once asked an older brother, "How does a person get experience?" The older brother answered, "We get experience through experience; there is no other way."

Paul adds a third thing—"and experience, hope." These experiences with the Lord not only strengthen our faith and confidence in God; they also turn our hearts heavenward—toward our "hope." The result is that it burns brighter in our hearts and is more real to us, and we thus live more in view of it. The "hope of the glory" (vs. 2)—the realization that our glorification is very near at hand—gives us fresh energy to endure for this "little while" (Heb. 10:37). If we lose sight of this hope, in times of trial we will be in danger of giving up rather than enduring. Paul says that the believer is not "ashamed" of his hope, because––resulting from the believer’s faith being strengthened through the experience of trials––he knows that it is steadfast and sure.

Vs. 5—The fourth link in this chain of Christian characteristics that God forms in His people through trials is that they have a way of producing a deeper sense of the love of God in the soul. Paul says that through these things "the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us." Note, he is not speaking of our love for God, but of God's love for us. It is God's desire that we would have a deeper and more profound sense of His love in our souls, and these experiences produce it. Note also: Paul is not referring to the believer's reception of the Holy Spirit—called sealing (Eph. 1:13; 4:30), anointing [unction] (1 John 2:20, 27), and the earnest (2 Cor. 5:5; Eph. 1:14) which occurs when a person believes the gospel (2 Cor. 1:22)—but of a fresh sense of His love filling our hearts. This is what motivates Christian living; we do what we do for the Lord because His love constrains us (2 Cor. 5:14-15).

Vss. 6-8—Having spoken of the possession of God's love in our hearts (vs. 5), Paul goes on to speak of the quality and character of that love. He compares the mighty love of God to the love of men. "For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." God has demonstrated His incredible love in the giving of His Son. His love is such that He loved us when there was nothing in us to love. In our lost state, we were "ungodly" (vs. 6), "sinners" (vs. 8), and even "enemies" of God (vs. 10), yet God loved us and gave His Son to redeem us! There could be no greater demonstration of love than this! By stating that Christ died "for us," Paul is focusing on the substitutionary side of His work on the cross—His taking our place under the judgment of God (1 Peter 3:18 – "the Just for the unjust").

Comparing this great love of God to the love of men, Paul shows that man's love needs a motive for it to act (Luke 6:32; John 15:19). In the natural man's way of thinking, a person must show himself to be worthy of love. Paul gives a couple of examples—a person must be "a righteous man" or at least "a good man." On rare occasions, men will dare to die for such persons, because they see something in them worthy of their love. However, men will not love, or die for, an ungodly murderer, etc.—such is the character of human love. Divine love, on the other hand, acts when there is nothing in its object that is loveable. And this has been demonstrated in the fact that "Christ died for the ungodly" (vs. 6). Thus, God's love is unparalleled among men, and is infinitely greater. Contemplating and meditating on this love will effect a transformation of character in our lives, from ungodliness to Christ-likeness (2 Cor. 3:18).

Thus, we see from these things that our education in the school of God is vastly different from our justification.

- Justification is something that God does for us (vss. 1-2).
- Spiritual education has to do with our conformity to Christ and is something that God does in us (vss. 3-8).

A Future Salvation From the Wrath to Come

(Chap. 5:9) Paul goes on to speak of another benefit of justification—the assurance of being saved from the wrath that is coming on this guilty world. He says, "Much more then, being now justified by [the power of] His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him." This is a future aspect of our salvation which will occur when the Lord comes. The Christians who are on earth at that time will be "saved" from the judgment coming upon the world by being taken out of it altogether. Bible teachers call this "the Rapture" (1 Thess. 4:15-17; Phil. 3:20-21). Christians who die before that time will, of course, not need this deliverance, because they will already be with the Lord.

Chapter 13:11 speaks of this future aspect of salvation as something that is getting nearer to us every day: "For now is our salvation nearer than when we believed." This is because God has set a day—sometime in the very near future, we believe—when He will send His Son to snatch away the Christians who will be living on earth. No one knows when this day will be (Matt. 25:13). The coming "wrath" will be delivered by Christ Himself (1 Thess. 1:10; 2 Thess. 1:9; Rev. 6:16, etc.). Hence, the Lord Jesus is:

- The Saviour from the coming wrath—for believers.
- The Executioner of the coming wrath—on unbelievers.

A Present Salvation Through Christ on High

(Chap. 5:10)—Having spoken of a past salvation (vs. 9a), and of a future salvation (vs. 9b), Paul now speaks of a present salvation for the believer (vs. 10). This is another great benefit of being justified by faith. He says, "For if, being enemies, we have been reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much rather, having been reconciled, we shall be saved in the power of His life." Walking through a world that is opposed to God and His principles is like walking through a spiritual minefield for the believer. There are dangers everywhere, and much to attract and excite our fallen sin-natures (the flesh). The Lord fully understands this and has undertaken to save us from these dangers in a practical way, while we are in the pathway to heaven.

To effect this present salvation, the Lord does not help us by coming down from heaven literally; He remains in His place on high and undertakes to save us from there. He went on high to effect three things to this end:

- To send the Spirit, and thus give us the power of resurrection life, which when lived in, neutralizes the activity of the flesh. (This will be taken up in chapters 5:12–8:17.)
- To be the Object for the believer's heart in a sphere altogether outside the world and the flesh (John 17:19). In the measure in which we are taken up with Him and His things where He is, the world, the flesh, and the devil lose their power of influence in our lives (1 John 5:4-5).
- To intercede for us in our wilderness pathway as our High Priest, by which we are saved from the many spiritual dangers in the pathway of faith (Heb. 7:25).

The Joy of Reconciliation

(Chap. 5:10-11)—Paul mentions one last (but not least) benefit resulting from being justified by faith—the joy of reconciliation. He says, "And not only so, we also joy [boast/rejoice] in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the reconciliation." There has been a radical change in the mind of the believer whereby he now rejoices in his relationship with God and his nearness to Him.

One of the sad results of the entrance of sin into this world is that there are estranged relations between men and God. There are wrong thoughts and feelings in man's heart and "mind" toward God (Col. 1:21). Through sin, men in their fallen state have become "haters of God" (Rom. 1:30), and thus they have great "enmity against God" (Rom. 8:7). Hence, men are "alienated" from God and are "enemies" of God (Col. 1:21).

This condition of enmity is altogether on man's side. It is man who has sinned and gone far from God. Even though man's heart toward God has been corrupted, God's disposition toward man has not changed. He is still favourably disposed toward His creatures, for He is the Unchangeable God (Mal. 3:6; Heb. 13:8; James 1:17). Hence, God is not an enemy of man, though man through the fall has become an enemy of God. There is, therefore, a great need for a change of heart in man, but not in God, for He has always loved man. Hence, it is not God who

needs to be reconciled to man, but man to God.

Sometimes, when people are awakened to their need of being saved, they have the mistaken idea that since they have sinned and are far from God, that they need to do something to turn God's heart toward them. Some think that they need to shed tears, while others think that they need to clean up their lives and get religious. But this is misunderstanding the heart of God and His unchangeable character. The truth is that His heart has always been favourably disposed toward man, even though man has sinned against Him. Since the day that sin entered the creation, God has been seeking man's deliverance and blessing.

Since God does not need to be reconciled to man—but rather man to God—Scripture does not present reconciliation as we know it today in the modern sense of the word. (It is used in our day in connection with two parties that have been estranged, coming toward each other's position with some degree of compromise, so that relations between them can resume as they once were.) Reconciliation, as presented in the gospel, never sees God and man meeting somewhere in between, but man (believers) being "brought" to God (1 Peter 3:18; Eph. 2:13). To guard against this mistaken idea, Scripture never says that we are reconciled with God. Such a statement might convey the idea that there has been some compromise on God's side as well as on man's. Scripture carefully states that believers are reconciled "to" God (Rom. 5:10; 2 Cor. 5:20; Eph. 2:16; Col. 1:20). This is why Paul says that "we" (believers) receive "the reconciliation;" it does not say that God receives reconciliation (vs. 11).

The Apostle states that we were once "enemies" of God. An enemy is one who has enmity and ill-feelings toward the one he hates, and consequently, he keeps away from him. This is the condition of fallen man in relation to God. His ill-feelings toward God are actuated by the presence of an evil conscience that condemns him as a sinner. It gives him the sense of having done wrong, and makes him uneasy about meeting God. The enmity in man's heart began with the fall of man (Gen. 3:15), and it has worked to keep men away from God ever since.

In spite of such a condition prevailing over the human race, God has undertaken to remove it and bring men (believers) back to Himself. In this fifth chapter of Romans, Paul has shown that God has taken the first step toward man's reconciliation in providing a sacrifice for sin in order to make a way for man to be brought back to Himself. He says, "God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (vs. 8).

Paul explains how God removes the enmity in the heart of a sinner—it is through "the death of His Son." This refers to the fact that God's love for mankind has been so great that He would even give His own Son to bring men back to Himself! Note: Scripture does not say, "the death of Christ," or some other title of the Lord Jesus. It says, "the death of His Son." This emphasizes the affection that existed in His relationship with His Son. God had only one Son, and He dearly loved Him, yet He gave Him to save sinners! The cost of making this sacrifice, therefore, is incalculable. When this great fact—that God has offered up His dearly beloved Son to bring men back to Himself—strikes the sinner's heart by the power of the Spirit, his heart is crushed. Then, learning through the gospel that God's disposition has been favourable toward the sinner throughout the sinner’s whole life (even though he has harboured evil thoughts toward God) is more than his heart can take. The love and compassion of God so grips the sinner's heart that the enmity that once rested there is dispelled. All such ill-feelings and hatred are flushed out of his soul, and the love of God floods into his heart. Thus, his thoughts toward God are all changed, and His Son, who willingly gave Himself, becomes the most wonderful and attractive Person to him. He was once uncomfortable at the thought of meeting God, but now as a believer, he is very comfortable in His presence and he actually delights in being there. J. N. Darby remarked in connection with reconciliation, "I feel at home with God. All His gracious feelings are toward me, and I know it, and my heart is brought back to Him." As a result, the believer exults in his new relationship with God. To "joy in God"—which is the happy state reconciliation produces in the believer—is truly the believer's proper attitude toward God. In this, we have truly come to a high point in the epistle!

Paul says, "We have now received the reconciliation" (vs. 11). This indicates that the believer's reconciliation is an accomplished fact; it is not something that he is waiting for when he gets to heaven. The KJV says that we receive "the atonement," but this is a translation error; it should read, "the reconciliation." In the salvation of man, it is God who receives the propitiation and the believer who receives the reconciliation.

Four Aspects of Reconciliation

There are four main places where reconciliation is mentioned in the New Testament in regard to believers:

• Colossians 1:20-23 presents God’s side—our being brought back to Him in a condition where the whole Godhead can delight in us, being made “holy and unblameable and unreproveable in His sight.” It is all for His pleasure and the satisfaction of His heart.

• Romans 5:10-11 presents the believer's side (individually)—the removing of the enmity that once made us enemies, whereby we are made comfortable in His presence and we thus “joy in God.”

• Ephesians 2:11-16—presents the believer's side (collectively)—the oneness that exists among the members of the body of Christ, whether they were once Jew or Gentile.

• 2 Corinthians 5:19-21—presents the testimony of this great truth to the world in the gospel.

The Difference Between Justification and Reconciliation

We also see from these things that reconciliation is different from justification, though both involve a change of thinking.

• Justification has to do with a change of thinking in God's mind. God reckons ("thinks it to be so") the believer as righteous.

• Reconciliation has to do with a change of thinking in the mind of the sinner who believes. His thoughts of enmity toward God, resulting from being an enemy of God, are replaced with rejoicing in God.

The Blessings of the Gospel Unfolded in Chapters 3:21–5:11

Thus, in this sub-division of the epistle (Chaps. 3:21 to 5:11), the Apostle Paul has unfolded the blessings of the gospel in an orderly way, with reconciliation being the culmination of it all. This sub-section ends with the believer in a happy relationship with God, enjoying His company.

Thus, the righteousness of God and the love and grace of God have triumphed over all the havoc that sin has wrought in man! The believer has:

• Redemption (chap. 3:24)—We are bought back and set free from judgment, from sin, from Satan, and from the course of this world.

• Forgiveness (chap. 4:7)—The guilt of our sins has been removed from our conscience.

• Justification (chap. 5:1)—We have been cleared from every charge against us by being brought into a new position before God in Christ, where God no longer sees us as sinners.

• Reconciliation (chap. 5:10-11)—We have been brought to God with changed thoughts and feelings toward Him, whereupon we delight to be in His presence, and He delights to have us there.

Purchase and Redemption: The Difference Between Bought and Redeemed, Redeemed

Now let’s speak about redeemed. Redemption includes being bought, but it goes beyond that to take in being set free. The meaning given in any good Bible dictionary is: “bought back and set free.” It indicates that there is not just a change of ownership (a change of masters) as in “bought;” there is also a change of condition.

The great emphasis in “redeemed” is being set free. Hence, Scripture does not speak of believers being redeemed to God, because redemption always has to do with being set free "from" things (Gen. 48:16; 1 Chron. 17:21; Titus 2:14; 1 Peter 1:18). (Revelation 5:9, in the KJV, says, "Redeemed us to God..." but it should be translated, "Bought us to God..." (W. Kelly Translation).

Four Aspects of Redemption

There are at least four different ways in which redemption is applied to persons and things—our souls, our time (opportunities), our bodies, and our inheritance.

1) The Redemption of Our Souls

Turn to Romans 3:24: “Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.” And in Ephesians 1:7: “In Whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace.” Titus 2:13-14: “Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; Who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.” And again, in 1 Peter 1:18: “Ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.” These verses show that redemption applies to the souls of believers. Those who, by faith, own Christ's purchase on the cross and receive Him as Saviour are thus redeemed; it is an “eternal redemption” (Heb. 9:12).

This aspect of redemption is two-fold. Firstly, believers are set free from the judgment of God against their sins. This has been called, "Redemption by blood" (1 Peter 1:18; Eph. 1:7). Secondly, believers are set free from the enslaving power of sin (Rom. 6:18; 8:2), from the dominion of Satan (Heb. 2:14), and from the course of this world (Gal. 1:4). This has been called, "Redemption by power." (Whether this deliverance is practically so in the lives of believers is another thing; such depends upon the believer yielding to the indwelling Spirit of God.)

Paul develops the truth of the gospel along the line of redemption by blood in Romans 3:21–5:11, and then he develops the truth along the line of redemption by power in Romans 5:12–8:39. A type of this two-fold redemption is found in Exodus 12 and 14. In Exodus 12, the children of Israel were set free from the judgment of God by being under the shelter of the blood of the lambs that were killed. In Exodus 14, the children of Israel were set free from Pharaoh (a type of Satan), from slavery (a type of the enslaving power of the flesh), and from Egypt (the world) by God's power displayed at the Red Sea.

Before the love, mercy, and grace of God reached us, we were under the judgment of God (John 3:18), but Ephesians 2:2-3 shows that we were also under the power and control of sin, Satan, and the world. It says: “Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind.” All three of these enemies work together to keep the sinner in bondage.

Sin

Men don’t like to admit that they are in bondage and under control of the sins in their lives. They are honestly deceived, thinking that the life they live is not bondage, but this just points to the solemn fact of sin’s blinding power. Romans 3:9 says: “We have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin.” Also Proverbs 5:22 Says: “His own iniquities shall take the wicked himself, and he shall be holden with the cords of his sins.” And again, in John 8:34: “Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin.” Apart from the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, all men, Jews or Gentiles, are under the dominion and power of sin, and need to be set free from it. Receiving by faith the truth of the redemption that is in Christ Jesus will make one “free indeed” from this internal power (John 8:32, 36).

Satan

Believers are also set free from Satan. He dominates all his subjects and is doing all he can to keep them in his grasp, without them knowing it. Luke 11:21-22 Says: “When a strong man armed keepeth his palace, his goods are in peace: but when a stronger than he shall come upon him, and overcome him, He taketh from him all his armour wherein he trusted, and divideth his spoils.” Satan is the “strong man” here. His “goods” are his poor sin-sick subjects under his dominion. They are “in peace” because he has deceived them into thinking that everything is fine (2 Cor. 4:4). Hence, they are not concerned about their destiny in a lost eternity. The “stronger” Man is the Lord Jesus. When sinners believe on Him, His redemptive power sets them free so that they are able to live for God’s glory. The point here is that the redemption that is

in Christ Jesus sets people free from Satan's dominion. When His work in redemption is received by faith, it turns people "from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God" (Acts 26:18; Col. 1:13-14; Heb. 2:14-15).

The World

Lastly, believers are set free from the course of this world. Satan uses the world system to control his subjects. The course of this world is a powerful thing that makes people act and speak the way they do. They need to be delivered from it; this is only found in Christ. "Our Lord Jesus Christ, Who gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father" (Gal. 1:3-4).

The Law

If a person is Jewish, redemption would also include being set free from the curse of the Law. This is also found in Christ. "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree" (Gal. 3:13 4:4-5). A Gentile, of course, does not need to be set free from the claims of the Law, because he has never been formally under the Law.

2) The Redemption of Our Time

Now let's turn to Ephesians 5:15-16: "See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil." And also, in Colossians 4:5: "Walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time." Here we have another aspect of redemption. It has to do with opportunities in our lives to live for the glory of God. This has nothing to do with what is eternal, but solely with our time is OUR responsibility. We are to do the redeeming or setting free of it in this sense.

