

G. P. Tasker

St. Paul and His Gospel

**By
G. P. Tasker**

With an Exposition of the Epistle
to the Romans

A Book for Bible Students

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To the Reader:

The free, personal style of the following pages is due to the fact that they were originally prepared and delivered in the form of lectures to the students of the Bible School. The desire of the students themselves and the belief that the lectures might prove helpful to others account for their publication in their present form.

As given, there were four lectures, but in revision for publication the final one has, for greater clearness and fullness, been divided into two. I trust that this arrangement will be acceptable and that the study of the great subject of which the series treats will bring as much blessing to others as their preparation has brought to me.

Sincerely yours,

G. P. TASKER

April, 1921

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Lecture I

St Paul and His Gospel

The cordial welcome extended to all to attend these lectures needs only to be amplified by the request that you keep in mind the fact that they have been designed especially for delivery to the students of the Bible School and may therefore not be quite so well adapted to the minds of a more general audience.

A subject therefore has been chosen which ought to yield us all a valuable return for the time and thought we shall devote to it together here this week. We want something that shall lay hold of us and stay with us,—something that will be a help and inspiration to us in all our future work. God grant we be not disappointed.

The subject we have chosen is “*St. Paul and His Gospel*,” and if the lectures should be found to have something of a missionary savor about them, it is nothing more than ought to be expected, for they will have to do with the soul and the thoughts of the greatest of our Lord’s apostles, —his chosen messenger to the Gentiles and the most successful of missionaries. Surely we of today, if we only may, would find inspiration where he found it and give our minds over to the same ideals that controlled his.

And who was this man St. Paul? And out of what experience came the inspiration and ideals that controlled his life?

Parentage and Early History

Saul, a Jew of Tarsus in Cilicia, born (very likely about the same time as our Lord) a free citizen of Rome and yet a “Hebrew of the Hebrews,” was the son of a devout Pharisee. Blest by birth with a nature so intense that he never could do anything by halves, and knowing himself the member of a race which God had specially chosen and to whom he had revealed himself at a time when all around them worshipped idols, it is no wonder that the strict moral and religious training he would receive in a home of the straightest sect of his religion would lead him as a youth to turn from purely secular pursuits to devote himself to the religion and the hope of his own people,—the people of the true and living God.

Tarsus, Saul’s birthplace, was a center of Greek culture and the seat of an important university. It was also a center of commerce. But neither father nor son saw anything there to compare with the ancient and coming glory of their own capital and the religious institutions of their own race.

As Dr. Stalker puts it so tersely in his *Life of Paul*, “Although the youth could not but receive innumerable and imperishable impressions from the city of his birth, the land and the city of his heart were Palestine and Jerusalem; and the heroes of his young heart were not Curtius and Horatius, Hercules and Achilles, but Abraham and Joseph, Moses and David, and Ezra. And as he looked back on the past it was not over the confused annals of Cilicia that he cast his eyes, but he gazed up the clear stream of Jewish history to its source in Ur of the Chaldees. And when he thought of the future, the vision that rose upon him was that of the

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kingdom of the Messiah enthroned in Jerusalem and ruling the nations with a rod of iron.”

And so it came about in due time that Saul’s father, as befitted a pious Jew, sent his son while yet a youth to Jerusalem to be “brought up at the feet of Gamaliel,” one of the most famous teachers the Jews have ever had since the spirit of prophecy was withdrawn from that race. He was called by his contemporaries “the Beauty of the Law” and is still remembered among the orthodox as “the Great Rabbi.” From their own traditions and also from the brief mention of him in the Book of Acts, where he gives the advice to his fellow-members in the Sanhedrin that they should let the apostles alone in their work (Acts 5:34-40), we know that he was a man of high character and enlightened, liberal mind. As a Pharisee, of course, he would be strongly attached to the religious traditions of his people, but like Nicodemus he was not intolerant of the opinions of others or hostile even to the followers of the Nazarene, as were most of his narrower associates.

The influence of the mind of such a man upon the youthful Saul must have been very great indeed. And although for a time the pupil afterwards became an intolerant zealot, the cause lay elsewhere, and the teacher’s example had doubtless something to do, though all unconscious to them both, in preparing Saul’s heart and mind for the crisis that turned the mad persecutor into the fervent apostle of the Lord Jesus. To that crisis and the steps that led to it, let us now devote our attention; for out of it were born both St. Paul and his gospel.

Contemporary Beliefs

Of the temper of mind in the “young man named Saul” just prior to his persecution of the Christians, I think we can gather a

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very clear conception from his own words as we set what he says against the background of some of the known beliefs of his time.

It was the well-nigh universal belief among the Jews of that period, that the Messiah would only come to a nation keeping the law. This belief was doubtless largely due to the nature of the message of Malachi, the last of their prophets, and it helps to explain to us how it was that “multitudes” of men, before the days of Pentecost and evangelical conviction of sin, flocked to John’s baptism of repentance. It would be hard to account for such a general movement at that time were it not for the prevalence of this belief,—that the Messiah would only come to a nation keeping the law.

Jesus also alluded to the same idea when he said, “Think not that I came to destroy the law or the prophets: I came not to destroy but to fulfill. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth shall pass away, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass away from the law till all things be accomplished. Whosoever, therefore, shall break one of those least commandments, and shall teach men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I say unto you, that except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven.” (*Matt. 5:17-20.*) They often said and did not.

The repentance of the people under John was plainly a repentance turning them from their transgressions of the law in order to prepare the way for the kingdom of the Messiah which was at hand. *Matt. 3:1, 2, 11, 12.* The Pharisees as a body were breaking the real spirit of the law while endeavoring to keep it and they were too blinded and proud to acknowledge the facts of the

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case and be baptized by John like the common herd of transgressors of whom they said, "This multitude that knoweth not the law are accursed." John 7:49.

Then again, these very Pharisees, our Lord's denunciations of the many hypocrites among whom are recorded in the Gospels, were that party among the Jews of the time which most zealously insisted upon the strict observance of the law, for it stood in their eyes as the one absolute expression of God's will, very much as the Quran stands in the eyes of Moslems today. Theirs being largely a codified, unspiritual, external conception of religion, they plainly, like many Moslems, had a very superficial sense of sin and a very good opinion of their own righteousness and standing with God.

Nicodemus, Gamaliel and Saul, however, may be taken as examples of what must have been a goodly number of men among them of a better type. Paul himself does not speak disparagingly of the Pharisees, which might suggest to us that his associates were not of the hypocrite class. He at any rate was no hypocrite. He was not of those who said and did not. He was in earnest. With him righteousness was the great question,—“How can man be just with God?”

The Supreme Quest

To him, and even to all the rest, though in a far less controlling sense, it was an understood thing that the true felicity of man and the goal of life eternal were attainable only in the enjoyment of the favor of God. The question was how to secure that. Devout Pharisees, of course, all believed that the favor of God was attainable only by the strict observance of his law. But this would surely bring it, for had not Jehovah declared, “Ye shall keep my

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statutes and mine ordinances, which, if a man do, he shall live thereby?" Lev. 18:5. And so we see this passionately-in-earnest youth early giving himself up to the law, mind and soul, undismayed by all its rabbinical amplifications and assured that it would bring him the coveted boon. *The law became central in his life.*

And with what result? There could be but one result on such a basis. Like the rich young ruler who could in all good conscience tell Jesus he had "observed all these things" from his youth, Saul too must come to the confession of a still remaining "lack." Despite all he could do, the coveted assurance of favor, the coveted rest of soul, still eluded him.

But worse than that. A man of Saul's moral earnestness and deep sincerity who tries to meet God's approval is sure to find that though he may be "blameless" as to his outer life in the fulfillment of the law's requirements in that respect, he cannot by it quell those "motions of sins" which he finds asserting themselves within his nature against the spiritual claims of the law in his own mind. In short, the man finds himself in bondage,—“the slave of sin,” as in after years Paul expressed it in characteristic metaphor. Describing the struggle in the terms of personal experience he puts it in effect thus: “I find then the law or constant rule of experience that to me who would fulfill God's will evil within is the only thing I am conscious of. For I delight in the law of God after the inward man, but I see a different law in my outward man warring against the law of my mind and bringing me under the law of sin which is in my members. Wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me out of this body of death?” Rom. 7:14-25 gives us the struggle, seen in retrospect through Christian eyes, but in all its essential features true to life as it was before his conversion.

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This sketch of the inner experience of this earnest young Jew is no mere picture of our own vain fancy. We are tracing the history of a soul,—a history that many of us here tonight can follow and can understand.

Casting about, then, for a reason for this non-attainment of the righteousness and peace and fellowship with God we know he was seeking for, two reasons would most naturally present themselves to his mind.

1. "I have not struggled with sufficient earnestness against my sinful nature."
2. "I have not sufficiently honored the teachings of God's law."

Saul was not of the morally indolent class, or of those who, face to face with obstacles in the way of life, give up and go back to Egyptian flesh pots. He was in dead earnest. So the question would readily arise in his mind, "Is there no service I may perform for God by which I may more perfectly show my devotion to his law, and in the performance of which I may at last attain that standing with him which I covet?"

The Crisis of Saul's Life

Such thoughts may well indicate for us the spiritual temper of Saul about the time the stoners of Stephen laid down their clothes at his feet. He is back in Jerusalem, most likely from Tarsus where he may have been teaching, and he is ready for anything in the service of the God of his fathers. To him the opportunity now afforded was plain and his duty clear. The repeal of the law and the subversion of its institutions, which seemed to be implied in the teachings of the Hellenist Stephen, were in his eyes a blasphemy

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against the divinest national hope of Israel,—a hope inspired by prophetic word and pictured in vision as an universal dominion beneath the whole wide heaven.

Besides, has not the infallible scripture declared that “He that is hanged is *accursed* of God”? Deut. 21:23. How, then, can the Nazarene be Israel’s King? Perish the thought! Away with the blasphemers! “And there arose on that day a great persecution against the church,” and Saul is its leader. In the vivid language of the Book of Acts, he “lays waste the church.” Entering into the synagogues and private homes on every hand he drags forth both men and women and commits them to prison. Acts 8:1-4. “Exceedingly mad” against the Nazarenes and verily thinking within himself that he ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus, he persecutes them even unto foreign cities. Acts 26:9-11. It is the final stage in his preparation for apostleship!

What a picture! How wondrous are God’s ways!

“Crucify him, crucify him,” was the cry that gave us redemption: a maddened persecution gives us its greatest preacher.

But had he no doubts, this noble young rabbi? Was he *sure* he was right? Ah! religious prejudice is an awful thing. It blinds the mind. And Scripture, too, is a wonderful buttress when it seems to justify us in a course that cuts across the grain of our better judgment. Even the horrors of the Inquisition were justified by the words “Gather up first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them.”