We are living in an evil day, and if the devil could have his way, we would never have any time for the Lord. He wants to fill our lives with anything and everything so that we don't have time for Him and His things. The Lord, therefore, said: "The violent take it by force" (Matt. 11:12). This means that we have to press into the kingdom practically by doing violence (in spiritual warfare) to things that are in the way. Therefore, we must seize the occasion from the enemy, and use it for the Lord—whether it is time for taking in the truth by sitting at Jesus' feet, or time in service, sharing the truth with others. In Ephesians, it is in connection with using our time to strengthen and encourage those within the Christian circle ("yourselves"), but in Colossians, it is in connection with reaching out to "them that are without" with the gospel. These are two things that are worthy of our time.

3) The Redemption of Our Bodies

Turn next to Ephesians 4:30: "Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption." And then in Romans 8:23: "We ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body." This is another aspect of redemption. The bodies of the saints need to be redeemed as well as their souls. Our souls were set free when we, by faith, received the Lord Jesus as our Saviour; but we are still waiting for the redemption of our bodies. These verses show that there is a "day of redemption." It is the day in which the Lord Jesus will come to take us home to heaven (the Rapture).

here in this world. The redemption of our souls is purely HIS work, but the redemption of time in our lives I remember hearing H. E. Hayhoe say (in a recording), "Brethren, we have only part of our redemption now!" That must have caused some stir! But in the light of these two verses, it is certainly true. Our bodies are still subject to the effects of sin in the creation ("the bondage of corruption" – Rom. 8:21), and they are waiting to be set free. Aging, sickness, and impending death await us if the Lord does not come in our lifetime. But when He comes, we will be glorified immediately. The fallen sin-nature will be eradicated at that time, and the aches and pains presently connected with our bodies will all be gone! The glorification of the sons of God will be at the Rapture (Rom. 8:18), but the manifestation of the sons of God will be at the Appearing of Christ (Rom. 8:19).

Philippians 3:20-21 brings this out beautifully: "Our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body, according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself." Here the Lord Jesus is spoken of, not as the Saviour of our souls, but the Saviour of our bodies. He is coming to save or redeem our bodies! This verse should be translated, " ... who shall transform our body of humiliation." "Vile" (KJV) is an unhappy word here because our bodies are a creation of God, and therefore, are not vile. They are affected by sin but are not sinful. If they were sinful and vile, God would never beseech us to present our bodies (in their present unglorified state) to Him as a living sacrifice (Rom. 12:1).

The saints who have passed away, who are with the Lord now, are waiting, as we are waiting, for the redemption of their bodies. This, I say, will happen when the Lord comes. They will experience the putting on of "incorruption," when their bodies are raised and reunited with their souls and spirits in that glorified state. At the same time, those of us who are alive when the Lord comes will experience the putting on of "immortality." Thus, our redemption will be complete. It will all happen in "the twinkling of an eye" (1 Cor. 15:51-54).

4) The Redemption of Our Inheritance

As I've said, sin, Satan, and the world have affected all that Christ has made by His power and wisdom. Every created thing has been purchased and is awaiting redemption. The creation, and all in it, is suffering under "the bondage of corruption" (Rom. 8:20-22), but there is a time coming when it will be set free from every adverse thing and power to be used as a stage for the display of the glory of Christ.

Not only do persons need to be set free, but so do things in the creation; they have all been affected by sin. There is still much in the creation that we can enjoy, even in its fallen condition, but when Christ appears, He will set it free by an act of God's power in redemption. Satan also, controls much of this world's goods. He said to the Lord: "All this power will I give Thee, and the glory of them: for that is delivered unto me; and to whomsoever I will I give it" (Luke 4:6). Thus, these material things need to be set free from his grasp. We might ask, "How are material things governed or controlled by Satan and the world?" Much of the lower creation has been commercialized and ordered by worldly principles, and thus spoiled. The creation must be set free from this world system, and as mentioned, it will be done through judgment when the Lord comes at His appearing.

God's great purpose is to glorify His Son; and He has chosen this creation as the stage to do it. This will be done in two spheres—in heaven and on earth (Eph. 1:10). In the millennial day, God will display the glory of His Son through the Church to a wondering world—in this very

scene where He was rejected and cast out (2 Thess. 1:10; Rev. 21:9-22:5). This groaning creation waits (unconsciously) to be set free from sin, Satan, and the world, so that it can be used for that glorious purpose. Today, Satan and worldly unbelievers are using the earth for their self-serving purposes; but then it will be set free to be used for the Lord's glory.

There is this difference between the redemption of our bodies and the redemption of all things; our bodies will be redeemed at the Rapture, whereas the redemption of all things awaits Christ's Appearing, some 7 years later (after the Tribulation period).

Summary

The redemption of our souls—occurs when we receive Christ as our Saviour.

The redemption of our time—should go on throughout our lives.

The redemption of our bodies—occurs at the Rapture.

inheritance

Outline of the Epistle to the Romans: God's Righteousness Declared in the Gospel, Romans 3:21-5:11: Deliverance From the Penalty of Sins

Chapters 3:21–5:11

Paul begins this sub-division of the epistle with, "But now...." This is a pivotal expression indicating that he is now turning to something in contrast to what he has been discussing. He has been giving us the bad news concerning the human race; now he is going to present the good news that God has for fallen man. Hence, the unfolding of the blessings of the gospel begins here at chapter 3:21. From this verse through to chapter 5:11, Paul explains how God can righteously save sinners who believe on His Son, through His justifying and reconciling work.

The Righteousness of God

Chapter 3:21-31

Chapter 3:21—He says, "But now the righteousness of God without [apart from] the Law is manifested." In this statement, Paul brings us to the cross of Christ. The righteousness of God has been "manifested" there in its perfection for all to see. (In the Greek, this sentence is in a tense which indicates that the manifestation of the righteousness of God is something that has occurred and now stands as a testament for all to behold.) The manifesting of God's righteousness is not something that He does in people to cause them to understand and believe the gospel. (That is a different work of God produced by the Spirit's quickening power which Bible teachers call "illumination.") Rather, the manifesting of the righteousness of God points to something that God has done at the cross and has made known through the gospel for all to understand and believe. If people would look at the cross of Christ with the understanding that faith gives, they would see the righteousness of God manifested in its perfection.

As mentioned in our comments in chapter 1:17, "the righteousness of God" has to do with the way in which God is able to save sinners without compromising what He is in Himself as a holy and a just God. The fact that Paul says that this righteousness is "of God" shows that God is the source of it. He has devised the plan of salvation for man.

The need for the righteousness of God is great. Man's sin has created a dilemma. Being that God is a God of love, His very nature calls for the blessing of man, because He loves all men. But being a holy God, His holy nature justly demands that man should be punished for his sins (Psa. 89:14; Heb. 2:2). If God acted according to His heart of love and brought men into blessing without judging their sins, it would be at the expense of His holiness, and thus He would cease to be just. He cannot do that and still be righteous. On the other hand, if God acted only according to His holy nature and judged men according to the claims of divine justice, all men would be justly sent to hell—but the love of God would never be known. How then can God save men and at the same time remain just? This is where the gospel comes in so sweetly. It declares God's righteousness and announces the good news that He has found a way to meet His holy claims against sin, and at the same time, reach out in love to save sinners who believe.

This is all because of what He did at the cross of Christ; it was there that God took up the whole question of sin and settled it for His own glory and for the blessing of man. He sent His Son to be the Sin-bearer, and in His sacrificial death, God judged sin according to the demands of His holiness. On the cross, the Lord Jesus took the believer's place before God and bore the judgment of his sins in His "own body on the tree" (1 Peter 2:24). His "finished" work on the cross (John 19:30) rendered a full satisfaction to the claims of divine justice and paid the price for the believer's sins, and also for the whole outbreak of sin in the creation (Heb. 2:9 – "taste death for every thing"). More than that, at the cross God's love has been displayed in the greatest way, for He gave His only-begotten Son as the Sin-bearer. With the sin question fully taken care of, God has come out to men with the good news that He can—on a righteous basis—redeem, forgive, justify, and reconcile the sinner who believes. Thus, the gospel presents God as being "just and the Justifier of him which believeth in Jesus" (chap. 3:26). Nothing will work more for the peace of the believer than to learn that God has saved him, and that He has done it righteously.

It is interesting to note that in presenting the gospel in this passage in Romans, Paul does not begin with the love of God, but rather with the righteousness of God. This is because God's claims against sin must be met first, before God's love can be proclaimed to man.

Paul also says that the righteousness of God is "apart from the Law." The Mosaic Law, as we know, is a works-based system which rewards man for right-doing (Luke 10:28) and condemns man for wrong-doing (James 2:10). By stating that the righteousness of God is "apart" from the Law, Paul was indicating that this blessing that God has for man is secured by men on an entirely different principle than that of their performance. The righteousness of God, therefore, is not about what man can do to save himself; it is about what God has done. Hence, the righteousness of God is not God demanding something from man (as the Law does), nor is it man acting for God (as man-made religions try to do), but rather, it is God acting for man in love and grace to save sinners, but at the same time, not compromising what He is as a holy and

just God.

Paul also adds, "Being witnessed by the law and the prophets." This means that the righteousness of God in providing salvation for men was foretold in the types and shadows of the Law, and it was also announced by Israel's prophets (see chapter 1:2). There are a number of such references to these things in the Old Testament. For instance, on the Day of Atonement (Leviticus 16) the high priest put blood from a victim "upon the mercy seat," pointing typically to the work of Christ satisfying the claims of God against sin. He also put some of the same blood on the ground "before the mercy seat," pointing typically to the work of Christ securing the ground of redemption on which the believer stands. Another example is found in Psalm 85:10. It says, "Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other." This is a reference to Christ's finished work meeting the holy claims of God against sin and making a way for God to reach out in love to sinners.

The Righteousness of God is Not Something Imparted, Bestowed, Transferred, Or Communicated to Believers

Some modern translations state, "a righteousness from God" (Rom. 1:17; 3:21; 3:22; 10:3) or, "the righteousness that comes from God" (Phil. 3:9), but these are not the best renderings. Firstly, “a righteousness” is misleading. It sounds as though God has a number of different righteousnesses in hand, and has simply appointed one for the believer. Concerning this error, J. N. Darby remarked, “‘A righteousness of God,’ I have already noted, is as if there were several...now this changes the whole sense of the passage” (Collected Writings, vol. 33, p. 86).

Secondly, translating it as “from God” conveys the thought that God's righteousness is something that is imparted to, or bestowed upon the believer. This, however, is not true, because if God gave His righteousness to us, which "from God" suggests, then He would no longer have it! Regarding this mistaken idea, W. Scott said, "God cannot impute that which is essential to himself" (Unscriptural Phraseology, p. 10). He also said, “It is not putting a quantity of righteousness in a man" (Doctrinal Summaries, p. 15). Regarding this, J. N. Darby remarked, “A man's being righteous is his standing in the sight of God, not a quantum of righteousness transferred to him” (Collected Writings, vol. 23, p. 254). F. B. Hole said, “We must not read those words [“the righteousness of God”] with a commercial idea in our minds, as though they meant that we come to God bringing so much faith for which we receive in exchange so much righteousness, just as a shopkeeper across the counter exchanges goods for cash” (Outlines of Truth, p. 5). God has given righteousness (Rom. 5:17) in the sense of having secured it for mankind in Christ risen and glorified. Thus, Christ has been made unto us righteousness (1 Cor. 1:30), and He is our righteousness (2 Cor. 5:21; compare Jeremiah 23:6; 33:16).

The Righteousness of Christ—an Unscriptural Expression

"The righteousness of Christ" is another term that is often used by Christians, but this expression is not found in Scripture. Many use it in reference to Christ's perfect life of obedience, and imagine that it has been imputed to the believer's account for righteousness. Now it is certainly true that Christ's life on earth was perfect—He was holy and righteous in all His thoughts, words, and deeds—but His perfect life was not vicarious. Scripture does not teach that the merits of Christ's perfect life are imputed to the believer for righteousness. It is what Christ accomplished in his death—not His life—that made it possible for God to save people who believe. It is this which we announce in the gospel. If the righteous life of Christ could be imputed to the believer for righteousness, and the believer could thereby be saved and blessed by it, why would God have Christ go through the ordeal of the cross with all its suffering?

Faith in Jesus Christ

Chap. 3:22-23—Paul passes on to speak of the means by which we come into the good of what God's righteousness has secured. It is "by faith in Jesus Christ" (W. Kelly Trans.). Simply put, what the righteousness of God has secured for man (i.e. the salvation of our souls) is appropriated by a person having faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. It is the simple means by which people are saved. Paul insisted on this wherever he went preaching the gospel. In order to be saved, men need "repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ" (Acts 20:21; 16:31).

God's desire for all men is that they would be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth (1 Tim. 2:4). Therefore, what has been secured at the cross by the righteousness of God is "towards all and upon all that believe." (Most of the modern translations omit the phrase, "and upon all," but Mr. Kelly has explained at length that the phrase should be in the text, as the KJV and the J. N. Darby Translation indicate. (See Bible Treasury," vol. 6, p. 376; vol. 13, p. 350; vol. 16, pp. 277-278; vol. N3, pp. 264-265; vol. N6, p. 264; Notes on the Epistle to the Romans, pp. 43-44.) This good news is "towards all" because all men need God's salvation, but it is only "upon all" who believe.

No Difference

Paul adds, "For there is no difference: for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." When it comes to the universal need of man, there is "no difference"—all men need to be saved. People take exception to this statement because they see a definite difference among men, as far as the wrongs that men have done; some have clearly lived more sinfully than others. Those who have sinned less do not appreciate being classed with those who have sinned more, because they feel that they are better. They will say, "I am not as bad as that gangster, etc." However, this is not what Paul is teaching here. He fully admits that there is a difference among sinners and has established that fact in chapters 1:18–3:20. The "no difference" that Paul is speaking about in this verse is in respect to men falling short of God's glory and God's standards of holiness. Without exception, all have come short. "There is no difference"—all are lost and all are heading for eternity in hell where they will pay the penalty for the sins that they have committed—if they don’t take Christ as their Saviour.

Mr. Albert Hayhoe used to illustrate this by asking us to imagine a swimming race taking place on the west side of Vancouver Island. Away across the Pacific Ocean was the goal—Japan. Down at the water's edge we hear men talking. One man says, "I can swim 20 miles!" Another man says, "I can swim 10 miles! A third man says, "I can swim a mile." A fourth says that he can't swim at all. If they all jumped in the water and took off for Japan, there would be "no difference" among the competitors; they would all fail and come short of the destination. Likewise, even though some men are worse sinners than others, there is no difference among them; they have all fallen short of the glory of God.

Justified and Redeemed in Christ Jesus

Chap. 3:24—Since God's great desire is that men would be saved from the judgment of their sins (1 Tim. 2:4), Paul goes on to speak of the great deliverance that God grants to those who believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. He says that they are, "justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." This statement encapsulates the new standing and condition of the believer; we are justified and

redeemed in Christ Jesus.

Justification

"Justified" means that the believer has been cleared from every charge of sin that has been against him by being brought into a new position before God, whereby he is no longer viewed by God as a sinner. It is an act of God whereby an ungodly sinner is reckoned righteous in God's mind. Thus, the person's legal standing in heaven is changed, and he is "constituted" righteous before God (chap. 5:19).

Two Parts to Justification

There are two parts to justification: a negative side and a positive side.

- The negative side has to do with being cleared “from all things”—i.e. charges of sin against us (Acts 13:39).

- The positive side has to do with the believer being in an entirely new position before God in Christ where no further charge can ever be brought against him (Gal. 2:17—“justified in Christ”). H. E. Hayhoe remarked, “Justification in Christianity always brings the believer into a new position before God. The believer is justified as being ‘in Christ’ before God” (Present Truth For Christians, p. 22). The believer is not only in a new position before God, he is there with an entirely new life and is in an entirely new condition that is without sin. This is called, “justification of life” (Rom. 5:18).

Justifying sinners is something that only God can do. The Law can justify the righteous (1 Kings 8:32), but since there are none righteous, the Law has never justified anyone. But the gospel declares that God, in perfect righteousness, can justify the ungodly who believe in Jesus (chap. 4:5).

Some will say that justified means, "just-as-if-I've-never-sinned." But this definition comes far short of the truth of justification. To place men in a position where they have never sinned would be to put them back on the ground of innocence, equal to that on which Adam was in the Garden of Eden. Adam on that ground fell, and we could fall from that ground too, if we were put there! Justification sets us in a far higher place than that of innocence. By it we are in a new position before God “in Christ” (Gal. 2:17) with an entirely new life that is without sin, nor can sin. We cannot possibly fall from this place!

Eight Expressions Denoting the Different Aspects Of Justification

- Justified by grace—the source (Rom. 3:24).

- Justified by faith—the means of appropriation (Rom. 3:28).

- Justified by blood—the price (Rom. 5:9).

- Justification of life—a new condition (Rom. 5:18).

- Justified from sin—a discharge from the old master (Rom. 6:7).

- Justified by God—the One who does the reckoning (Rom. 8:33).

- Justified in Christ—the new position of acceptance (Gal. 2:17).

- Justified by works—the manifested evidence in the believer’s life of him being reckoned righteous before God (James 2:21, 24).

Redemption

Paul said that we are justified “through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus” (vs. 24). Thus, the believer is also redeemed. Redemption means to be "bought back and set free." The believer is set free from sin, from judgment, from Satan's captivity, and from the world. The purpose of redemption is to set the believer free so that he can do the will of God—in worship and in service. This is illustrated in Scripture in the Lord's words to Pharaoh through Moses: "Let My people go, that they may serve Me" (Ex. 8:1). As a rule, redemption is always "from" or "out of" some adverse thing that has held people in bondage, because the emphasis in redemption is on being "set free" (Ex. 15:13; Psa. 25:22; Psa. 49:15; Psa. 130:8; Jer. 15:21; Mic. 4:10; Rom. 8:23; Gal. 3:13; Titus 2:14). (In the KJV, Revelation 5:9 says, "Redeemed us to God..." but redeemed is not the right word there; it should be translated, "Purchased [bought] us to God...").