Then again, Saul’s own reverence for the objects which the Nazarene heresy seemed to imperil would help to shelter him against any doubts as to the righteousness of the work he was engaged in. And if at the deaths of the “heretics” his natural

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feelings suffered—for Paul could never have been a really hard-hearted man—would he not be consoled by the thought that such a sacrifice of feeling made the merit of his service all the greater? No doubt he would. We cannot think, however, that he never had any doubts about the matter. Even some inquisitors had, but they smothered them with their religion.

The Journey to Damascus

At all events we see Saul now, armed with authority and commissioned by the chief priests to root out the heresy, setting out for Damascus. Can we picture him as he goes along? May we follow his reflections? He has time for reflection in a journey of six long days, and God's providences, we know, usually coincide with conditions favorable to their fulfillment. Without a doubt Saul is thinking deeply. He has been "breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord" and he is thinking of them—of the Christians, though he knows them not yet by that name. Nor if he had ever heard it would he have honored them with the title of his nation's Messiah. No, they are "Nazarenes."

But as he thinks and hurries along he is conscious of a rising feeling that all may not be so well as he had hoped. He has lately been "kicking against the pricks" of a subtle consciousness that something is wrong about his course. And as he reflects, the face of the dying Stephen arises before him shining like that of an angel, and he hears again that ecstatic testimony, "Behold, I see the heavens opened and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God." Acts 7:56.

With a shudder he puts away the blasphemous picture. But there comes another. It is that of the simplicity and piety of the

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homes he has entered to seize the unresisting disciples of the Crucified. Can such people really be the enemies of God?

Then he hears again their martyr testimonies and defense as they tell of their Master's character and teachings. How different were these accounts from what he had heard from the chief priests and rulers of the people! He recalls too their powerful quotations from the prophets in confirmation of their testimony to a suffering but now triumphant Messiah about to return from heaven in power and great glory.

Such sights and sounds haunt the chambers of his memory as he journeys along. What can it all mean? His essentially honest mind is whispering to him, "How do you account for so much good fruit if the tree be really bad?" But such thoughts are "dangerous," so with resolution he dismisses them all as morbid suggestions,—suggestions of the evil one, and presses forward in the mid-day heat, for he sees in the distance the roofs of Damascus shining in the meridian sun. No time or inclination has he to rest at noon as do all but the most impatient native travelers in the East. He will rest when his work is over.

Saul's Conversion to Christ

But let us turn for a moment now to the saints in Damascus. Tidings have certainly gone ahead of Saul, warning the little flock of the approaching wolf. They are in prayer, beseeching God that in some way the coming destroyer may be stopped. God's interpositions and the preparation of men's hearts are nearly always joined to prayer. The Good Shepherd is listening. They are praying for their persecutor as he had taught them they should do. Many a petition have the saints sent up for Saul. The hour has come for them to be answered.

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From his throne of grace the Savior rises, not now to receive a martyr but to gain a soul, not to destroy the persecutor but to make him an apostle and a witness of His resurrection unto the ends of the earth. In the midst of a blaze of heavenly glory, in all the radiance of his spiritual humanity, Jesus appears to Saul, who, stricken blind by the indescribable brightness of the sight, drops to the ground. There upon his face he hears a voice saying in the Hebrew tongue, “Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? It is hard for thee to kick against the goad.”

What a gracious word was this! No denunciation. Only mercy! No wonder we hear him say in after years when he is now “Paul the aged,”—“Faithful is the saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief. Howbeit, for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me as chief might Jesus Christ show forth all his long-suffering, for an ensample of them that should thereafter believe on him unto eternal life.” 1 Tim 1:15, 16.

May we tell what passed through the soul and mind of Saul in that moment of his vision of the Lord? Perhaps not altogether. Some things we know, however. The old régime was dissolved. All things were new. In that single instant a whole new world was born for Saul. Dr. Stalker analyses the event and pictures the scene so well that I feel I cannot do better than quote here a slightly altered portion of what he says:

“It is but a clumsy way we have of dividing time, by the revolution of the clock, into hours and minutes, days and years, as if each portion so measured were of the same size as another of equal length. This may suit well enough for the common ends of life, but there are finer measurements for which it is quite misleading. The real size of any space of time is to be measured by

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the amount it contains of the soul's experience. No one hour is exactly equal to another and there are single hours that are larger than months. So measured, this one moment of Paul's life was perhaps larger than all his previous years. The glare of revelation was so intense that it might well have scorched the eye of reason or burned out life itself, as the external light dazzled the eyes of his body into blindness.

“When his companions recovered themselves and turned to their leader, they discovered he had lost his sight, and they had to take him by the hand and lead him into the city. But what a change had taken place! Instead of the proud Pharisee riding through the streets with the pomp of an inquisitor,—a stricken man, trembling, groping, clinging to the hand of his guide, arrives at the house of entertainment amid the consternation of those who receive him, and getting hastily to a room where he can ask them to leave him alone, he sinks down there in the darkness.

“But though it was dark without, it was bright within. The reason for the blindness may well have been to seclude him from all outward distractions and help him to concentrate his thought on the objects now being presented to the inner eye. For the same reason he neither ate nor drank for three days. He was too absorbed in the thoughts that crowded on him thick and fast. In those three days, it may be said with confidence, he got at least a partial hold of all that gospel which he afterwards proclaimed to the world, for his entire theology is nothing but the explication and unfoldment of what was involved in his own conversion.