Four Aspects of Redemption

The Bible speaks of redemption in relation to Christians in at least four different ways. They are:

- The redemption of our souls. This occurs when we receive Christ as our Saviour (Rom. 3:24; Eph. 1:7; Col. 1:14; Titus 2:13-14; Heb. 9:12; 1 Peter 1:18).

- The redemption of our time. This should go on throughout our lives as a matter of Christian exercise (Eph. 5:15-16; Col. 4:5).

- The redemption of our bodies. This will occur at the Rapture when we will be glorified (Rom. 8:23; Eph. 4:30; 1 Cor. 15:51-57).

- The redemption of our inheritance. This will occur at the Appearing of Christ through His judgments being poured out on the earth (Eph. 1:14).

"In Christ Jesus"

Finally, the believer's justification and redemption are said to be "in Christ Jesus." As mentioned in the introduction (chap. 1:1-17), when Paul uses the term, “Christ Jesus”—the Lord's title (Christ) before His manhood name (Jesus)—it refers to Him as risen, ascended, and seated at God's right hand as a glorified Man. Hence, these great blessings announced in the gospel are secured for us in "the Man Christ Jesus" at the right hand of God (1 Tim. 2:5). In fact, all of our distinctive Christian blessings are said to be "in Christ." Note the Scripture quotations in the J.

N. Darby Translation in the following list of blessings.

- Redemption in Christ Jesus (Rom. 3:24).
- Forgiveness of sins in Christ—a purged conscience (Rom. 4:7; Eph. 4:32; Heb. 9:14).
- Justification in Christ Jesus (Rom. 4:25-5:1; Gal. 2:16-17).
- The gift of the Spirit in Christ—anointed, sealed, and given the earnest of the Spirit (Rom. 5:5; 2 Cor. 1:21-22; Eph. 1:13).
- Reconciliation in Christ Jesus—“made nigh” (Rom. 5:10; Eph. 2:13; Col. 1:21).
- Sanctification in Christ Jesus (Rom. 6:19; 1 Cor. 1:2).
- Eternal Life in Christ Jesus (Rom. 6:23; 2 Tim. 1:1).
- Deliverance (salvation) in Christ Jesus (Rom. 8:1-2).
- Sonship in Christ Jesus (Rom. 8:14-15; Gal. 3:26; 4:5-7).
- Heirship of the inheritance in Christ (Rom. 8:17; Eph. 1:10-11; Gal. 3:29).
- Members of the new creation race in Christ Jesus (Rom. 8:29; Gal. 6:15; 2 Cor. 5:17).
- Members of the “one body” in Christ (Rom. 12:5; 1 Cor. 12:12-13).

The position of the believer being “in Christ” is not taken up until the next section of the epistle (chap. 6:11; 8:1), though it is introduced here in chapter 3:24.

Paul adds that these things are given to the believer "freely by His grace" (vs. 24). Grace is the unmerited favour of God. Hence, there is nothing that the believer has to do to receive these blessings. They are a free gift from God, and are ours the moment we believe the gospel and receive the Lord Jesus Christ as our Saviour.

The Righteousness of God in Connection With Sins Committed Before and After the Cross

Chap. 3:25-26—Some have wondered how the sins of believers who lived long before the time of Christ could be taken care of by His death on the cross, when they had already passed off the scene. And also, how Christ could bear the sins of believers who were not even born yet? Their sins had not even been committed when Christ died! Anticipating these questions, Paul goes on in these next couple of verses to explain how Christ's work on the cross has taken care of the sins of believers once for all time, regardless of when they lived. Through two attributes of God—His forbearance and His foreknowledge (chaps. 3:25; 8:29)—God has been able to righteously deal with the sins of believers who have lived before and after the cross, through what Christ accomplished on the cross.

Paul says, "Whom God hath set forth as a mercy seat [propitiation], through faith in His blood, for the showing forth of His righteousness, in respect of the passing by the sins that had taken place before, through the forbearance of God; and for the showing forth of His righteousness in the present time, so that He should be just, and justify him that is of the faith of Jesus." As noted by the underscoring, twice in this passage Paul says, "For the showing forth of His righteousness..." Once in connection with believers who have lived before Christ died, and once in connection with believers who have lived after Christ died.

- "For the showing forth of His righteousness, in respect of the passing by the sins that had taken place before" the cross (vs. 25).
- "For the showing forth of His righteousness in the present time," which is after the cross (vs. 26).

Propitiation

In both cases, God's righteousness has been shown forth in Christ's one act of “propitiation.” Propitiation (Rom. 3:25; Heb. 2:17; 1 John 2:2; 4:10) refers to the side of Christ's work on the cross that rendered a full satisfaction to the claims of divine justice in regards to sin. It is the Godward side of Christ’s work, and by it, God's holy nature has been vindicated regarding our sins and the whole outbreak of sin generally in the creation. The finished work of Christ includes His atoning sufferings, His death, and His blood-shedding. These three things are distinguished in Scripture but never entirely separated from each other. Thus, they should always be viewed as one work. Bible students have gotten into error by separating these things from each other.

J. N. Darby states in his footnote on verse 25 that the word translated "propitiation" in the KJV could also be translated "mercy-seat." Paul's point here is that God has set forth Christ as the Mercy Seat in the gospel testimony. We might wonder what this means, but it’s really quite simple. The mercy seat in the Old Testament sacrificial system was the place where God met with His people on the ground of the blood of a victim—a sacrifice (Ex. 25:22 – "there I will meet with thee;" Lev. 16:14). This illustrates (typically) what we announce in the gospel testimony. Christ set forth as the "Mercy seat" in the gospel is the announcement that God is now able to meet the sinner and bless him on the merits of Christ’s sacrifice. This is the great result of propitiation being made. Christ could not be set forth as such until His work on the cross was finished. But now since God has triumphed in what Christ accomplished, Christ (with His finished work) is the divine meeting place for all in the world to come and be saved. Some preachers say, "God will meet the sinner at the cross." Rather, it is that He meets the sinner (who has faith) in Christ on high as the Mercy-seat. Christ is not on the cross today; therefore, the sinner desiring to be saved does not come to a dying Saviour on the cross, but to a risen Saviour on high in glory. He is there today as an Object of testimony for all to believe. In keeping with this, the apostles preached Christ as a risen Saviour throughout the book of the Acts (Acts 4:10-12; 5:29-32; 10:38-43; 13:22-39; 16:31).

Paul adds, "Through faith in His blood." The blood of Christ is the token of the finished work of Christ (John 19:30, 34). Having faith in His blood, therefore, means that we have faith in what He accomplished in His sacrificial death. The sinner who comes to Christ for salvation is to believe that what Christ accomplished in His death was for him personally.

Forbearance

Christ's bearing the sins of believers who lived in times before the cross could only be possible through “the forbearance of God.” Forbearance has to do with God knowing and recording sins but not demanding a payment for them immediately upon them being committed. Through His forbearance, God has held back, or put in abeyance, the judgment of the sins of those who believed before Christ came to pay the price for them. (Those people would not have been intelligent as to how, when, or where the Saviour would come to pay the price for their sins, which has been brought to light by the gospel.) This "passing by of sins" could not go on indefinitely; those sins had to be dealt with justly at some point in time—and that is what happened at the cross. If God never dealt with them, He would prove to be unjust, for every sin and disobedience must receive its "just recompense of reward" (Heb. 2:2). Hence, His forbearance was in exercise in connection with the sins of all who had faith before Christ died. When they died, they went to heaven on a credit basis, so to speak. The judgment of their sins would be stored up by God until Christ came as the Sin-bearer, and then it would be poured out on Him. The faith of those who lived before the time of Christ would be counted as righteousness, as witnessed in the case of Abraham in chapter 4. Even though Christ had not actually paid for his sins yet, when he died he went to heaven (Luke 16:23). Hence, through divine forbearance, there was "the passing by of sins" for roughly 4000 years of man's history, until the cross when they were dealt with righteously and put away forever.

There is a type of this in the Old Testament. In Joshua 3:14-17, the children of Israel crossed the Jordan River and entered the land of Canaan. The moment the feet of the priests who bore "the ark of God" (a type of Christ) stepped in the river's edge, a miracle occurred. The waters of Jordan (which speak of the judgment that swept over Christ on the cross) which came down from further up the river, "rose up in a heap" and were stopped all the way back to "the city Adam"—which was situated on the river about 20 miles north. This typifies the efficacy of Christ's work at Calvary being able to take care of the sins of everyone who had faith all the way back to Adam, the first sinner.

The “forbearance of God” is also illustrated typically in the Day of Atonement (Lev. 16). Each year blood from a victim was placed on the mercy seat, and God exercised His forbearance in connection with the sins of Israel for another year. In the epistle to the Hebrews, Paul explains that since the process had to be repeated year by year (Heb. 9:7), it showed that those sins were still in remembrance before God, and that the sacrifices on the Day of Atonement had not taken away those sins. They were covered (the meaning of atonement in the Hebrew language) for another year by those sacrifices, but they were not taken away. In Hebrews 10, Paul goes on to explain that when Christ came, His one offering for sins was sufficient to "take away" the sins of believers, once and for all (Heb. 10:1-17; 1 John 3:5).

Chapter 3:25 in the KJV is somewhat misleading. It says, "Sins that are past." This has led some to think that Paul was referring to sins that Christians have committed in their lives before they were converted. But, as we have shown, this is not what Paul was speaking about. J. N. Darby's Translation footnote states, "God passed by, not brought into judgment, the sins of Old Testament believers." Thus, it was the sins of people who lived in the "past"—i.e. in Old Testament times.

Also, the KJV says, "the remission of sins," but this phrase should be translated, "the passing by of sins." Remission of sins is the forgiveness of sins, and is often translated as such (Luke 24:47; Acts 5:31; 13:38; 26:18; Eph. 1:7). As announced in the gospel, it involves the soul knowing in his conscience that his sins are eternally forgiven, and has to do with the believer having a purged conscience (Heb. 9:14; 10:1-17). This eternal aspect of the forgiveness of sins, which Christians have, is something that the Old Testament saints did not have. Their sins were taken care of at the cross, and they are in heaven now, but they did not have the conscious knowledge of it in their lifetimes. It is, therefore, not accurate to translate the passage as "the remission of sins." Old Testament believers only knew of God's governmental forgiveness, which has to do with God forgiving (and not punishing) a person for his wrongs while he is living on earth, because the person is repentant (Lev. 4; Psa. 32, etc.). The forgiveness offered by the Lord in His earthly ministry in the four Gospels was also governmental (Luke 5:20; 7:47-48, etc.). The eternal aspect of forgiveness was first announced after redemption was accomplished, when Christ rose from the dead (Luke 24:47; Acts 2:38, etc.).

Foreknowledge

The other great attribute of God we mentioned is "foreknowledge." Foreknowledge is God's ability to know everything before it happens (Acts 2:23; Rom. 8:29; 1 Peter 1:2). Since God knows how many sins each believer will commit in his lifetime—even before the person is born—He could lay the just judgment of those sins on the Lord Jesus Christ on the cross before they actually happened. Thus, Christ also bore the judgment of the sins of all who would believe during this "present time"—i.e. the Day of Grace (vs. 26).

Hence, on the cross, Christ made propitiation, and a full payment was made for the sins of all believers for all time. God took the sins of all who have faith—from the beginning of time until the end of time—and laid them on Christ, the Sin-bearer, and He bore the just judgment for them.

There is one difference between those who have lived before the cross and those who have lived after it. The people who had faith in Old Testament times are not said to have believed "in Jesus," as is the case with those in this present time (vs. 26). This is because Old Testament believers did not know the gospel which tells the story of God sending His Son, etc. They could not believe on the Lord Jesus Christ because they would not have heard of Him, but they were blessed by God on the principle of faith and are safe in heaven now as friends of the Bridegroom (John 3:29).

Vs. 26—Since atonement has now been made, we can “declare” through the gospel “His (God’s) righteousness.” This is something that could not be done until “this time.” J. N. Darby said, “Righteousness was never revealed under the Law—God bore with things, but there was no declaration of righteousness. Now it is to ‘declare His righteousness.’ Righteousness was revealed when atonement was made’” (Collected Writings, vol. 27, p. 385). We now can go to the sinner with the good news that God is “just and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.” He is “just” in that He has judged sin in Christ’s finished work on the cross, and He is “the Justifier” of those who believe.

The Principle of Faith

Chap. 3:27-31—In the closing verses of chapter 3, Paul explains faith's part in the believer's justification. He has already mentioned "the righteousness of God by faith" (vs. 22) and "faith in His blood" (vs. 25), and has made it clear that the blessings of the gospel are only appropriated "on the principle of faith" (chap. 1:17; 3:30; 4:16; 5:1). Thus, the gospel is so simple that all a person has to do is to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and he will be saved and justified (Acts 13:38-39; 16:31).

However, even in this, we must not think that our faith has merited our justification. Paul makes it clear in these verses that it is by faith so that boasting would be "excluded." Our faith is not a meritorious work. In fact, in Ephesians 2:8, he states that our faith "is not of ourselves: it is the gift of God." Since it is all from God, He must get all the credit. If faith were a meritorious thing, then a person would have something to "boast" in. He could say, "Others didn't have the faith to believe, but I did, and God saved me because of my faith!" This, however, would be taking some credit for our salvation.

Neither should we think that weeping, confessing our sins, repenting, earnest prayers, etc., merit salvation. These things may accompany a person's turning to Christ, but they do not secure it. Let us be clear about this: "faith" is not the subject of the gospel. The subject of the gospel is Christ and His finished work. Thus, Paul shows that the believer's justification has nothing to do with "works." All boasting on man's part, therefore, is completely shut out. Works exalt man, but faith exalts God.

In verses 29-30, Paul shows that justification is not just for Jews ("the circumcision"), but for all who believe the gospel—including Gentiles ("the uncircumcision"). This shows that God is not partial when it comes to offering salvation to men, He saves people from all three sectors of the human race.

Vs. 31—Lest the Jews might think that he was ignoring or belittling the Law, Paul says, "Do we make void the Law? God forbid: yea, we establish the Law" (vs. 31). The gospel does not set aside the holy standards of the Law; the Law emphasizes the fact that men have fallen short of it. In this way, the Law complements the gospel in proving that men have sinned and have come short of the glory of God. Hence, the gospel upholds the holy demands of the Law. It shows men to be sinners, and thus, their need of salvation.

Outline of the Epistle to the Romans: God's Righteousness Declared in the Gospel, Romans 3:21-8:39: God's Righteousness Declared in the Gospel

Chapters 3:21–8:39

In chapters 1:18–3:20, Paul has shown conclusively that all men are sinners, and consequently, justly under the sentence of divine judgment. He has also made it abundantly clear that men cannot save themselves from the judgment of their sins. Thus, if any are going to be saved, it must come from some other source and by some other means than from man. The good news is that God loves all men and is greatly interested in their blessing (John 3:16-17), and He has secured a way to save men without compromising His holiness. It is, therefore, with a sense of relief that we turn from the sad story of man's sin to find in chapters 3:21–8:39 that God has a way through grace to save and bless men. In the next few chapters, Paul answers the question asked in the book of Job, "How then can a man be justified with God?" (Job 9:1; 25:4)

The Universal Need of Man Met by the Grace of God in a Threefold Way

Before we proceed with God's remedy for man's sinful condition, let us summarize man's great need in a threefold way, for it is a natural segue (bridge) to this next section of the epistle.

- Firstly, man is ruined externally. Sin has severed the happy relations that once existed between God and man, and there is now an estrangement on man's part from God.

- Secondly, man is ruined internally. Sin has wreaked havoc in the heart and the will of man. Instead of being the master of himself, he has become a slave to his fallen sin-nature. He is captive to his habits and sins which control him, and it is evident in his life.

- Thirdly, man is ruined physically. Sin has also effected a ruin of the whole lower creation. As a result, men’s bodies (and every living creature) have become subject to disease and death. Thus, death has been written over the whole creation.

In this next series of chapters, Paul brings in the good news of the gospel and explains that God has a threefold remedy for man's threefold condition. This is developed in three sub-divisions in this section of the epistle.

In chapters 3:21–5:11, Paul explains that the righteousness of God has met the need of man's estrangement from God by securing redemption, forgiveness, justification, and reconciliation for those who believe. In this section of the epistle, Paul deals with the question of man's sins (the evil deeds that we have done). He shows how God can righteously put away the believer’s sins, and deliver him from the just penalty of them, through faith in the blood of Christ.

In chapters 5:12–8:17, Paul explains that God has also met man's internal need by providing a way of deliverance from the inward working of his fallen sin-nature. In this section of the epistle, Paul deals with the question of sin (the fallen nature in us, called “the flesh”) and shows how God can deliver the believer from its power by our identification with the death of Christ.

In chapter 8:18-30, Paul further explains that God has deliverance for man from the ruined condition of his body through the coming of Christ—the Rapture. At that time, the bodies of believers will be transformed and glorified and made like Christ's physical body of glory (1 Cor. 15:51-56; Phil. 3:21). Animals and vegetation in the lower creation will be delivered about seven years later at the Appearing of Christ, when the sons of God (Christians) will be manifested as such before the world (Rom. 8:19-22.)

Thus, the main themes in these three sub-divisions are:

- Deliverance from the PENALTY of sins—through justification and reconciliation (chap. 3:21–5:11).

- Deliverance from the POWER of sin—which results in practical sanctification (chap. 5:12–8:17).

- Deliverance from the PRESENCE of sin at the coming of the Lord, effecting glorification (chap. 8:18-30).

Viewing these three things together, we see that the gospel presents a full salvation for the sinner who believes.

Chapter 8:31-39 closes this section of the epistle with a thesis on the believer's security in Christ.

~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~

Justification, Deliverance, and Redemption

• There are two things that the Christian needs for lasting peace and spiritual stability—justification and deliverance. One has to do with being reckoned righteous before God, and the other has to do with being made practically righteous before men. There is a third thing we need which will prepare us to dwell above with God in heaven as glorified beings—the redemption of our bodies (chap. 8:11, 23). Hence, we need:

• JUSTIFICATION for what we have done. This is effected by faith's application of the blood of Christ, and is unfolded in chapters 3:21–5:11.

• DELIVERANCE from what we are. This is effected by faith's identification with the death of Christ, and is unfolded in chapters 5:12–8:17.

• REDEMPTION from the physical corruption in our bodies, in order for us to live in our final destiny in heaven. This will be effected at the coming of Christ (the Rapture), as unfolded in chapter 8:18-30.

Outline of the Epistle to the Romans: God's Righteousness Declared in the Gospel, Romans 3:9-20: The Conclusion

All the World is Guilty Before God

Chap. 3: 9-20—Paul now draws a conclusion to the foregoing. He asks, "What then? Are we (Jews) better than they (Gentiles)?" He answers his own question, "No, in no wise" (vs. 9a). In this statement, he reduces the three sectors of the human race to one common denominator—they are all sinners. From this point forward in his charge, he no longer views the race in three parts, but the race as a whole, and addresses them as such in verses 9-20.

The Charge

Vs. 9b—Paul continues to use the imagery of a courtroom scene, and brings a formal charge against the whole human race—"They are all under sin." He says, “We have before proved...” but the word "proved" (KJV) is not exactly the right translation here. The word in the Greek means "to lay charge against," and should be translated, "We have before charged..." "Before" is referring to the sum of what he has stated in the first couple of chapters of the epistle. "Under sin" not only refers to being under sin's guilt, but also under sin's dominion and sin's just judgment.

The Indictment

In verses 10-18, we see sinful man at the bar of divine justice being charged under 14 counts.

• "There is none righteous, no not one" (vs. 10). This shows that man in his natural state has no righteousness of his own.

• "There is none that understandeth" (vs. 11a). This shows that the mind of man is broken through sin and is now incapable of comprehending divine subjects (1 Cor. 2:14).

• "There is none that seeketh after God" (vs. 11b). This shows that man's will is bad; he does not want a relationship with God.

• "They are all gone out of the way" (vs. 12a). This shows that man has transgressed from God's way and is far from Him.

• They are together become unprofitable" (vs. 12b). This shows that men in their fallen state cannot be used for the purpose for which they were created.

• "There is none that doeth good, no not one" (vs. 12c). This is speaking of the general course of human life; it is not speaking of isolated acts of kindness that men might do occasionally.

• "Their throat is an open sepulchre" (vs. 13a). This statement has to do with man's language being bad; corruption and defilement pour out of his mouth like the stench that comes out of an open grave (sepulchre).

• "With their tongues they have used deceit" (vs. 13b). The motives behind much of what men say are corrupt.

• "The poison of asps in under their lips" (vs. 13c). Man's words can also be vindictive.

• "Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness" (vs. 14). Man's words can be full of hatred.

• "Their feet are swift to shed blood" (vs. 15). The tendency of human life has been toward violence—wars and civil strife have abounded throughout history.

• "Destruction and misery are in their ways" (vs. 16). Much of the trouble and sorrow in this world has come upon men because of their own evil ways.

• "The way of peace have they not known" (vs. 17). As a result of man's sin, the world has never known real peace.

• "There is no fear [respect] of God before their eyes" (vs. 18). The human race as a whole lives without reference to God and without reverential fear of Him.

A Threefold Summary of the Indictment
~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~

- Vss. 10-12 What man is—depraved in character (his way).
- Vss. 13-14 What man says—depraved in conversation (his words).
- Vss. 15-18 What man does—depraved in conduct (his works).

Thus, Paul has not only laid charges before God against the whole human race concerning its guilt, but he has also proved—with 14 counts—that the charges are true! (These points regarding man's depravity are quotations from seven Old Testament Scriptures—Psalm 14:1-3; Psalm 5:9; Psalm 140:3; Psalm 50:19; Psalm 10:7; Isaiah 59:7-8; Psalm 36:1).

Chap. 3:19—Paul concludes by saying, "Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God." His point here is that when God gave the Law to Israel, He was using Israel as a sample of the whole human race. When the Law proved Israel to be in total failure, God rightly concluded that all (both Jews and Gentiles) have fallen short of His holy standards. This is predicated on Paul's use of the word "that." The things which the Law said to Israel about their failure, implicated the whole world as guilty. W. Macdonald illustrated this point by saying, "It is the same as when a health inspector takes a test-tube of water from a well, and tests the water and finds it polluted; he then pronounces the entire well polluted." If the Law has proven Israel to have fallen short, it has proved that all in the human race have fallen short.

The Verdict

Thus, following the courtroom imagery that Paul has been using, opportunity—so to speak—is given for those under the charge to make their defense. However, the evidence is so overwhelmingly against all mankind that "every mouth" is "stopped" and all the world stands "guilty before God."

Chap. 3:20—Having been proven guilty, the accused may think that he can appeal the verdict on the grounds of his (supposed) good works of law-keeping. But Paul counters this by showing that there is no chance of appeal on that basis, because "by the deeds of the Law there shall no flesh be justified in His sight." Job also condemns any attempt of self-justification before God. He says, "If I justify myself, mine own mouth shall condemn me: if I say, I am perfect, it shall also prove me perverse" (Job 9:20).

This leads Paul to make one last remark concerning the purpose of the Law. He says, "For by the Law is the knowledge of sin." To clear up any misunderstandings, he states that the Law was not given to men so that they could justify themselves, but that they would have "the knowledge of sin." When it is applied to men as God's holy standard, it bears witness to the fact that all men are thoroughly ruined sinners. Similarly, a carpenter will use a level to establish a straight line, from which he will build a project. In establishing a level plane, he can determine whether the other components that he is working with are true, by comparing them to the straight line. Again, a mirror is useful to see whether our faces are dirty, but it cannot wash our dirty faces; it was not made for that purpose. Hence, the Law has been given to convict men of their sins and help them to see their sinfulness more clearly (chap. 5:20). It cannot, and never was intended to, save men from the judgment of their sins.

Outline of the Epistle to the Romans: God's Righteousness Declared in the Gospel, Romans 2:17-3:8: The Enlightened Jews

The Religious Man Favoured With the Word of God Is Under the Sentence of Divine Judgment

Chapters 2:17–3:8

Paul goes on and says, “But if thou art named a Jew ... .” By turning to speak to the Jews, it is clear that he has shifted to the third class of men in the human race. It is now the enlightened Jews’ turn to be summoned to God’s court. Thus far in Paul's indictment, the Jews would have nodded in agreement with all that he has said about the Gentiles deserving to be under the sentence of God's judgment. But now in this passage Paul proceeds to show that the Jews were not to think that they were in some way exempt. They are also guilty and under the sentence of divine judgment because besides having the witness of the creation and the witness of their conscience, they also have the witness of "the Law" of God—the Old Testament Scriptures.

On account of having been given special privileges from God, the Jews have a false sense of security in regard to judgment. This false security is based on a misunderstanding of three things:

- They were descendants of Abraham (John 8:33).
- They were the custodians of the Law (Rom. 3:2).
- They were circumcised (Gen. 17:11).

Thus, the Jews were trusting in their heritage, in their knowledge, and in an ordinance. They thought that these things guaranteed that they would not be condemned when they passed out of this world. In this next series of verses, Paul takes up these three things, one at a time, and shows that neither the “Law,” nor “circumcision,” nor being a “Jew” can shelter a person from the penalty of his sins. In fact, he shows that those outward tokens of God’s favour actually make the Jews more responsible than the Gentiles who have been less privileged.

The Law Cannot Shelter a Jew From Judgment

Chap. 2:17-24—The Jews “rested” on the fact that God had given them the Law—the Old Testament Scriptures. They saw it as a sign that God approved of them. Thus, they believed that they of all people would be exempt from God’s judgment. This, however, is not true; the very Scriptures upon which they rested teach that God will judge His people (Psa. 50:4; Psa. 135:14; Amos 3:2). Paul proceeds to show that the light the Law sheds on men does not shelter them from judgment, but rather, it exposes all who come short of its standards.

Vs. 18—The Jews' responsibility was magnified by the fact that they were familiar with the demands stated in the written Word of God. They knew God's "will" and were thus able to "discerningly approve of things more excellent." They could accurately weigh matters of fine differences regarding moral conduct because they were "instructed out of the Law." ("Knowest His will" could not be referring to the Mystery of His will in Ephesians 1:9-10, because it was not disclosed in the Old Testament (Rom. 16:25; Eph. 3:5, 9). It is rather the knowledge of His will in moral and practical matters of life.)

Vss. 19-20—In having and knowing the Law, it was God's mind that the Jews would be His instrument to instruct the Gentiles in things pertaining to the kingdom of God. Paul speaks of four things which the Jews prided themselves in, as God's special vessel of testimony to the world. They were:

- "A guide of the blind."
- "A light to them which are in darkness."
- "An instructor of the foolish."
- "A teacher of babes."

His point in bringing this up was to show that the Jews were that much more responsible than the Gentiles, for those who teach the Word of God must practise the things that they teach.

Vss. 21-24—Paul then asks the Jews a series of rhetorical questions as to whether they practised what they taught. He answers his own questions with the condemning fact that they had not practised what they had professed to teach, and thus it proved that they were hypocrites. He says, "Thou that makest thy boast of the law, through breaking the law dishonourest thou God?" Instead of drawing people to God, their hypocrisy had made "the name of God" to be "blasphemed among the Gentiles." Paul quotes Isaiah 52:5 to support this charge.

Paul shows that because they knew and taught God's requirements in the Law, but did not practise them, they were much guiltier than the two classes of Gentiles that he has already addressed. James confirms this; he said that all who take the place of a teacher are in danger of "greater judgment," if they fail (James 3:1). This was definitely the case with the Jews. Thus, having the Law (vs. 17), knowing the Law (vs. 18), and teaching the Law (vss. 19-20), does not save the Jew—but those things make him extremely responsible. This fact supports what Paul has already established in chapter 2 Concerning the judgment of God—that increased light brings increased responsibility.

Circumcision Will Not Shelter a Jew From Judgment

Chap. 2:25-29—Paul moves to the next thing that gave the Jews a false sense of security—the rite of "circumcision." The rabbis did not help matters regarding this; they erroneously taught that no circumcised man in Israel could be eternally lost. This is simply not true.

God instituted circumcision as a sign of His covenant relationship with Abraham and his descendants (Gen. 17:10-11). The Jews understood this to be an irrevocable pledge of God's blessing on them (Gen. 15:5; 17:10). Since they were in such a secure relationship with God, they believed that it was impossible that God would judge them, because He would be going back on His Word if He did. How could God judge those whom He has promised to bless?

In these verses, Paul explains that circumcision will not shelter a person from judgment any more than trusting in the Law will. He shows that a Jew needed to have more than the outward sign of circumcision in his body to be a real Jew of whom God approved. He says, "He is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: but he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God." The Jews had "circumcision that is outward in the flesh," but they also needed "circumcision of the heart" which involved having faith, if their eternal destiny was to be secure. Circumcision is an outward sign promising outward blessing to Abraham and his descendants. It was connected with temporal blessings, such as: possession of the land of Canaan, abundant growth of crops, good health, protection from their earthly enemies, etc. These temporal things have to do with life on earth under the favour of God; they have nothing to do with a person's eternal destiny. The Jews, however, were mistakenly trusting in the rite of circumcision, having to do with temporal blessing, and were imagining that it secured their eternal blessing.

The Jews are not alone in this misunderstanding. Many professing Christians are likewise trusting in baptism, in church membership, confirmation vows, etc., but those things will not secure their eternal blessing.

Paul Refers to Circumcision in Three Ways

- It stands for the Jews nationally as opposed to the Gentiles who are regarded as the uncircumcision (vss. 26-27; Gal. 2:8-9).
- It indicates the actual rite itself—the literal surgical procedure performed on the body (vs. 28; Gen. 17:11).
- It represents a life that is separated to God in faith from the activity of the flesh (vs. 29; Phil. 3:3).

Being a Descendant of Abraham Will Not Shelter A Jew From Judgment

Chap. 2:28-29—Paul moves to the third thing that the Jews were falsely trusting in—that they were descendants of Abraham. To bear the name of a "Jew" means that a person is one of Abraham's descendants, and every descendant of Abraham was by birth outwardly in a covenant relationship with God (Gen. 17:7). Whether they had faith or not, did not change this fact.

In these last two verses of chapter 2, Paul shows that having the same bloodlines as Abraham will not shelter a Jew from judgment. Believing that a person is exempt from the penalty of his sins because he is of Abraham's seed is a false notion indeed. There is abundant testimony to the falseness of this in the Scriptures. In Matthew 3:7-9, John the Baptist said, "Think not within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham." John used the word "children" to distinguish those of Abraham's descendants who truly had faith, indicating that not all of his descendants were Abraham's children. His point is that God would see to it that Abraham would have children—some men and women from the nation would believe.

The Lord Himself taught the same thing in John 8:37-39. He said, "I know that ye are Abraham's seed; but ye seek to kill Me, because My word hath no place in you. I speak that which I have seen with My Father: and ye do that which ye have seen with your father. They answered and said unto Him, Abraham is our father. Jesus saith unto them, If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham." Here, the Lord distinguishes between "Abraham's seed" and "Abraham's children." His "seed" were his natural descendants, and his "children" were his spiritual descendants, who not only have his blood, but also his faith.

Paul also teaches this later in this very epistle. He said, "For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel; neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children" (chap. 9:7-8).

Thus, being a physical descendant of Abraham did not mean that a person was automatically a spiritual child of Abraham. A true Jew must be one “inwardly” as well as “outwardly.” This inward thing would be a work of faith “in the heart.” In fact, Paul shows that what is inward is infinitely greater in importance than what is outward, when it comes to these vital things having to do with a person's eternal destiny. All the advantages given to the Jew will not shelter him from judgment—those privileges only make him more responsible. The sobering conclusion of this whole indictment against the human race is that the Jews are actually the guiltiest of these three classes of men that Paul has examined!

Merely Professing Christians

Today, with the gospel having gone forth for almost 2000 years, there is now a large portion of the population of the world that is even more responsible than the Jews! These are merely professing Christians. (We distinguish these from those who are sincerely professing Christians—true believers.) These profess to believe the Word of God, including the New Testament (not as the Jews who only accept the Old Testament), and have been enlightened by the superior revelation of Christian truth, but they have no inward reality. If, in the end, they prove not to have faith, they will receive the greatest judgment of all, because they have had a greater degree of light, and "unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall much be required" (Luke 12:48).

Christians Are Not Spiritual Jews

This passage in Romans 2 has been mistakenly taken to mean that Christians are "spiritual Jews" because there has been an inward work of faith in their souls. This idea comes from taking these verses out of context. It is a classic example of not "rightly dividing the Word of truth" (2 Tim. 2:15). Understanding the basic outline of the epistle to the Romans, with its various sections and sub-sections, would correct this misconception in a moment. It would show that Paul is not speaking of Christians here at all, but of Jews in their natural setting as Jews in the Jewish economy. The gospel and its blessings, by which a person becomes a Christian, do not even come into the discussion until Paul reaches chapter 3:21. Up to that point in the epistle, he is laying down man's need of salvation—both among the Gentiles as well as among the Jews.

People think that this passage is teaching that every Christian is a Jew, but really what it's teaching is that not every Jew is a Jew! As mentioned, a real Jew in the Jew's religion must have an inward work of faith in the heart. Romans 2:28-29 is not speaking about Christians.

Four Objections the Jews Would Naturally Make in Self-defence

Chapter 3

We now come to what is perhaps the most difficult passage to understand in all of Paul’s writings—some say in the whole Bible!

The Jews objected vehemently to Paul teaching that they were under the sentence of judgment along with the rest of the world. It offended them that they would be viewed as being on the same level as the Gentiles, as far as their need to be saved was concerned. In an effort to prove Paul wrong and to discredit the gospel that he preached, they raised numerous objections and criticisms. Being well acquainted with these objections, Paul reiterates four of their main arguments and answers them with Spirit-given wisdom and logic.

Chap. 3:1—After reading what Paul had said in the previous chapter, concerning the Jews' false security in religious things, their natural response would be: "What advantage then hath the Jew? Or what profit is there of circumcision?" In other words, they would say, “Paul, you're denigrating the favours and privileges that God has bestowed on us, His chosen people. Surely, if those things were given by God, they must be right and good. And if they are precious to Him, we should not treat them as being worthless." Thus, they charged Paul with teaching that the privileges which God gave to Israel in Judaism were meaningless. He was accused of belittling the sacred things of Judaism, and to them it was akin to blasphemy.