The Elements of His Gospel

“First of all, in that one vision of the Lord his whole previous life fell down in fragments at his feet. It had appeared to him to be

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a consistent deduction from the highest revelation he knew, and in spite of its imperfections he had felt that it lay in the line of the holy will of God. But instead of this, that life had been rushing in diametrical opposition to the will and revelation of God and it had now been brought to a sudden stop and smashed into pieces by the collision. What had appeared to him to be the perfection of service and obedience had really involved him in the sin of blasphemy and innocent blood. Such had been the outcome of his whole-souled seeking of righteousness by the works of the law. And at the very moment when his righteousness seemed at last to be turning to the whiteness so long desired, it was caught in the blaze of this new revelation and whirled away in shreds of shriveled blackness.

“It had all been a mistake, then, from first to last. Righteousness was not to be obtained by the law, but only guilt and doom. This was the unmistakable conclusion, and it became one of the two poles of Paul’s theology.

“But while his theory of life thus fell in pieces with a crash that might by itself have shaken his reason, in the same moment an opposite experience befell him. Not in wrath and vengeance did Jesus of Nazareth appear to him, as he might have been expected to appear to the deadly enemy of his cause. His first word might have been a demand for retribution, and his first might then have been his last. But instead of this his face had been full of divine benignity and his words full of consideration for his persecutor. In the very moment when the divine strength cast him down to the ground Saul felt himself encompassed by the divine love. Here in realized experience, then, was the prize he had for years and years been struggling for in vain, and now he has grasped it in the very moment in which he has discovered that his struggles have been

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fightings against God. He is lifted up from his fall in the arms of God's love. He is reconciled and accepted forever."

It was a wonderful experience. He found himself placed by Christ, without effort of his own, in that position of peace and favor with God that he had striven in vain to reach before. And this became the other pole of this theology—that righteousness and strength are found in Christ alone, without man's works, by mere trust in God's grace and acceptance of his free gift.

There were many other things involved in this experience which it required time to work out; but within these two poles,—that righteousness was not to be obtained by the law or the legal principle it embodied, and that righteousness and strength *are* to be found in the free grace of God in union with the living Christ and him alone,—the whole system of Paul's thinking ever afterwards revolved.

Saul's conversion left Jesus the Christ central to his new world as the Law had been to his old. Christ simply replaced the Law as the element of his being, and henceforth for him, Christ instead of the Law was the controlling principle of life and the one medium of all relations between God and man. The old things had passed away. Behold, all things had become new. Everything now became summed up in Christ and henceforth his one mission was to make him known to the world of Jews and Gentiles. "He straitway preached Jesus in the synagogues that he is the Son of God." Acts 9:20.

This was the only possible thing for a man of his sincerity and temper to do. Christ had his soul now, as the law and the power of sin had possessed it before, and out of the fullness of his fresh and burning experience of God's wonderful grace his lips were bound to speak. "And all that heard him were amazed, and said, Is not this

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he that in Jerusalem made havoc of them that called on this name? And he had come hither for this intent that he might bring them bound before the chief priests?" Acts 9:21.

Development of His Gospel

But Paul was a thinker. It was not enough for him to experience anything. He must comprehend its meaning and implications. He must understand the matter and be able to relate the new experience and the new order of things it implied to all that Divine revelation which had preceded it and of which the Jews had been made the custodians. He must, therefore, have time to think and to pray. So after a short season at Damascus he tells us he went away into the south country, to Arabia, from whence in due course he returned again to Damascus, and from there, three years after his conversion, he returned once more to Jerusalem. This visit, he says, was in order to see Peter, and he tarried there with him fifteen days. Gal. 1:11-23.

There appears to be some obscurity here as to the exact order of events in this connection, it being difficult to fit the account given by Luke in The Acts with the details given by Paul himself in Galatians. But our concern is not with that. The point for us to note is that Paul in the thinking out of his gospel conferred with no man, not even with the apostles at Jerusalem, but arrived at it alone with God through the revelation of Jesus Christ within him. The full working out of its principles in some directions, at least so far as their application was concerned, has had to be left largely till a later day, as, for instance, in the matter of slavery, temperance reform and female emancipation. And even so far as the working out of those principles in more directly spiritual matters in his own day is concerned, it also doubtless came about somewhat

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gradually, under the stimulus of the varied circumstances of his ministry. For the reaction of the Christian consciousness of Spirit-filled men and of the church itself against the many recurring forms of error that have been felt to be contrary to it has been the means that God has most generally used to impart larger and clearer views of the truth to his people. We have learned the breadth and inexhaustible riches of the gospel of Christ as we have been led to dig, and conflict has ever forced our views and principles into their clearer expression. The same is doubtless true in a measure of Paul himself as affected by the experiences of his ministry.

At all events, by whatever means it came about, the most notable of all the outstanding characteristics of this most remarkable man is undoubtedly the clearness and fullness of his vision of divine truth. He was indeed “a chosen vessel unto the Lord,” prepared and qualified for a special purpose,—to bear Christ’s name “before the Gentiles and kings, and the children of Israel.” Acts 9:15, 16.