Vs. 2—Paul answers this by saying, "Much every way: chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God." "Much every way" means that he agreed that there were many advantages to being a Jew—most importantly, they had been given "the oracles of God." This is the prophetic voice of God in the Old Testament Scriptures concerning the coming of Christ the Messiah. The oracles of God enlightened the Jews to God's moral standards, to God's ways, and to the prophecies concerning Christ. But these things would be of no advantage to the Jews unless they were accompanied by an inward work of faith in the heart. This was their problem; they had not responded in faith to what the oracles of God had announced concerning Christ. Thus, their great advantage became the very thing that condemned them, because, as a nation, they did not receive the Messiah when He came.

Vs. 3—The Jews would respond to this with a second objection: "What if some did not believe? Shall their unbelief make the faith [faithfulness] of God without effect?" The Jews knew that the nation had not believed the oracles of God concerning Christ, and respond by saying, "Paul, you saying that the unbelief of the Jews cancels the faithfulness of God!"

Vs. 4—Paul answers by saying, “God forbid.” This is the first of ten occurrences of this phrase in the epistle. It means, "Certainly not." Thus, Paul agreed that the unbelief of the Jews could not cancel the faithfulness of God in connection with His promises to the nation. He then states a principle that we all should use in handling the Scriptures: “Let God be true, but every man a liar [false].” That is: whenever we are faced with a conundrum in God’s ways, and a case presents itself as to whether man or God is in the wrong, always proceed on the basis that God is true (right), and every man is wrong (false). To take it the other way around would be to find fault with God and to charge Him with unrighteousness—which is what the Jews were accusing Paul of.

Paul insisted that God keeps His Word and gives an example in David. He quotes him in Psalm 51:4: "According as it is written, So that Thou shouldest be justified in Thy words, and shouldest overcome [be clear] when Thou art in judgment." David disregarded the warnings in God's

Word concerning God's judgment against the sin of adultery, and he found out the hard way that God keeps His Word. He experienced the (governmental) judgment of God in connection with his sin. David's sins only confirmed the truthfulness of God's Word in connection with His judgment of sin. Hence, the Jews' unbelief had not cancelled the promises of God—it only cleared God in having to judge them for not having believed.

Vs. 5—The Jews at this point would twist what Paul was saying and accuse him of undermining the impeccability of God's character. Paul knew this and states their third objection: "But if our unrighteousness commend the righteousness of God, what shall we say? Is God unrighteous in taking vengeance?" In other words, they were saying, "Paul, if you teach that God is glorified by the sins of the Jews, then you are saying that sin glorifies God! By saying that God needs our sins for the praise of His righteousness is to present God as condoning sin! You are charging God with unrighteousness!" Thus, the Jews accused him of misrepresenting God's character. In case anyone thought that Paul actually believed this ridiculous idea, he adds in a parenthesis, "I speak as a man." That is, he was merely presenting their perverted argument.

Vs. 6—Paul answers this by saying, "God forbid: for then how shall God judge the world?" In effect, he was saying, "Such an argument is unworthy of serious consideration, for if it were true, then God would have no basis for judging the world. He could not rightly take vengeance on sin and judge sinners." This could not be true because the oracles of God clearly state that God will "judge the world in righteousness" by the very One whom the nation rejected (Psa. 9:8; Psa. 96:13; Psa. 98:9, etc.).

Vs. 7—The Jewish antagonists would continue to press their previous objection, adding a fourth objection: "If the truth of God hath more abounded through my lie unto His glory; why yet am I also judged as a sinner?" In other words, they said, "If our sins help to glorify God, why should we be judged for them? If my sin vindicates the truth and glorifies God, then how can God find fault with me as a sinner? How can He inflict judgment on us for doing something which turns out to His glory?"

Vs. 8—Paul answers this objection by saying, "Not rather (as we be slanderously reported, and as some affirm that we say), Let us do evil that good may come." He says, "No, that couldn't be right, because if you carry that argument out to its logical conclusion, it leads to the false philosophy that the end justifies the means. Paul interrupted the flow of the argument to say, in another parenthesis, that this is exactly what people were saying that he and his fellow workers were preaching—but it was slander. Paul closes the argument with a short answer: "Whose judgment is just." Thus, he concludes that anyone who reasons to justify themselves on this line will receive his just judgment.

Thus, in chapter 2:17–3:8, Paul has shown that all these human arguments are bogus and do not relieve the Jews of their responsibilities before God, nor from the sentence of judgment that is upon them. Their arguments have not gotten them "off the hook." The enlightened Jew, therefore, with all of his religious advantages is also under judgment, as are the Gentiles, and they are all in need of a Saviour.

A Summary of the Jews' Objections

- Paul attacked the privileges of God in Judaism.
- Paul belittled the promises of God.
- Paul blasphemed the character of God.
- Paul impugned the ways of God.

~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~

Viewing these three sectors into which Paul has divided the human race, we see that:

- Ignoring the witness of God in creation makes men insensible. (They will worship sticks and stones and creeping things, and reduce themselves to things that are morally despicable.)
- Ignoring the witness of God in the conscience makes men judgmental.
- Ignoring the witness of God in the Scriptures, while professing to believe them, makes men hypocritical.

Outline of the Epistle to the Romans: God's Righteousness Declared in the Gospel, Romans 1:18-3:20: The Unrighteousness of Man

Chapters 1:18–3:20

Chapters 1:18–3:20 form the first sub-division in the epistle. The purpose of the teaching in this section is to prove that all men are hopelessly lost and are in need of a Saviour. Thus, it is occupied with revealing the unrighteousness of man in the most convincing way. The Apostle carefully explains in detail why men need the good news presented in the gospel—which will be unfolded in chapters 3:21–5:11. This sub-division is important because if men do not see their true condition and the danger that they are in, they will not see their need of receiving God's remedy in Christ the Saviour.

Rome was where Caesar's throne was, and where the empire's supreme court was located. It was considered the right of every Roman citizen that, if he were under some charge, he could appeal to Caesar, and thus he could have his case tried before the highest court in the empire (Acts 25:11-12). Since the people in Rome were familiar with the whole procedure, Paul uses it as a backdrop for his presentation of the gospel that he preached. In the following chapters, he shows that all men are under the charge of having sinned and have been summoned to God's court in regard to how they have lived in this world. In a masterly way, Paul brings the whole world before God's bar and shows that all are guilty and under the sentence of divine judgment because "all have sinned and come short of the glory of God" (chap. 3:23).

As mentioned, the Apostle does not begin with the good news of the gospel, which declares what God can do for man's blessing, but begins by emphasizing man's need of the good news. In these chapters, Paul shows that man has no righteousness of his own. Not only has he ruined himself through sin, but also, there is nothing that he can do to save himself from his ruined condition. Hence, if anyone is going to be
~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~

saved, it must be by what God does for man—not by what man can do for himself or for God. This part of the epistle, therefore, lays the groundwork for a person's reception of the good news of the gospel.

Since it is ever the way of God to produce a sense of need in souls before meeting it in grace, Paul proceeds to give us the bad news about the human race before he comes in with the good news of the gospel. Thus, chapters 1:18–3:20 reveal the unrighteousness of man, and then chapters 3:21–5:11 declare the righteousness God.

The Three Great Sectors of the Human Race Are Under the Sentence of Divine Judgment

Chapter 1:18 stands as a heading for this sub-division regarding the unrighteousness of man. It mentions three aspects of man's depravity, which correlate with the three sectors of the whole human race in which Paul is about to divide mankind. He shows that the wrath of God is against:

- "All ungodliness"—This is a reference to the morally degraded heathen—i.e. the pagan world. This will be taken up in chapter 1:19-32.
- "The unrighteousness of men"—This is a reference to the civilized Greek—i.e. the educated, cultured world. This will be taken up in chapter 2:1-16.
- "Them that hold the truth in unrighteousness"—This is a reference to the enlightened Jew. This will be taken up in chapters 2:17–3:8.

Thus, Paul divides the human race into major categories that correspond to the degree of light that each have had from God. In doing so, he indirectly answers the often-asked question, "What about those who have never heard—will they perish in a lost eternity?" The answer is that there is no such class of persons in the world who have never heard. All have had some light (testimony) from God, regardless of when or where they have lived on earth. Therefore, all men ought to know that there is a God and that they are responsible to Him. Hence, all are "without excuse." It's true that not all have been privileged to hear "the Gospel of the Grace of God" which presents Christ the Saviour and His atoning work on the cross (Acts 20:24), but all have had some testimony from God, and it makes them accountable to Him (chap. 14:12).

As mentioned, people in these three great sectors of the human race have had varying degrees of light, and therefore, varying degrees of responsibility. He shows that:

- The "heathen" have the witness of creation (chap. 1:20).
- The "Greek" has the witness of creation and the witness of an enlightened conscience (chap. 2:15).
- The "Jew" has the witness of creation, the witness of conscience, and the witness of the oracles of God—the Old Testament Scriptures (chap. 3:2).

(We do not mean to imply that the degraded heathen are without conscience, but because they live in such moral and spiritual darkness, their consciences do not work to any significant degree. The function of a man's conscience is similar to the function of his eyes—both need light. A person may have 20/20 vision, but if he goes into a dark place where there is no light, his eyes will not work. Similarly, since the degraded heathen live in moral and spiritual darkness, their consciences do not function properly.)

In the following chapters, Paul piles proof upon proof, evidence upon evidence, and Scripture upon Scripture to demonstrate the solemn fact that both, by nature and by practice, the whole human race is utterly ruined and depraved, and consequently, under the sentence of God's just judgment. If men do not respond to the various witnesses that God has given of Himself—be it in creation or be it in the full light of the gospel of Christ—they will be judged according to the degree of light that they have had. Even within each of these three great sectors, men have had varying degrees of light. For instance, someone who has read much of the Word of God (the Holy Scriptures) but has rejected it, is more responsible than someone who has read only a limited amount of the Word, but also rejects it. Similarly, someone in the Christian profession who has heard the gospel many times, but has rejected it, is certainly more responsible than someone who has heard and rejected it only a few times (Luke 12:47-48). This principle is found throughout Scripture and it shows that God is just.

The Uncivilized Gentiles; The Heathen Are Under the Sentence Of Divine Judgment

Chapter 1:19–32

Since God does not judge unjustly, Paul proceeds to give the reason the heathen (the pagan world) are under the sentence of divine judgment. Put simply, they have ignored the revelation of God in creation.

Chap. 1:19-20—The heathen world is under judgment "because what is known of God is manifest among them, God has manifested it to them—for from the creation of the world the invisible things of Him are perceived, being apprehended by the mind through the things that are made, both His eternal power and divinity—so as to render them inexcusable." The context here shows that Paul is referring to those who are unreached by the gospel of Christ, and thus, know nothing about the finished work of Christ on the cross. God would be unjust to hold these people responsible for not believing the gospel of His grace when they have never heard it! They are under judgment for a different reason—they have ignored the revelation that God has given to them of Himself in creation.

Paul's use of the word "world" in verse 20 is "cosmos" in the Greek. It literally means "order." It indicates that the creation has an orderly design to it (which we see everywhere), and thus testifies of the existence of an orderly Designer. Since the creation proves the existence of a Creator, God has clearly revealed Himself to men. Psalm 19:1 states, "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament showeth His handywork. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night showeth knowledge." This shows that the creation has a voice; it is telling us of the glory of God. By looking at the creation (not only the heavens but also the earth) every honest man and woman will know that God exists. It is a limited revelation of God; nevertheless, it is enough to make men responsible to Him "with whom we have to do" (Heb. 4:13). There are three main things that creation teaches us about God:

- He is all-powerful (Rom. 1:20 – "His eternal power and divinity"). Looking at the universe, every sober person will conclude that only Someone with enormous power could bring something so vast into existence.

- He is all-wise and intelligent (Psa. 147:4-5 – “His understanding is infinite”). Looking at the universe, every sober person will conclude that only Someone with amazing intelligence could ever design something so intricate and make it work so perfectly.

- He is good (Acts 14:17 – “He left not Himself without witness, in that He did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness”). Looking at the care God has for His creatures, we can rightly conclude that He is a good God. (There are some exceptions; occasionally He allows natural catastrophes, famines, disease, etc., to occur in specific places for specific reasons, but in the big picture, such is not God's normal activity toward His creatures.)

Creation, however, does not tell us that “God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son” (John 3:16), which is only known through the gospel of God’s grace. But there is enough of a revelation of God in the creation to cause men to fear Him and turn from their unrighteousness. Peter states this fact in Acts 10:35. Speaking of the un-evangelized Gentiles, he said, “In every nation he that feareth Him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with Him.” Thus, men can and will be delivered from the eternal judgment of their sins if in faith they simply fear God and work righteousness. All such will be safe among the redeemed in heaven, even though they have not heard of Christ's finished work on the cross. This does not mean that people can get to heaven by doing good works, but that if a person has real faith, his faith will evidence itself in works. These believers would not be part of the Church of God which is a special company of blessed persons who have believed the gospel and have been sealed with the Holy Spirit and thereby are part of the body and bride of Christ. But all who believe through the simple witness of creation are part of God's vast "family" (Eph. 3:15). They have a place of being friends of the Bridegroom (John 3:29).

The King James Version (KJV) says: “eternal power and Godhead,” but more properly it should be translated “eternal power and divinity.” The Godhead refers to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. The limited revelation of God in creation does not reveal the three Persons in the Godhead; such required the coming of the Son of God into the world to make known this truth (John 1:18).

Paul’s point here, however, is that the heathen have not responded in faith to this revelation of God, and are, therefore, under the sentence of judgment. They are “without excuse” because they have had the witness of creation.

The Consequences of Ignoring the Revelation Of God in Creation

Paul proceeds to show that there are serious moral and spiritual consequences that result when men willfully ignore the revelation that God has given of Himself in creation. He mentions three devastating things that arise among men who have turned their backs on God. These things explain how the heathen have gotten into their depraved condition.

1) Man Turns to Idolatry

(Chap. 1:21-23)—Since the human heart cannot exist in a state of vacuum (it must have an object), Paul shows that, historically, when men have turned their backs on the revelation of God in creation, they turn to idols (false gods) to fill the void. Paul says, “When they knew God, they glorified Him not as God, neither were they thankful; but became vain [fell into folly] in their imaginations [thoughts] and their foolish heart [without understanding] was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like unto corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things [reptiles].”

Man began with a certain degree of knowledge of God and a certain degree of nearness to God, but he turned his back on it and a declension began which has taken him far from God morally and spiritually. “Knew” (verse 21) is translated from “ginosko” in the Greek; it refers to outward, objective knowledge. (It is not “oida”—the other word used in the New Testament translated as “know,” which is an inward conscious knowledge gained by having personal experience with the thing in question.) Hence, the knowledge that these heathen had of God was only a superficial thing. And, because it was not mixed with faith, they gave up what they knew of God, and the downward slide away from God began.

Men like to think that the human race has evolved from lower forms of life, but Paul shows here that man has not evolved, but rather, he has devolved—at least morally and spiritually. Man did not start out in a depraved state; it was the result of a process. The heathen have gotten into their present condition of being far from God because their wills were at work. They did not want to see the truth (about God), and consequently, lost their capacity to see it. This teaches us that we cannot turn our backs on God and the light that He has given us without serious consequences—the mind becomes darkened and the downward slide of ignorance that results in idolatry begins.

The Apostle traces the downward progression in which the heathen have gone in their departure from God:

- They refused to honour God as God—“glorified Him not as God” (vs. 21).

- They were unthankful of God’s goodness—“neither were they thankful” (vs. 21).

- They began to speculate about God—they “fell into folly in their thoughts” (vs. 21).

- They lost the little knowledge they had of God—“their foolish heart without understanding was darkened” (vs. 21).

- They were lifted up in pride—“professing themselves to be wise” (vs. 22).

- They became insensible—“became fools” (vs. 22).

- They turned to idols—“changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image ... ” (vs. 23).

Even after the heathen world turned to idols, the downward slide continued. In their confused state, their thoughts of God steadily declined. First, they worshipped Him as a “man,” then as “birds,” then as “four-footed beasts,” and lastly as “creeping things.” Psalm 115:4-8 says that a person who worships dumb idols becomes as senseless as his idols; he loses his moral and spiritual sensibility. This is exactly what happened to the heathen world. Thus, they became “alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart” (Eph. 4:18). The seriousness of the sin of idolatry is that it is really worshipping demons (Lev. 17:7; Psa. 106:37; 1 Cor. 10:20).

There is no record in Scripture of idolatry being practised before the flood. The first recorded mention of it is in Job 31:26-27, where Job says that he would not worship the sun and moon, as other men were doing. Joshua 24:2 refers to that same general time. It mentions that Terah worshipped other gods in the days before Abram was called out of it. The first mention of actual idols in Scripture is when Rachel stole her father's images (Gen. 31:30-35).

2) Man Turns to Immorality

(Chap. 1:24-27)—In an act of governmental judgment, as a direct consequence of turning away from the knowledge of God in creation, "God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves ... .even their women did change their natural use into that which is against nature: and likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men [males] with men [males] working that which is unseemly." This refers to the sin of homosexuality. Letting man go to such degradation was God's answer to man's willful departure from the knowledge of God. He let their fallen sin-natures have control over them, and they have degraded themselves.

This shows that if people try to change the truth of God into a lie, and they worship and "serve the creature rather than the Creator" (i.e. idolatry), the whole order of nature is violated, and a moral slide results. It teaches us that apart from the fear of God, there is nothing that will hold in check the evil desires of the human heart. As a rule, when men turn their backs on the light they have had from God, their morals degenerate. This is what has happened to the heathen world, and it explains how they got into their despicable state.

In these verses, Paul mentions that God "gave them up" in three ways:

- In their "bodies" (vss. 24, 27; 1 Cor. 6:18).
- In their "affections"—their souls (vs. 26).
- In their "mind" (vs. 28).