Lecture II

Paul's Influence Upon Christianity

The influence upon Christianity of Paul's ministry and writings simply cannot be measured. Some scholars have even gone so far as to say that but for him and his interpretation of the gospel, Christianity would never have broken away from Judaism but would have remained a sect of that religion. This, of course, is saying too much. The Lord would have raised up other agencies to save his gospel from such a fate if it had been necessary. But it is certain, as a fact of history, that Paul's ministry had a controlling effect in establishing the pure untrammelled faith of Christ in the earth.

He found the essential message of Jesus still wrapped in the swaddling bands of Judaism. With the greatest difficulty the people to whom it had been first committed were able even to think of a Gentile becoming one of the people of God except by first identifying himself with Israel by circumcision or at least doing so after he had believed on Jesus the Messiah. And all who have studied the writings of the apostolic age know well that Paul and those that saw with him had an awful time to secure the full liberty of Gentile believers on a plane of full equality with Jewish believers.

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Not even Peter had grasped the full import of the Messiah's death in relation to the whole Jewish system,—that those who are in union with Christ are free from it entirely. Paul was the first to see it clearly in all its implications, so far as we know. The more simple attitude of Galilean fisherman and tax gatherers toward the law, as compared with that of a zealous Pharisee and student of the law, could, in the nature of things, hardly suggest to them in the same vivid way the problem, of its dispensational relation to the Messiah. He saw it clearly from the start, from the time of his conversion, and he applied it fearlessly throughout his entire ministry. He had tried the law to the limit and found the legal principle wanting as a means of securing inward righteousness and peace. He had found Christ and proved his all sufficiency. There was no mixing of the two for him. Believers are dead to the law by the body of Christ, that body which had borne its curse and ended its reign, in order that they might be joined to the living Prince of Life through whom they could be filled with the fruits of true righteousness. Phil. 1:11.

This was no mere doctrinal or theological conception with Paul. It was a living experience which experience it was the privilege of all to enjoy in the spirit even though it might not be for all to have that objective vision of Jesus which had put Saul on the same plane of apostleship with the twelve. From the time of that vision without and within, on the Damascus road and in the house of Judas in the street called Strait when he was filled with the Holy Ghost, Paul had but one message and one remedy for all the needs of the human soul. It was Christ's "unsearchable riches." God had revealed his Son within him that he might preach him among the nations. *Christ* became his unfailing text.

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As regards the old order of things to which Messiah had died, Paul's whole ministry was one long conflict with those who would bind such things upon his converts, and with those who, even if they did not themselves really depend upon the law for justification with God, at least felt that the observers of it were thereby more to God and superior to those who did not observe it. The battle had all been fought out first within his own breast, and in combating the legalists it was only Paul the Christian confronting Saul the Pharisee. On the other hand his conflict with those who wrested his gospel to their own destruction by assuming they were free to walk after the flesh because they were not under the law, was the corollary of his conflict with the legalists, and he powerfully and conclusively refuted their contentions in his Epistle to the Romans which we shall consider in these lectures.

The Passing of Jewish Christianity

Conservative Jewish Christianity of the type we see so prominent in the Jerusalem church, as shown by the remarkable statement in Acts 21:20 and by the whole legalistic controversy of those days, survived indeed until the second century, but it finally snuffed out with the death of those obscure sects, the Ebionites and the so-called Nazarenes. God was with the progressives. The full sweep of the divine movement was to take in all nations. The "time of reformation" had come. The middle wall of partition was down. The Spirit was being poured out upon all flesh. Not Levitical ordinances of external value but the Holy Spirit of God himself sanctified the "unclean" Gentiles. All men must come to Christ.

With the end of the first century, we are already in the final stage of the evolution of Christianity from its Jewish envelope, when the question no longer is whether those who do not keep the

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law can be saved but whether those who do keep it can be regarded as Christians at all. Our theme, however, does not take us beyond the days of Paul himself, and our purpose here is to understand him and his gospel. For to think after him and to have something of the same outlook and ideas he had, cannot but be a wonderful help to us in our own Christian life and varied ministries.

We need to study the life and letters of this man, for next to Christ's own life and teachings they are basic for Christianity. Their study with mind alert will produce the conviction that in him we have Christianity's greatest interpreter and that in the providence of God he, like his divine Master, actually lived and taught as much for the people of our times as he did for those of his own, and possibly even more so, for both Jesus and Paul are certainly better understood today than they were in the first centuries.

Paul was Christianity's greatest defender and most successful exponent in those early days and his writings, more than any others, have influenced the minds and souls of the great reformers and leaders in the church of God ever since. It was his words that lit such a fire in the breast of Martin Luther that it spread into a conflagration the embers of which still burn in the world. And if I read the literature of our own times aright, it is Paul above all other writers that God is using to revive his work in our day and clarify the vision of his people. For instance, but for him where would we have got that profound idea of the church as the body of Christ? It is not in James, nor in Peter, nor in John, nor in Jude. The nearest figure we have to it in all the New Testament is that of the vine and the branches, found only in the Gospel of John.

Paul and His Own Time

How much greater Paul was than the general thought of his own time may be seen from a number of facts. I will mention two.

1. The opposition he encountered all his life, not from the heathen, for that was to be expected, but from those who felt themselves to be *the* people of God. "False brethren," no doubt, many of them were, "desiring to be teachers of the law" among his converts and also traducing both his apostleship and his gospel of liberty. In the Galatian and Corinthian epistles we see the struggle with these men at its height, but there are echoes of it in all his letters, excepting in that charming personal note to Philemon. Its sound may be heard all through the book of Acts.

And where he did not meet with direct opposition he often met with coldness and want of sympathy. For evidence of the latter in both Jewish and Gentile churches, we only need to read his touching appeal to the saints in Rome to pray that the offering for the poor of the church in Jerusalem, which he was taking to them from some of his Gentile churches, might be "acceptable to the saints." Rom. 15:30, 31. The pathos that lies back of that request may only be appreciated by those who have been able to catch the prevailing feeling of Christian Palestinian Judaism toward the uncircumcised, "unclean" Gentiles, even if they were the converts of Paul. These "alms" from the Gentile churches were a veritable peace offering to the saints in Jerusalem. "I beseech you, brethren, pray that it may be acceptable," says Paul. People as a rule find gifts acceptable. We would surely think there was a powerful lack of sympathy somewhere if an apostle should find it necessary to beseech us to pray that an offering he was bearing from the churches in India to the poor in the church at Anderson might be acceptable to the saints at the latter place.

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At the very end of his life, too, in Rome, where he had so many acquaintances at the time he dictated the long list of names we find in the last chapter of his epistle to the church there, he met with great lack of sympathy. From his own letters, and also from Luke's graphic touch in Acts 28:15 where he tells how the weary prisoner of Jesus Christ "thanked God and took courage" when he saw the Roman brethren come to meet him at the Appii Forum and the Three Taverns, we know that Paul had looked for sympathy from the Christians of the great metropolis. But from the same epistles we also know that he looked largely in vain. All Paul's grace and magnanimity cannot hide from us the facts. We hear a note of sadness amid all the joy of the letter he writes from there to his beloved Philippians. The epistle to the saints at Philippi has been called the Epistle of Joy. It is the most "joyous" writing in the whole New Testament. But the very emphasis Paul puts upon joy in this letter suggests the soul's victorious reaction against its joyless environment—a chain, a prison, a coming trial before the monster Nero, and a disappointing condition in the local church. Two selections from his Philippian letter will be sufficient. The first is ch. 1:12-17; the second, ch. 2:19-21.

"I would have you know, brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the progress of the gospel; so that my bonds became manifest in Christ throughout the whole praetorian guard, and to all the rest; and that most of the brethren in the Lord, being confident through my bonds, are more abundantly bold to speak the word of God without fear. Some, indeed, preach Christ even of envy and strife; and some also of good will: the one do it of love, knowing that I am set for the defense of the gospel; but the other proclaim Christ of faction, not sincerely, *thinking to raise up affliction for me in my bonds*"—

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certainly not a very sympathetic attitude toward Paul on the part of at least some of even the local preachers.

But hear again what he says, "I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy shortly unto you, that I also may be of good comfort, when I know your state. *For I have no man likeminded, who will care truly for your state. For they all seek their own, not the things of Jesus Christ.*" "No man likeminded"—evidently not much real sympathy there with his outlook and interests.

But clearest and saddest of all in this connection is what we find in the last epistle that left his pen,—Second Timothy. He is still a prisoner in Rome, but more alone than ever. Only Luke now is with him. Demas is gone. Titus, Timothy and other faithful members of his own little company have been sent on missions to distant places. And now he turns to pen a last letter, a letter to his "dear son Timothy." He says, "O Timothy, I adjure you, preach the word; keep at it in season and out of season, refuting, checking and exhorting men, never lose patience with them, and never give up your teaching; for the time will come when people will decline to be taught sound teaching and will accumulate teachers to suit themselves and tickle their own fancies; they will give up listening to the truth and turn to myths. Whatever happens, be self-possessed, flinch from no suffering, do your work as an evangelist, and discharge all your duties as a minister. The last drops of my own sacrifice are falling; my time to go has come. I have fought in the good fight; I have run my course; I have kept the faith." But he can also say, like the Spirit of his Master as it moved in the soul of the ancient prophet, "*I have trod the wine press alone, and of the people there was none with me.*" All his Asian friends have turned their backs upon him, and of his Roman friends not one had stood with him on the occasion of his defense before the authorities. All

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had forsaken him. (1:15; 4:16.) “May it not be laid to their account” he prays. He is drinking of his Master’s cup.

Time and a better understanding of Paul’s real size as a man and of his unique place in history and in the counsels of God, have given him an honor he seldom received in his own day. As we look back on him now we seem to see a halo about his head. He wore no halo then,—not even among the Christians. Today we fully and cordially acknowledge his gospel and apostleship. He had to defend them both then, and he did it vigorously. The Galatian and Corinthian epistles thrill us with their burning words in this connection.

2. The other fact I would mention that indicates that Paul largely outvisioned the people of his day, is the suddenness with which his distinctive gospel was forgotten after his death. The Fathers quote him, but it is altogether evident from the tone and emphasis of their writings that they had not understood him at all, nor assimilated his conception of the Christian life. Their legalism, creedalism, ritualism and ecclesiasticism are all in strange contrast to the freedom, life and power we see in Paul and the throb and inspiration of which we feel in all his letters.