Thus man—a tri-part being—has been given up to defile his body, his soul, and his spirit. God has left him to taste of the fruit of his sins which he has brought upon himself—"receiving in themselves that recompense of their error which was meet [fit]" (vs. 27).

3) Man Turns to Violence and Social Injustice

(Chap. 1:28-32)—A third consequence of men turning their backs on the knowledge of God in creation is that they began to commit all manner of anti-social sins against their fellow men—violence and injustice, etc. Paul proceeds to give a definitive list of over 20 of these sins. ("Fornication" is in this list in the KJV, but is not in the Greek text because the previous series of verses have already addressed that. These verses are dealing with anti-social sins—e.g. malice, anger, violence, deceit, etc.). The behaviour that the heathen world has degenerated into shows that practical righteousness will not be found among men who do not "like to retain God in their knowledge."

The Heathen Have Gone Away From God in Three Ways

- In their theology (sin against God)—idolatry (vss. 21-23).
- In their morality (sin against their own bodies)—homosexuality (vss. 24-27).
- In their social life (sin against their fellow men)—violence and corruption (vss. 28-32).

~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~

Thus, in chapter 1, the Apostle has shown conclusively that the heathen are guilty and need to be saved from the penalty of their sins. The beauty of the gospel message—which we will see—is that while the heathen have put themselves in a seemingly hopeless condition, they are not beyond the reach of the grace of God. "God gave them up" to do those vile things, as a governmental judgment (which has to do with time only), but He has not given up on them as far as eternity is concerned—they can still be saved. Paul proceeds to show (in chapters 3:21 to 5:11) that God loves all sinners and He can and does save people out of this class of men. Some of the Corinthians were once of this character and God in grace saved them (1 Cor. 6:9-11). Even if the gospel does not reach them in their lifetime, the heathen have been given enough witness from God in the creation to cause any who have faith to turn away from their sins and "fear God and work righteousness"—whereupon they would be "accepted with Him" and safe from eternal judgment (Acts 10:34-35).

The Cultured Gentiles

The Civilized Gentiles Are Under the Sentence

Of Divine Judgment

Chapter 2:1-16

Taking a cross-sectional view of the Gentiles, we can see that not all of them are uncivilized, as described in chapter 1. A large part of the Gentile world is quite civilized and educated, and seemingly morally upright. Lest any of these should think that they are exempt from judgment because outwardly they look better than those in chapter 1, Paul summons this class of men into God's courtroom. It is now their turn to be examined under the all-seeing eye of God.

Chap. 2:1-16—This civilized class of people look with disgust and abhorrence upon the lewdness of the ignorant pagan world and seemingly distance themselves from it. However, their private lives (and thought life) are really not any holier or cleaner than those whom they condemn. Paul, therefore, rebukes these Gentiles for thinking that they are better than the degraded Gentiles in chapter 1. He says, "Thou art inexcusable O man, whosoever thou art that judgest; for wherein thou judgest another thou condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest doest the same things" (vs. 1). These people were doing the same things as those mentioned in chapter 1, but in a context of refinement and outward respectability! It shows us that education and culture do not preserve a person from the indulgence of the flesh. Recognition of evil and judging it in others does not give a person the power to overcome evil in his own life.
~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~

The fact that these people are able to pass judgment on the heathen in chapter 1, shows that they know the difference between right and wrong. This means that their conscience (which gives a person the knowledge of good and evil – Genesis 3:5) is functioning. That being the case, Paul shows that this class of men is actually more guilty than the heathen in chapter 1, because they not only have the witness of creation, but also the witness of “their conscience” (vs. 15). They are more responsible because they have had more light, and therefore, are in danger of greater judgment if they do not respond in faith to these witnesses.

The great consequence of ignoring these witnesses of God (creation and conscience) is that man not only does the things mentioned in chapter 1, but he also becomes critical and self-righteous. He can criticize others for doing evil things, without taking into consideration that he himself has done "the same things" (vss. 1, 3).

It is important to see in these chapters that Paul is not dividing the Gentile world according to the kinds of sins that men do, because both groups of Gentiles commit the same sins. In fact, some of the Jews (the next class of men Paul considers) were doing those things too (1 Kings 14:24; 15:12; 22:46). Rather, Paul is dividing mankind according to the degree of light that men have been given. The sinners in chapter 2 Commit the very same sins as the sinners in chapter 1—the only difference is that they do them in a seemingly civilized manner. Those in chapter 1, on the other hand, do those things in open shame, and often mixed with the ignorant superstitions of idolatry. (This being the case, we would not place the homo-sexual community in America in chapter 1, but in chapter 2. These people live in the context of having been educated and civilized, and are well able to conduct themselves outwardly in society in a seemingly upright way.) It is also important to understand that Paul is not saying that every last person in these categories does every one of the sins that he mentions; he is speaking of what characterizes these classes of people generally. Even within these classes, some have more light than others.

Facts About the Judgment of God

Since these self-righteous, civilized Gentiles have mistaken ideas about justice and judgment, Paul proceeds to lay out some of the great principles of God's judgment.

Vs. 2a—Firstly, God’s judgment is “according to truth.” That is, the standard on which God measures evil and meets out corresponding judgment is according to the truth of what He is in His holy being. Men measure evil by standards that they have set up—which are always declining—but God measures evil by the holiness of His nature.

Vs. 3—Secondly, God’s judgment is inescapable. Paul says, “Thinkest thou ... .that thou shalt escape the judgment of God?” Unless, a person turns to God in repentance, there is no way to escape judgment. Divine justice demands that all sin must be dealt with a “just recompense of reward” (Heb. 2:2) because “justice and judgment” are the habitation of His throne (Psa. 89:14).

Vs. 4—Thirdly, God’s judgment is delayed to give space for men to repent. God acts in “forbearance and longsuffering” in connection with the exercise of His judgment, and this proves that He loves sinners and desires that His “goodness” would lead them to “repentance.” The Apostle Peter confirms this, stating that God is “not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance” (2 Peter 3:9). The delay of judgment should not be taken as a sign that God is indifferent to evil, but rather, as a sign of His longsuffering patience.

Repentance is literally to “re-think.” “Pent,” in the Latin, means to muse or to think. (Words like “pensive,” are derived from that same root.) Re-pent, therefore, is to “re-think.” Hence, repentance in a sinner is to have a change of mind about one's course of sin and the passing of his personal judgment on it. The reality of a person’s repentance will be seen in a change of action in his life. This is called “fruit meet for repentance” (Matt. 3:8).

Chap. 2:5-10a—Fourthly, the judgment of God is treasured up (piled up) for every unrepentant unbeliever “according to his deeds.” This shows us that God does not deal indiscriminately in judgment; it is according to specific things which each person has done. The point here is that the judgment will fit the crime. Lost sinners will not suffer punishment for things they haven’t done; judgment will be meted out “according to their works” (Rev. 20:12).

In verses 7-10, Paul sets before us two lifestyles and their respective destinies among the un-evangelized people of the world. One lifestyle, which is lived with simple Godward faith, leads to “eternal life;” the other lifestyle, lived without faith, ends in “indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish.” Since faith evidences itself in works (James 2:17-18), Paul shows that a man’s deeds will give evidence of whether he has faith or not. Even though he has not been reached with the gospel of God’s grace, he will manifest his faith by “patient continuance of good works.” If such “seek” (or live for) “glory and honor and incorruptibility,” they will be granted “eternal life.” The aspect of eternal life here is that which the believer has when he reaches heaven in the glorified state. As a rule, the Apostle Paul speaks of "eternal life" as something which the believer gets at the end of his path (Rom. 2:7; 5:21; 6:23; 1 Tim. 6:12, 19; Titus 1:2; 3:7). The Apostle John, on the other hand, speaks of "life eternal," which is the present possession of life in the Son of God (1 John 5:11-13), which is distinctly a Christian blessing. It is a special character of divine life, which Christians have by faith (John 3:15-16, 36) through the indwelling Spirit (John 4:14), by which they enjoy fellowship with the Father and the Son (John 17:3).

By mentioning “continuance,” Paul is indicating that these "good works" are not an occasional thing (which even an unbeliever may do), but the general character of their lives, as evidence of their faith. Paul is not teaching that a person can get to heaven by doing good works; it would be contrary to the whole tenor of his teaching (See Romans 4:4-5; Ephesians 2:8-9; Titus 3:5.) These are not works which a sinner may try to do to be accepted by God, but works that a person who has faith does because he is born again, which give evidence that he has faith. Note: Paul does not say that these people (who have faith) look for a life together with the Lord Jesus Christ in heaven on account of having believed that He died for them on the cross, because he is considering those who are unreached by the gospel of God’s grace. All such do not know the good news concerning Christ, but their end will be eternal life (vs. 7).

He says that those among the un-evangelised Gentiles who are “contentious” and “do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness” will have “indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish” executed on them by God. This, he says, will be the portion of “every soul that doeth evil” and will not repent. Again, the “truth” that Paul is referring to here (which these people reject) is not the truth of the gospel of God’s grace, but the truth about God as revealed in creation and in the consciences of men. We see from this that there is enough evidence in the witness of creation and in the witness of man’s conscience to justly condemn men to a lost eternity, if they reject that truth.

Chap. 2:10b-11—Fifthly, the judgment of God is without partiality. Paul says, “There is no respect of persons with God” (vs. 11). Whether a person is a “Jew” or a “Gentile [Greek],” judgment will fall on all who do evil. The Jew will not escape because he is a privileged person (Deut. 7:6-7; 14:2), nor will the Gentile be able to plead that he is a poor, ignorant person who doesn't know any better, and therefore, he should be excused. These things will not influence God in His just judgment of sinners.

Chap. 2:12-15—Sixth, God’s judgment will be according to the measure of light that a person has received. Paul said, “For as many as have sinned without the law shall also perish without the law: and as many as have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law.” Obviously, those who have had God’s Law (the Old Testament Scriptures) have had more light than those who have never read or heard the Word of God. This difference will be taken into account in the day of judgment, and those who have had the Law will be judged by its higher standard. The Lord said, “That servant which knew his lord’s will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes” (Luke 12:47-48). Thus, in the clearest language, the Lord taught that the judgment of sinners will be graduated according to each person’s degree of guilt.

Then, in a parenthesis in verses 13-15, Paul explains that even though the Gentiles haven’t had the Law, it doesn’t mean that they are excused. He says that when Gentiles “do by nature the things contained in the Law,” they demonstrate the work of the Law written in their hearts. This inward witness, in a sense, is “a law unto themselves.” It is not that the Law of Moses is written in their hearts, but that “the work of the Law” is there because their consciences have given them the knowledge of good and evil. A person, therefore, does not need to have a formal law telling him that it is wrong to murder, steal, and commit adultery, etc., before he knows that those things are wrong. The Creator has written indelibly in their hearts how they ought to live as responsible, moral beings, and their consciences bear witness to it.

Hence, besides having the witness of creation, all such cultured Gentiles also have this inward witness (their conscience) working in their “thoughts” enabling them to know the rightness or the wrongness of their actions. They were “accusing or else excusing one another,” and this proved that their consciences have given them a moral standard to judge each other, as seen in verse 1. This fact proved that their consciences were operating, and it made them more responsible than the heathen in chapter 1 whose consciences did not work to the same degree.

Chap. 2:16—Seventh, the Judge is none other than the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul said, "God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ." The Lord Himself said, “The Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son” (John 5:22). Paul also states that there is a “day” (a time) coming when all lost sinners will be judged for their sins. The judgment will not be for public sins only; “the secrets of men” will also be judged according to divine justice. This will take place at the Great White Throne at the end of time (Rev. 20:11-15).

A Summary of Facts Concerning the Judgment of God

- It is according to the truth (vs. 2).
- It is inescapable (vs. 3).
- It is delayed in order to give sinners opportunity to repent (vs. 4).
- It is accumulated according to the deeds sinners have done (vss. 5-10).
- It is without partiality (vs. 11).
- It will be meted out according to the measure of light that a person has had (vss. 12-15).
- The Judge is the Lord Jesus Christ (vs. 16).

~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~

Thus, in chapter 2:1-16, the Apostle has shown conclusively that the cultured Gentiles in this world (the Greek) are as lost as the uncivilized Gentiles (the heathen). Both are in need of God’s salvation.

Outline of the Epistle to the Romans: God's Righteousness Declared in the Gospel, Romans 1:1-17: Opening Salutations

Chapter 1:1–17

Chap. 1:1-7—At the time of the writing of this letter, Paul had not been to Rome, and therefore, takes a little more time than he usually does in his epistles to introduce himself to the saints there.

Vs. 1—He begins: “Paul, a servant [bondman] of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God.” A “bondman [servant]” of Christ is something more than being a believer on the Lord Jesus Christ. It refers to a personal exercise that occurs in the life of a believer to voluntarily surrender himself to the cause of Christ in this world, and thus, to become His servant. The Lord does not command anyone to be His bondman-servant; all who have made themselves such have done so of their own volition. This exercise comes as a result of realizing that we have been “bought with a price” (1 Cor. 6:20; 7:22-23). In considering the cost of our redemption—that Christ, in love and pity, willingly took our place under the judgment of God to save us—our heart becomes deeply moved, and we respond by giving our life (our time and energy) to Christ as His servant. By stating that he was the Lord’s bond-servant, Paul was indicating that he had gone through this exercise and had placed himself unreservedly under the Lordship of Christ, to be used in His service in whatever way He desired. Thus, he introduces himself to the Romans as one who was totally “sold out” to Christ.

The King James Version (KJV) says, “servant of Jesus Christ,” but some translations render it—“bond-servant of Christ Jesus”—which we understand to be the correct rendering. This is significant. As a rule, when Paul says “Jesus Christ”—using His manhood name ("Jesus") before His title ("Christ") the Anointed One—it is referring to His coming into the world to do the will of God and to accomplish redemption. Whereas, when Paul says, “Christ Jesus” (putting His title before His manhood name), it refers to Him as having completed redemption, and is risen,
~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~

ascended, and seated at the right hand of God as a glorified Man. It is interesting to see that Peter styles himself as a bondman and an apostle of “Jesus Christ” (1 Peter 1:1; 2 Peter 1:1), whereas Paul sees himself as a bondman and apostle of “Christ Jesus.” This is because Peter came to know the Lord, and was called by Him when the Lord came into the world at His first coming, but Paul came to know the Lord when the Lord was a glorified Man on high, and was called by Him as such.

Believing that the saints in Rome should know something of his personal history with the Lord, Paul mentions two events in verse 1 That occurred in his life. Firstly, he was “called an apostle.” This took place on the road to Damascus when he submitted to the Lord in faith (Acts 9:1-6). The King James Version (KJV) says “called to be an apostle.” The words, “to be” are in italics, which indicate that they are not in the Greek text, but have been added by the translators to aid in the reading of the passage. Unfortunately, those words, though well intended, are misleading and imply that Paul had to pass through a certain religious process after he was saved in order to become an apostle. This savours of the man-made clerical idea that has been prevalent in the Church for centuries, in which a person passes through a process of training in a seminary, whereupon he (or she) is ordained to a place in "the Ministry." However, the text should read, “called an apostle” or “an apostle by calling.” This means that he received his apostleship the moment he obeyed the call of the gospel and was saved.

The second thing Paul mentions is that he had been “separated unto the gospel of God.” This took place at Antioch about ten years later when the Spirit of God said, “Separate Me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them” (Acts 13:2). Hence, Paul received his apostleship the moment he was saved, but he was not sent by the Lord to do the work of an apostle until sometime later. This means that, even though he was an apostle, and he had placed himself under Christ’s Lordship as His bondman, he needed time to grow and mature in the things of God before he could be used in that work. This process of spiritual growth and maturity is needed in every convert (2 Peter 3:18).

The word “gospel” means “good news” or "glad tidings." Thus, the message of the gospel is God's good news to man. It is good news because it makes known God’s movements in grace toward men, seeking their blessing. (Grace is God's unmerited favour toward man.) By saying that the gospel is “of God,” Paul was indicating that God is the source of this good news. It all emanates from His heart of love; He drew salvation’s plan and in grace He has brought it down to man.

There are two parts to “the gospel of God” which Paul preached. He distinguishes them elsewhere as:

- “The gospel of the grace of God” (Acts 20:24).
- “The gospel of the glory of God” (2 Cor. 4:4; 1 Tim. 1:11).

The Gospel of the Grace of God emphasizes Christ's coming into this world to accomplish redemption; it focuses on God’s condescending grace coming down to meet man in his need by that which Christ accomplished on the cross. The Gospel of the Glory of God emphasizes Christ's ascending up into heaven as a glorified Man. This latter aspect is what Paul calls “my gospel.” He was given special revelations concerning the believer’s position and present portion in Christ, the glorified Man at God’s right hand (Gal. 1:11-12). Paul preached and taught both aspects of the gospel of God. In the book of the Acts, we see him preaching the gospel of God’s grace to sinners (Acts 20:24), but in the epistle to the Romans, we have him teaching the gospel to the saints.

Vs. 2—In a parenthesis, Paul adds that this good news declared in the gospel was “promised afore by the prophets.” In chapter 3:21, he is more specific about this, stating that certain elements of the gospel—such as the “righteousness of God”—are “witnessed by the Law and the prophets.” Peter also speaks of this. He states that “the salvation” of our “souls” (a new kind of salvation which Old Testament saints had not known) connected with “the sufferings of Christ” had been prophesied in the writings of the Old Testament prophets (1 Peter 1:9-11). He also mentions that those prophets did not understand what they had prophesied, and that it wasn’t until “the Holy Spirit” was “sent down” from heaven in these Christian times that we now understand what those things are (1 Peter 1:12). An example of this is found in Isaiah 56:1: “Thus saith the LORD, Keep ye judgment, and do justice: for My salvation is near to come, and My righteousness to be revealed.”