The reason for this difference, I believe, lies in a different experience of Christ. In the Gospels and The Acts, we see a living Personality at work. Christ is central, present and active throughout all these books. The life and power of the same divine Being pulsates in Paul’s epistles and is seen working in his churches. But as time passes and we leave the writings of Paul and John we seem to leave farther and farther behind us that vital sense of the living presence and power of Jesus in the soul and in the church. Both as relates to a victorious life in the individual and as relates to the Divine government of the church, Christ is plainly felt to be at a

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distance. We seem to be getting away from the light. The sun is becoming obscured and the shadows of the dark ages are falling upon us. But as in our day the church emerges again into the light of evening time, the sun's clearer and clearer shining is bringing more and more warmth to our souls, clearer and clearer understanding to our minds and fuller and deeper realization of Christ in our lives. Thus it will be, thank God, until we see him as he is with the dawning of that eternal day just ahead of us.

“Face to face with Christ my Savior,
Face to face! what will it be!
When with rapture I behold Him,
Jesus Christ who died for me!”

Paul a Theological Prophet

Paul is undoubtedly the first and greatest theologian of Christendom, but if we look for a theological system in his writings we shall look in vain. His mind did not run in that direction. He was an Israelite, steeped in the religious literature of his own people, a people whose genius lay in the *realization* of God, not in the rational or logically ordered arrangement of abstract truth concerning Him. As one writer puts it, “Paul’s mind was fundamentally Semitic. It seized on one truth at a time, penetrating to the underlying principle with extraordinary power and viewing it successively from various sides. But, unlike a Greek thinker, he did not labor to reduce the sum of his principles to formal harmony in a system.” No, Paul’s mind and interests, like those of all the other Scripture writers from Moses down to John, did not run in that direction. He was a prophet. He had a message from God, and he burned to deliver it.

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You will get very little in the Bible, my brethren, that *appeals* to intellect, but its words have a tremendous pull on the heart. That knowledge of truth which its writers everywhere seek to convey is not doctrinal but experimental, not theoretical but practical. Doctrine, as Paul and Jesus used the word, was teaching rather than dogma, instruction of the soul, rather than information of the mind. All their interests were practical. And this is a point for us worth noting. As Christian teachers and ministers of the gospel word today, we may congratulate ourselves upon the “sound doctrine” we have, and we do, using the term in a sense that is perhaps more common with us than it is in the Scriptures. But we do well I think to keep also in mind the emphasis of Jesus and Paul and judge ourselves and our work thereby. Failure to follow Christ closely in this respect has in the past greatly hindered the real work of the kingdom in some places by producing a type of convert which happily is not so often met with today as formerly, a type that perhaps cannot better be described than by calling them “proselytes.” They are folks that have been brought over to our views and professions but have not been baptized into Christ. They have not been saturated in the Christian spirit—the Spirit that makes men and women like Jesus in disposition and outlook. We must guard against this sort of thing in ourselves and our people, remembering that even if we possess the gift of prophecy and are versed in all mysteries and all knowledge, if we are destitute of love, we count for nothing as God reckons values.

Paul’s writings, then, do not constitute what we would call a Systematic Theology; but if I may so speak, they are themselves the judge of all theologies and constitute today the best exposition and explanation of Christianity there is in the world. Let no one mistake me here. I have not a word against the study of Systematic Theology. Study it by all means. It will do you good, especially

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under a good teacher. My point simply is that Paul's writings are supreme. In these lectures, however, we shall confine ourselves pretty much to his epistle to the Romans, for there, in a fullness unknown to any other of his letters, we have his gospel. In fact, just as we have The Gospels according to Matthew, Mark, Luke and John concerning Jesus Christ the Son of God, so here we have The Gospel according to Paul, which interprets and applies the meaning and significance of those great facts of history which the others narrate and upon which both his and our faith is based.

An Estimate of Romans

The importance to Christians and to Christianity of Paul's letter to the Romans can scarcely be overdrawn. In it the leading minds of the church from primitive times until now have found both inspiration and the solution of their moral and religious problems. No other single writing, I believe, has furnished the Christian soldier with so many and such telling weapons for the battle of the truth. Here Luther found peace and the word with which he enlightened Europe and overthrew the papacy. Augustine in the 4th century was brought into the light while reading it, and John Wesley, the awakener of England in the eighteenth century, found peace and deliverance while listening to someone reading Luther's preface to the Epistle. Luther himself thus wrote of it—

“Romans is the true masterpiece of the New Testament and the very purest gospel, which is well worth and deserving that a Christian man should not only learn it by heart, word for word, but also that he should daily deal with it as the daily bread of men's souls. For it can never be too much or too well read or studied. And the more it is handled the more precious it becomes and the better it tastes.”

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It is related of Melancthon, too, that he regarded Romans as the key to the whole Bible and that he expounded it both orally and in writing more often than any other part of the New Testament. That he might the more thoroughly grasp its meaning and scope, he often wrote out the entire letter.

Ulrich Zwingli also found such strength and inspiration in it and Galatians that he made a copy of them and committed them to memory. Paul's letters were his unfailing arsenal of supplies in the victorious fight he put up against both the unrighteousness of the State and the superstitions of the Church.

For giving us a clear understanding of the gospel, Romans is undeniably the most important book of the whole New Testament. And yet how often we content ourselves with but portions of its treasure,—the 8th chapter, for instance, that raptured “paean of victory,” which begins with “no condemnation” and ends with certain glory.