The fact that the righteousness of God and the salvation of the soul were promised in the Old Testament shows that the gospel is something distinct from the “mystery” (Eph. 5:32). The Mystery is a secret which God hid in His heart from past eternity and did not make known until these Christian times, when the Holy Spirit would come. It has to do with His purpose to glorify Christ in two spheres—in heaven and on earth—in a coming day (the Millennium) through a specially formed vessel of testimony—the Church, Christ’s body and bride. In Romans 16:25, Ephesians 3:3-9, and Colossians 1:23-27, Paul differentiates between the gospel and the Mystery. He states in those passages that the Mystery was not prophesied about in the Old Testament, whereas in Romans 1:2 and Romans 3:21, he indicates that elements of the gospel were stated in the Old Testament.

Vss. 3-4—Paul said that the gospel concerns “His Son Jesus Christ our Lord.” In stating this, he was indicating that this glorious Person is the subject of the gospel. Let us understand this clearly; men are not the subject of the gospel. Believing men and women are the beneficiaries of the blessings of the gospel, but they are not the subject of it—the subject of the gospel is Christ.

In introducing the Person whom the gospel concerns by stating His names and titles in the particular order in which Paul did is very instructive. They follow a sequential order from eternity to eternity and tell us much about who Christ is:

- “His Son”—Since this is mentioned before His manhood name of Jesus, it is referring to His relationship with God the Father before He became a Man, as the eternal Son (Isa. 9:6). Thus, His Sonship is eternal.
- “Jesus”—This name refers to His humanity; it was given to Him when He became a Man—this points to His incarnation (Luke 1:31).
- “Christ”—This title refers to His Messianic office as the Anointed One, which He fulfilled in His earthly ministry (John 1:41; 4:25) but was rejected as such and crucified (Mark 14:61-65; 15:32).
- “Our Lord”—This title refers to His exalted position in resurrection, as ascended to the right hand of God (Acts 2:32-36).

Thus, in this one sweeping statement, we have an introduction to the Person of Christ, from His Sonship in eternity past to His position now at God’s right hand as a glorified Man.

The Spirit of God leads Paul to open another parenthesis (from verse 3b to the end of verse 4) to enlarge upon Christ being both human and divine, so that there could be no question as to Who He was. He was “made [come of] the seed of David according to flesh.” This refers to His earthly lineage, being born in the family of King David. It indicates that the Lord Jesus was a real Man, and emphasizes His humanity. He was also “declared [marked out] the Son of God.” This emphasizes His divinity. Note: Paul mentions that there was a point in time when He came “of David’s seed” (at His incarnation), but he does not say that there was a time when He became “the Son of God” because He was always that from eternity, being God’s eternal Son.

Paul says that Christ was marked out (identified) as the Son of God “with power.” That is, He demonstrated that He was the Son of God by His acts of power when He walked here in this world. The power in His earthly ministry resulted from “the Spirit of holiness” being with Him (Luke 4:14; Acts 10:38). Mentioning the word “holiness” indicates that His power to do miracles did not come from some corrupt source (Satanic power), but from the power of the Holy Spirit. The greatest barrier to blessing is death itself, but the Lord overcame this great obstacle by raising the dead—thus showing that He was the Son of God, the great Life-giver (John 1:4; 5:21; 11:25). “The resurrection from the dead” (KJV) is in the plural in the Greek and should read literally, “the resurrection of dead ones.” This is a reference to Jairus’ daughter (Matt. 9:18-26), the widow of Nain’s son (Luke 7:12-17), Lazarus (John 11:14-46), and the Lord’s own resurrection—all were raised by His power. Thus, the Lord’s family lineage proved that He was “the seed of David” (Matt. 1), but His acts of power in raising the dead proved that He is “the Son of God.”

Vss. 5-6—These verses bring us to the scope of the gospel. Paul states that he was given special “grace” to carry out his “apostleship” and bring the gospel to “all nations.” Thus, the scope of the gospel message reaches to the whole human race. By adding the phrase, “For the obedience of faith,” Paul made it clear that the blessings which the gospel promises are only realized by those who have faith to believe the message.

Vs. 7—Paul then identifies those to whom the epistle was written—“all that be in Rome, beloved of God.” This is not referring to all the people of Rome, but to all the believers there. It is likely that some of them had been saved through the preaching of Peter at Pentecost (Acts 2:10), and they had carried the gospel back home and spread it there. That Paul was referring to believers in Rome is evident by his use of the word "beloved." As a rule, the term is used in Scripture for believers only.

Another proof that he was referring to believers is in the fact that he calls those to whom he was writing “saints.” A saint is a “set apart one” or a “sanctified one.” Saints could only be believers. All such have been saved by God’s grace and are (positionally) sanctified, being set apart for blessing. The KJV says, “called to be saints,” but the words “to be” are italicized, indicating that they are not in the Greek text and have been added by the translators to aid the reading of the passage. Unfortunately, as was the case in verse 1, it changes the meaning and makes sainthood a goal to be attained in the future. This is a Catholic error. (Roman Catholicism teaches that if a person lives nobly for that system, after he leaves this world through death, he may be promoted to the special place of a saint.) People have picked up on this mistaken idea and will say things such as, “I don’t pretend to be a saint, but … ” The text should simply read, "called saints." The truth is that if we are believers on the Lord Jesus Christ, we are saints—and are such by being called by God! It is not something we hope to be, or we are waiting to be, but something that the Word of God says we are by the grace of God. Some think that it is evidence of humility to refuse to be called a saint now, but this denies the truth of Scripture. There is no Scripture that tells us to try to attain to sainthood, but there are many Scriptures that tell us that all believers are saints, even while they are still living in this world. It is not pride or presumption to believe the Word of God.

Personal Communications

Chap. 1:8-15—Having introduced himself formally, Paul now makes clear his reasons for writing. He also makes known his personal desires for the Roman believers. He seeks to gain their confidence by being as transparent as possible with them—even to the point of calling upon God as a "witness" of his genuineness—thus manifesting his sincere care for their spiritual welfare. His desire was that they would see that he had nothing but their good on his heart.

Paul thanked God for the reality of their faith which had spread throughout the Christian community in “the whole world.” This is an expression that refers to the Roman Empire; it is not the whole globe (Luke 2:1). He also prayed intensely for the saints in Rome and requested that God would allow him to come to them. He had two main reasons for this:

- To impart "some spiritual gift" to the end that they would be established (vss. 10-11).
- So that both he and they would have "mutual comfort" in the Christian path through fellowship (vss. 12-13).

Firstly, Paul's desire to impart some “spiritual gift” to the Roman Christians was not what we see in the present day activities of the Pentecostal/Charismatic movement. (This Christian group promises a “second blessing” for Christians sometime after they have been saved, whereupon they profess to have the gift of tongues, healing, etc.) Paul was speaking of a spiritual gift in the sense of giving the saints in Rome some spiritual truth. Since he had not been to Rome, it was likely that they were deficient in their understanding of some of the things that he taught, and he simply desired to fill in those things that were lacking in their understanding (compare 1 Thess. 3:10). Paul's intention in giving them a spiritual gift was that they would become "established" in the Christian faith. This proves that the gift that he was referring to was not miraculous sign-gifts, because those things do not build up (establish) a person's understanding of the truth.

Nor does Paul's reference to a “prosperous journey” mean that he was hoping to make money on this trip; he simply desired that God would prosper him so that he would have the finances to come. (See J. N. Darby’s Translation footnote) As it turned out, Paul's prayer was answered in an altogether different way in which he had prayed; the last chapter of the book of the Acts records that he got there as a prisoner!

Paul's other reason for wanting to come to the Roman Christians was, as mentioned above, for "mutual comfort." They would encourage him and he would encourage them "by the faith which is in the other, both yours and mine." He explains to them that the reason that he hadn't come to them thus far was that he had been "hindered hitherto." Since the door was closed at that time, Paul undertook to write this letter in an effort to help them understand his gospel more clearly, and thus, to get them on the way to being established in the faith. He promised that when he would get there, he would give them "the fullness of the blessing of Christ" (chap. 15:29). This is an allusion to the truth of the Mystery, which is a higher line of truth than that in the gospel, and is what actually completes the Christian revelation (Col. 1:25-26 – J. N. Darby Trans.). Understanding the Mystery, which brings the believer in accord with God's “eternal purpose” for “the ages” (Eph. 3:11) and

also in accord with His program for this present dispensation (1 Tim. 1:4 – J. N. Darby Trans.). Both lines of truth—the gospel and the Mystery—are necessary for the believer's establishment in the Christian faith (Rom. 16:25).

Vs. 14—Paul said that he was ready to preach and to teach the gospel to everyone. He felt that he had a debt to discharge in announcing the gospel—stating, "I am a debtor ... "

Firstly, he was ready to preach to various kinds of unbelievers—"the Greeks" and "the Barbarians." These were the civilized and the uncivilized people of this world in his day. (In using the term "Greek," he is not referring to those who are Greeks by nationality only. It is a generic term that includes all people among the Gentiles who have been educated and refined under the Grecian culture to some degree. A refined Roman, for instance, would come under this title.). Then he says, "To the wise and to the unwise." These were the educated and the uneducated people of the world. Thus, in referring to these different classes of lost men, Paul has drawn a line over the globe from north to south, and from east to west, and has touched on every kind of unbeliever there is in the world. Whatever their status in life may be—rich or poor, educated or uneducated, black or white—Paul was ready and willing to preach the glad tidings to them, because he genuinely cared for them and desired that they all would be saved.

Vs. 15—Secondly, Paul was ready to speak to believers about the gospel too. He said, "I am ready to announce the glad tidings to you also who are in Rome." "You" is the believers in Rome. We might wonder why he would want to bring the gospel to believers when they were already saved, but it was because he wanted them to know the truth of it better. His presentation of the gospel to believers, of course, would take a different character from what he would stress to unbelievers. This second point shows that there is a need for not just preaching the gospel to sinners, but also for teaching the gospel to the saints. The saints need to learn the truth of the gospel soundly because it gives the soul a solid foundation on which to grow spiritually (Rom. 16:25). It brings assurance and peace and thankfulness, out of which comes obedience and devotion in service, which chapters 12-15 of this epistle indicate.

We see from verses 14 and 15 that Paul did not lack desire to come to Rome with the gospel (he was ready for it when the Lord opened the door); it was that he lacked opportunity, being hindered "oftentimes" (vs. 13).

The Three Main Elements of the Gospel

Chap. 1:16-18—Now we come to another great thing concerning the gospel—its substance. This could be summarized as three things—"the power of God," "the righteousness of God," and the "the wrath of God."

Before delineating these three things, Paul says, "I am not ashamed of the gospel." While it is true that we should never be ashamed of being publicly identified with Christ in this world, this is not exactly what Paul is saying here. His point is that the preacher of this great gospel never needs to be ashamed of what he announces, because the Lord Jesus Christ is better than he can ever state. Sometimes when a person presents something that he wants others to accept, he may enthusiastically overstate the qualities of the thing, and when the person accepts it, he finds that it is not as good as it was stated. But this will never happen in presenting the gospel. The preacher does not need to fear that the receiver of the message will be disappointed, because Christ and the blessings promised in the gospel cannot be overstated.

The Power of God

(vs. 16)—Firstly, "the power of God unto salvation" has to do with what the gospel can do for the sinner who believes. Those who believe its message and receive Christ as their Saviour experience God's power in salvation. The gospel Paul preached was a very full and complete thing. It promises deliverance ("salvation") from the penalty of sins, deliverance from the power of sin working in the believer, and eventually when the Lord comes, deliverance from the presence of sin altogether, by being taken to heaven. (Salvation and deliverance in Paul's writings are the same thing.)

Satan is no hindrance to the mighty "power of God" working to save sinners who believe. When the gospel is received, the believer is thereupon delivered from the clutches of Satan (being his captives) and is translated into the kingdom of God's Son (Luke 11:22; Acts 26:18; Col. 1:13). Sin also is no hindrance to God's power in the gospel. A person may be a slave to some sinful vice, but the power of God can deliver him from it (Rom. 8:2). Also, the world, with its attractions and entanglements, cannot stop the power of God from working to deliver the believer from it (Gal. 1:4). Thus, all the barriers to man's blessing are destroyed by the power of God when a sinner receives the Lord Jesus Christ as his Saviour.

"Saved" and "Salvation"

In this verse (16), we come to the first reference to "salvation" in the epistle. Many Christians are not aware that salvation is a broad subject in the Word of God, having many aspects and applications. They rejoice in the fact that they have been saved from the penalty of their sins through faith in Christ, and in their simplicity they imagine that every place where "saved" or "salvation" are mentioned in Scripture, it is referring to that eternal aspect. However, this is a mistake that will surely lead to a number of wrong ideas. Mr. Kelly, in fact, points out that the eternal aspect of salvation from the penalty of our sins is usually not what is in view in most passages that speak of salvation! (Lectures on Philippians, p. 43; Lectures Introductory to the Study of the Minor Prophets, p. 379) We would do well to let this statement sink deeply into our minds. It means that when we run across the words "saved" and "salvation" in our Bibles, it is probably not referring to deliverance from the penalty of our sins! Having said that, the salvation spoken of in this 16th verse, refers to the eternal aspect of salvation from the penalty of our sins.

Paul adds that the gospel is "to everyone that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek." This shows that the gospel has no racial boundaries; it's for "everyone." It does not matter if a person is—as Sunday-School children sing—"Red or yellow, black or white, all are precious in His sight." The only condition attached to the gospel is that a person has to believe it. The gospel has no power to those who trust in circumcision for salvation, or for those who are trying to keep the Law for salvation, or for those who trust in baptism and church attendance for salvation, etc.—its power is only for those who believe its message concerning the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Bible indicates that the blessings of the gospel will not be possessed by every person in the human race, because "all men have not faith" (2 Thess. 3:2). Sad to say, there are many who, after hearing the gospel, choose not to believe it. We can only pray for such that they will change their minds before it is too late. Paul's comment: "to the Jew first, and also to the Greek" is a reference to the historical order in which

the gospel went out; it is not a priority of persons. (See Acts 15:11.)

Note also: Paul does not say that this message of good news is sent to angels. The gospel, which promises salvation, is not for that class of beings. The angel who came to the shepherds in Bethlehem to tell them about the birth of the Lord Jesus made reference to this fact. He said, “For unto you is born this day in the city of David, a Saviour” (Luke 2:11). He did not say, “Unto us is born this day ... ” Elect angels have not sinned, and therefore, do not need redeeming grace, and there is no mercy for the angels that are fallen (Matt. 25:41).

The message of the gospel is not for angels, nor is it carried by angels. God has not sent angels to preach the gospel of His grace. He would only have redeemed men to carry that message to others—that is, people who have personally experienced its power, love, and grace. Thus, it would be communicated to others, not merely as facts and knowledge, but as something that has had a personal effect on the bearer of the good news, as far as his own soul’s blessing is concerned. The old adage is: “What comes from the heart (of a person) goes to the heart (of another person).” An angel cannot convey this, for he has never experienced this grace.

This fact is seen in the account of the salvation of Cornelius (Acts 10). He needed to hear words whereby he and his house could be “saved” (Acts 11:14). An angel appeared to him and told him what to do; he was to send for a man named Peter who would tell him how to be saved. God could have had the angel tell him the gospel, and thus spare the men who went to find Peter the trouble of taking the 40-mile journey from Caesarea to Joppa. Also, it would have saved Peter the trouble of going all the way to Caesarea. But the angel would not do that, because it is not for angels to carry the message of redeeming grace.

The Righteousness of God

(vs. 17)—Secondly, the gospel reveals “the righteousness of God.” This has to do with how God is able to save sinners without compromising what He is in Himself. The righteousness of God is about God acting in love to save sinners, and at the same time, not giving up what He is as a holy and just God.

Man’s sin has seemingly put God in a dilemma. Since “God is love” (1 John 4:9), His very nature calls for the blessing of man, for He loves all men (John 3:16). But at the same time, “God is light” (1 John 1:5), and thus His holy nature justly demands that man should be judged for his sins (Heb. 2:2). If God acted according to His heart of love and brought men into blessing without dealing with their sins, He would cease to be holy and just. On the other hand, if God acted according to His holy nature and judged men according to the claims of divine justice, all men would be justly sent to hell, and none would be saved—and the love of God would remain unknown. How then can God save men and still remain just? This is what the gospel announces. It declares God’s righteousness and reveals the good news that He has found a way to meet His holy claims against sin, and also be able to reach out in love to save sinners who believe. Thus, God is presented in the gospel as being “just and the Justifier of him which believeth in Jesus” (chap. 3:26). (The righteousness of God will be explained in more detail in our comments on chapter 3:21-31.)

Paul says that the blessings of the gospel are possessed “on the principle of faith, to faith.” That is, salvation from start to finish is something that is only received by faith. This shuts out the principle of works altogether. Chapter 4:5 confirms this. It says that it is “to him that worketh not, but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.” Also, Ephesians 2:8-9 says, "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast." Paul quotes Habakkuk 2:4 to show that blessing on the principle of faith is not some new thing. The “just” in every previous age were only blessed on that principle. Hebrews 11 testifies to that fact.

The Wrath of God

(vs. 18)—Thirdly, the gospel reveals the truth about “the wrath of God.” This has to do with why men need to believe God’s glad tidings. The simple answer is that if a person will not receive the Lord Jesus Christ (the divine Sin-bearer) as his Saviour, then he will have to bear the judgment of his own sins, because sins must be dealt with justly. For God to indefinitely pass over sin would be a denial of what He is in the essence of His being as a holy and just God. The wrath of God, therefore, will be vented “against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness.” This fact is now “revealed from heaven” in the gospel. Eternal punishment was not announced in the Old Testament. The Lord Jesus first announced it in His public ministry (Matt. 5:22, etc.), and this solemn fact is announced in the gospel.

While the wrath of God has been “revealed,” it has not been executed yet. In the meantime, before the judgment falls, God is acting in long-suffering mercy toward sinners, calling them to come to Christ for salvation. Thus, mercy, in a general way, has been shown to all mankind (Rom. 11:32), but the person who receives Christ as his Saviour experiences God's special mercy (1 Tim. 1:13; Titus 3:5).

Mercy is not getting what we deserve. We surely deserve to be judged for our sins, but God graciously exercises His mercy on those who believe and delivers them from judgment, because He has a ransom (a full payment) in the finished work of Christ on the cross (Job 33:24; Matt. 20:28; 1 Tim. 2:6). Grace, on the other hand, is getting something that we don't deserve. The believer gets salvation and many spiritual blessings which he surely does not deserve, but such is the giving heart of God (Eph. 1:3).

Hence, warning proclamations of coming judgment are made known in the gospel. People are told that the cross has not changed God’s mind about sin; it does have to be judged. Thus, the gospel reveals the solemn fact of God's wrath against sin.

Thus, in these introductory verses (1-17), Paul has presented a chain of important facts about the gospel that we all need to understand. He has mentioned:

- The source of the gospel—It is “of God” (vs. 1).
- The subject of the gospel—It concerns “His Son Jesus Christ our Lord” (vs. 3).
- The scope of the gospel—It is for all people in “all nations” (vs. 5).
- The substance of the gospel—It announces “the power of God,” which has to do with what God can do for sinners who believe; “the righteousness of God,” which has to do with how God is able to save sinners without compromising His holiness; and “the wrath of God,” which explains why sinners need to believe the gospel—divine justice demands that sin must be judged (vss. 16-18).

The Responsibility of Man and The Sovereignty of God

If any are to believe the gospel and be blessed of God, there must be a work of God in them. A man must be "born again" (John 3:3-8; James 1:18; 1 Peter 1:23) or "quickened" (Eph. 2:1-5; Col. 2:12-13). Both have to do with God communicating divine life to a soul whereby the spiritual faculties in a person begin to function, and it results in his seeking God. But that side of things which has to do with the sovereign working of God in souls is not taught in Romans 1-8, because the responsibility of man is in view. This is why we do not read of new birth or quickening in this part of the epistle. The sovereignty of God will come into view in chapters 9-11 where new birth is alluded to in chapters 9:16 and 10:17).

Outline of the Epistle to the Romans: God's Righteousness Declared in the Gospel, Romans 15:14-33: Paul's Itinerary

Chapter 15:14-33

This last section is supplementary to the foregoing doctrine in the epistle. Paul apprises the Roman saints of his personal circumstances and his intentions in service in regard to the gospel in “the regions beyond” (2 Cor. 10:16).

Thus, he closes the epistle by stating his reasons for writing to them and expresses his great desire to visit them. He explains that he did not write to them because of any particular lack on their part, but simply to communicate to them the gospel he preached among the Gentiles; promising that when he would come to them, he would give them “the fullness of the blessing of Christ” (vs. 29)—which he did not expound upon in this letter. This is a reference to the truth of “the Mystery” which was a special revelation given to him, and other apostles and prophets (Eph. 3:5), to communicate to the saints. He mentions this in chapter 16:25.

Vss. 14-15––He said, “I myself also am persuaded of you, my brethren, that ye also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another. Nevertheless, brethren, I have written the more boldly unto you in some sort, as putting you in mind, because of the grace that is given to me of God.” We see from this that Paul was convinced that the brethren in Rome were in a good state––“being full of goodness”––and thus would receive his admonitions. Therefore, he wrote with considerable boldness to them. He was also confident that they were mature Christians and well able to mutually admonish one another in love, and thus regulate themselves in regard to difficulties that might arise among them, without him being present to do it. This is a sign of a healthy assembly. Paul, therefore, had no intention of coming to them as an arbitrator or regulator. Damage can be done by those who imagine themselves to be such among the Lord’s people. It is not that an assembly cannot call for help and advice, but under normal conditions, local assemblies should work out their own difficulties in the fear of God (Phil. 2:12). An assembly that habitually has its trouble worked out by brethren from other localities could miss the practical blessing and spiritual education that the Lord intends for them in the trouble.

Note that he mentions “full of goodness” before being able to “admonish one another.” To be effective admonishers, we first must have hearts full of goodness toward those whom we seek to help, and we must also have the practical “knowledge” of the Scriptural principles concerning the person’s situation. Without this grace and knowledge, we could do damage to the person and exacerbate the problem.

Chap. 15:16-17—Paul had another reason for coming to them, and that was because he had been “officially employed” (J. N. Darby Trans. footnote) by God as an “administrator of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles.” He had a special commission from God to the Gentiles (Acts 9:15; 22:21; Gal. 2:7; Eph. 3:8; Col. 1:27). Since they were predominantly a Gentile assembly––if not exclusively Gentile, for Claudius Caesar had expelled all Jews from Rome (Acts 18:2)––Paul felt it incumbent upon himself to make sure that “the offering up of the Gentiles might be acceptable” to God. That is, that they would stand before God in all the truth of the gospel and the Mystery. He adds, “Through being sanctified by the Holy Spirit” because he fully understood that this work among the Gentiles was really a work of God by the Spirit, and he wanted to give God the credit for what He had wrought. Paul was, therefore, justified in his desire to “glory [boast] through Christ Jesus in those things.”

Vss. 18-19––If there was any question whether he really had this commission, such a notion could easily be put to rest by the proofs of it. He said, “I will not dare to speak of any of those things which Christ hath not wrought by me, to make the Gentiles obedient, by word and deed.” That is, he would not comment on what others were doing for the Lord but of what he had known firsthand by the Lord working through him. There had been a display of “mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God.” And this had been in many places––“from Jerusalem, and in a circuit round to Illyricum (north of Macedonia on the Adriatic Sea). Essentially, it was in every place where he “preached the gospel of Christ.” This is an account of the geographical extent of his ministry, not the chronological order of it.

Vss. 20-21––Paul’s intention was to keep pressing further out among the Gentiles with the gospel, “where Christ was not named.” His ministry consisted more of breaking into new regions and leaving the work of shepherding and of teaching his converts to others. He had no intention of working where others had laboured and had built upon the “foundation”––which is Christ (1 Cor. 3:11). He quotes Isaiah 52:15 to show that the principle of reaching out to the Gentiles in this way was according to God—“As it is written, To whom He was not spoken of, they shall see: and they that have not heard shall understand.” Paul’s ministry was not a fulfilment of this prophecy. He does not say that it was––stating only that the principle upon which he was acting was according to what had been “written” in the Old Testament. (As a general rule, when something from the Old Testament is fulfilled in the New Testament, it will state that it is. See Matthew 1:22; 2:23; John 19:36-37, etc.)

Vss. 22-24––Being thus occupied in service, Paul tells them that he had often sought for opportunities to come to them, but was “often hindered from coming” (compare chapter 1:13). However, having been specially commissioned with a ministry to the Gentiles, Paul expected that a way would open for him to come to them shortly. And now since his ministry of opening new areas with the gospel was largely completed in “these parts”––Asia Minor (Turkey) and Achaia (Greece)––he was free to push forward into new regions, and thus come to them on his way to Spain.

Vss. 25-27––But Paul had one last responsibility to take care of before he would go far hence unto the Gentiles. He was headed to Jerusalem with the collection from the brethren from “Macedonia and Achaia” (northern and southern provinces in Greece) to give to “the poor saints which are at Jerusalem.” We read about this in 2 Corinthians 8-9. Paul and Barnabas had delivered a similar gift to the saints of Jerusalem in their earlier days (Acts 11:29-30). There appears to be two reasons for the poverty of the Jews in Judea:

- There had been a great famine in that land (Acts 11:28).

- The communal living that they had practised in Jerusalem had left them without lands and means to sustain themselves (Acts 2:44-45; 4:34-35). (Scripture does not say that this was something that the Lord told them to do.)

The believing Gentiles were “well pleased indeed” to give their Jewish brethren this gift because they saw themselves as “debtors” to them. They had partaken of their “spiritual things” (the Scriptures, the presence of the Spirit of God, etc.) and felt that it was only right that they should send relief to them in temporal things.

Vss. 28-29––Having “sealed to them this fruit” (put the gift into their hands), Paul fully intended to come to the Roman saints on his way to Spain. And when he would come to them, he promised to give them “the fulness of the blessing of Christ” (vs. 29). The KJV adds, the “gospel” of Christ, but that word is not in the Greek text. Paul had just expounded the truth of the gospel to them in this very epistle. The “fulness” that he refers to here is the truth of “the Mystery,” which would “complete” the Christian revelation of truth (Col. 1:25). He mentions it in chapter 16:25. It is a special revelation of truth concerning Christ and the Church. Mr. Darby mentions that there is no record that Paul ever got to Spain (Synopsis of the Books of the Bible, on Romans 15).

A Threefold Prayer Request

Vss. 30-33––Lastly, Paul asks for the prayers of the Romans in view of this work. This, he says, would be for “the Lord Jesus Christ’s sake” and would be in accord with “the love of the Spirit,” which is the mutual fellowship of the saints. His threefold prayer request is predicated on the word “that.”

- “That” he might be delivered from the unbelieving Jews in Judea who desperately wanted to kill him (1 Thess. 2:14-16).

- “That” the gift he was bringing to the Jewish believers would be accepted in good grace and would be seen as a true expression of their Gentile brethren’s love. And, by it, they would be knit together as fellow believers in Christ. (Paul requested this because he knew that there were still some religious prejudice in the Jewish saints, and he hoped that this would flush those feelings out of them.)

- “That” he would get to Rome with joy and by the will of God, and that they would be mutually refreshed. This prayer was answered, but in a very different way than Paul anticipated; he arrived in Rome as a prisoner.

Paul ends the main part of the epistle by telling the Roman saints that he desired “the God of peace” would be with them, adding a hearty “Amen.”

Outline of the Epistle to the Romans: God's Righteousness Declared in the Gospel, Romans 12:17-21: Practical Righteousness Toward Those Outside the Christian Community

Chap. 12:17-21––Paul’s exhortations broaden out in the latter part of the chapter, focusing on our interactions with those outside the Christian profession.

Vs. 17––As Christians, we are to be careful to maintain a good testimony before “them that are without” (Mark 4:11; Col. 4:5; 1 Tim. 3:7). This is not easy because the world is opposed to Christianity and those of the world are inclined to find fault with Christians. Since persecution is inevitable (John 15:20; 2 Tim. 3:12), the believer will feel the brunt of the world’s animosity, and may be tempted to get even. But Paul says, “Recompense to no man evil for evil.” If we retaliate we will surely give offence in some way, and thus, the ministry will be blamed (2 Cor. 6:3).

Moreover, we must be careful in our secular callings to have our business dealings “honest in the sight of all men.” If the world finds “a spot on our garment” so to speak (Eccl. 9:8)––that is, some failure or shortcoming which they can criticize, they will use it to justify their unbelief.

Vss. 18-21––Therefore, Paul says, “If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.” This shows that we should go on quietly in our Christian lives. We are to pray to that end––“that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life” (1 Tim. 2:2). As much as is possible––that is, without compromising principles––we are to live “peaceably” in this world. If the people of the world direct their animosity towards us, we must resist the tendency to retaliate. Naturally, we would like to avenge a wrong done to us, but the Lord has not entrusted that to us. Our place is to maintain a Christian spirit and to wait for the Lord to work with that person. Paul quotes Psalm 94:1 to show that vengeance belongs to the Lord, and therefore, we must leave the injustices done to us to Him, who will deal with them in His time and in His way.

Instead of retaliating, we are to try to diffuse the animosity by acts of kindness. Paul says, “If thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink.” He says, “In doing so, thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head.” This is figurative language taken from Proverbs 25:21-22. “Fire” is symbolic of judgment––in this case, self-judgment. The “head” is the place of one’s thoughts. Hence, repeated acts of kindness toward those who dislike us will eventually reach their hearts and consciences, and they will change their minds about us. This shows that practical Christianity goes beyond non-resistance to active benevolence.

Paul warns us of being “overcome of evil,” which is to allow ourselves to be affected by those who mistreat us and to deal with it in the flesh. J. G. Bellett said, “If my bad temper puts you in a bad temper, you have been overcome of evil” (Present Testimony, vol. 15, p. 66; Notes from Mediations on Luke, p. 42). Instead, Paul says that we are to “overcome evil with good” with acts of kindness.

Outline of the Epistle to the Romans: God's Righteousness Declared in the Gospel, Romans 12:9-16: Practical Righteousness Toward Fellow-Believers

Chap. 12:9-16—The display of practical righteousness in the life of the believer is to be seen in his interactions with his brethren. There follows fifteen short maxims that should regulate our relations with one another within the Christian community. It is significant that love is placed first, for its influence and activity is to affect each of the things that follow. Note how many times the suffix “ing” is used in these verses—“preferring, serving, rejoicing, continuing, distributing, pursuing, going,” etc. This indicates that these things are to be an on-going practise in our Christian lives.

Love Without Pretention

(vs. 9a)––Love is to pervade the fellowship of the saints. Sad to say, it is possible to feign love, and Paul warns against it here. H. Smith points out that Judas kissed His Master while betraying Him! See also Ezekiel 33:31. Hence, Paul’s exhortation to “love without pretention” is necessary (1 Peter 1:22).

Abhor Evil

(vs. 9b)––Being that hatred of evil is mentioned as a contradistinction to loving one another without hypocrisy, it appears that the aspect of evil, which we are exhorted to abhor here, is the spirit of hatred toward our brethren.

Cleave to Goodness

(vs. 9c)––We need to be careful to embrace good and wholesome things.

Affectionate Toward One Another

(vs. 10a)––This exhortation shows that there should not only be divine love (agape) among the saints (vs. 9a), but also “brotherly love” (phileo) (2 Peter 1:7). Brotherly love expresses itself affectionately and with the warmth of emotion. It is not an aspect of love that Scripture tells us to have toward the lost. We are to love those of the world with an agape love (1 Thess. 3:12), which is a love that is based on a settled disposition of care and concern for its object. This would lead us to reach out to them with the gospel. However, we are not told to love the lost with brotherly (phileo) love, because we could get emotionally wrapped up in their lives and inadvertently be drawn into their lifestyle, whereby we would compromise principles.

Honour One Another

(vs. 10b)––We should be glad to see others honoured, rather than to want honour for ourselves (Phil. 2:3).

Zealous in Serving the Lord

(vs. 11)––The KJV says, “Not slothful in business,” and it has led some to think that Paul was referring to secular business. (The word “business” actually has no business being in the verse.) It should be translated, “As to diligent zealousness, not slothful; in spirit fervent, serving the Lord.” This is an exhortation to serving the Lord with commitment and energy, because it is possible to become neglectful in the work of the Lord. Archippus is an example of this. Paul said, “Say to Archippus, Take heed to the ministry which thou hast received in the Lord, that thou fulfil it” (Col. 4:17). Jeremiah warned: “Cursed be he that doeth the work of the LORD negligently” (Jer. 48:10).

Rejoice in Hope

(vs. 12a)––The next three exhortations are particularly connected with the believer’s wilderness journey. Our hope (a deferred certainty) of the coming glory ought to be before us constantly. It will lift us above the trials and the discouragements of the present day, and make us rejoicing Christians.

Patient in Tribulation

(vs. 12b)––Our anticipation of the coming glory will also sustain us in the path of faith, and enable us to be patient in trial.

Persevering in Prayer

(vs. 12c)––The trials and difficulties of the way should cast us on the Lord in dependence. Since the tendency is to give up in prayer, Paul’s exhortation is to continue steadfastly in this priestly function.

Generous

(vs. 13a)––The next two exhortations pertain to the needs of the Lord’s people. Thus, we are exhorted to be liberal with our possessions, giving to those in need (Acts 20:34). It is a good way to show people that we truly care for them.

Hospitable

(vs. 13b)––Paul says, “Given to [pursuing] hospitality.” The word for “given” in the Greek can be translated “pursuing.” This means that we should be actively looking for opportunities to show hospitality to our brethren. Small living quarters is sometimes used as an excuse for not entertaining in our homes, but it shouldn’t deter us from this service (Heb. 13:2; 1 Peter 4:9).

Unretaliating

(vs. 14)––We are to endure persecution and return all animosity against us with courtesy and love (Luke 6:28). We must be careful not to retaliate. The Lord taught that in all such circumstances we are to “turn the other cheek,” and be careful not to retaliate (Matt. 5:39).

Empathetic

(vs. 15)––God would have us to enter into the joys and sorrows of His people, and to feel what they feel. Attending a wedding would be an example of “rejoice with them that do rejoice.” Attending a funeral would be an example of “weep with them that weep.”

Impartiality

(vs. 16a)––We are to have the same respect for a poor brother as we would have for a wealthy person of social distinction. We should be happy to “condescend to men of low estate.”

Humility

(vs. 16b)––We must judge all tendencies to self-importance. Paul says, “Be not wise in your own conceits [opinion].” Carrying ourselves with an air of self-importance is sure to have a negative effect on the fellowship of Christians. Humility is the secret of happy fellowship, but seeking a high place among brethren stirs up rivalry that divides the saints.

clickbible.org