Is it because we have not understood the Epistle that we do not enjoy it more? It was so with me until at a crisis in my life in India I gave myself up for weeks to the study of it. I was seeking a clearer understanding of the gospel to meet the cry of my heart, the needs of my ministry and the demands of my own mind. I thank God that I found just what I needed in Paul. You will not wonder then at my choice of a topic for these lectures. I know of others, too, that have had a glorious quickening from a study of Paul's “Gospel.” He who masters its thought knows the Pauline theology and enjoys all that holy enrichment which comes from association with an inspired mind like his. Let me commend it to you, my brethren, if any of you have not hitherto given it the attention it deserves, or have been using it more as a sort of dictionary of proof

texts for accepted doctrines than as a distinct piece of literature having its own peculiar message.

Unity In Diversity

It is a great convenience, but I am almost tempted at times to think it is a great misfortune too, that we have in our Bible the writings of so many writers all bound together without each having a separate introduction of its own. In its present shape the divine unity of the precious Volume has too often obscured from us the individuality of its many parts. A dozen different inspired writings have as much distinctive matter in them as the personalities of the dozen different inspired men that wrote them. It is this element of difference that gives me fully as much joy and zest in Bible study as does the evident underlying divine unity of the whole Book. Life in a local church would be awfully tame, wouldn't it, if we were all exactly alike and reduced by some supernatural power to a dead level of mental and dispositional uniformity? We would all soon be sighing, Oh, for relief from this dull monotony! And God would have to send us a Savior to liberate our personalities.

But I am digressing somewhat. Romans *is* a hard book for us to understand, I admit. But this is largely due, I believe, to the fact that owing to the circumstances of Paul's time the exposition of his gospel as we have it in Romans is encumbered with numerous references to feelings, prejudices and beliefs that are long since dead to the interests of Gentile readers. But even as relates to his essential message we might expect to have some difficulty in fully mastering his thought. You would hardly expect it to be just *naturally* easy to think all the thoughts of Paul, would you?

Many religious books of today provoke too little thought and awaken too little feeling. Having read them once or twice you have

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exhausted everything the writer says. Paul's writings are not like that. They awaken feeling in a Christian, but they, especially Romans, are also a challenge to his thought. So if we are to master the epistle we shall have to stir up the mind and soul, lay aside all mental indolence and ask the Lord earnestly for the help of his Spirit in the matter.

Coleridge, the great English poet and philosopher and the bosom friend of Wordsworth, once described this letter to the Romans as "the profoundest book in existence." We have to remind ourselves, however, that it was not written to be profound. It was written to elucidate. It is the natural, unaffected production of the Spirit-filled mind and soul of the Apostle to the Gentiles, and the more fully we can feel as he did toward Christ and the more nearly we can come to understanding the particular questions that were confronting him in his ministry at the time he wrote, the more easily we shall grasp and master the thoughts of his letter. One of its greatest difficulties perhaps in our minds, lies in what he says about Israel, but I think we shall get some help on that in our fourth lecture.

Lecture III

The Significance of Terms

I am sure we all recognize the fact that in order to a clear understanding of any letter or book of the Bible it is necessary for us to know something of the relative history of the time and of the circumstances under which the particular book or letter was written. Our regard for such things must sometimes reach even to the particular significance of words as they are used by the various writers. Because a word often occurs in the Bible is no reason for its having everywhere the same identical meaning. Different writers often use the same term with a different connotation. For instance:

“Flesh,” a favorite term with Paul, commonly has with him an ethical significance it seldom has in any other writer.

“Life,” in John, has generally a meaning entirely different from what the same word has when we meet with it in Genesis, or even in any of the other three Gospels.

“Know” and “knowledge,” occurring so often in John’s writings, and especially in his first epistle, have an emphasis and peculiar significance found nowhere else in the Bible, due entirely to the errors of incipient Gnosticism and Doceticism which he was combating.

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The Gnostics were those who said they *knew* the truth and knowing it were free. *They* had no sin. The essential evil of matter, as they regarded it, precluded the possibility of holiness in it, of course. So the soul was pure because it was spirit, but the body followed its own nature. They gloried in a salvation by *gnosis* (knowledge) and were careless about their lives. They held that their spiritual natures could not become morally polluted, whatever their conduct might be, as sin inhered only in matter. Hence the strong words John uses about sin, and about true knowledge in its relation to the practice of righteousness. "He that saith I know him and keepeth not his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him." "He that saith he abideth in him, ought himself also to walk even as he walked." "Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not; whosoever sinneth (practices sin) hath not seen him, neither hath known him."

The Docetics with the same idea of the essential evil of matter as the Gnostics had, reduced the incarnation to a mere appearance of a union between God and man. Hence John's emphasis upon the physical reality of the incarnation, a point that the other writers do not see any need of stressing. "That which we have heard," says he, "that which we have seen with our eyes, that which we beheld and our hands handled, . . . that which we have seen and heard declare we unto you also." The Docetics among the Christians were saying that Christ acted and suffered only in appearance. Hence John in his Gospel describes the spear thrust, which none of the other evangelists even mentions. Its value as evidence was only recognized with the rise of heresy.

Then again, take the term "faith." In Paul's writings, as a rule, this word has a peculiarly strong ethical and spiritual significance, seldom found to the same extent elsewhere. He regards faith more

as a moral act, than as a creedal requirement, more as a believing “unto righteousness” *realized here and now*, more as a loving adhesion of the soul to the living Christ, than as a supporting principle enabling us to persevere in hope and well-doing as did the patriarchs of old,—a principle giving us as it did them the assurance of things *yet to be*. This last, you will have noticed, is the chief meaning “faith” has throughout the Epistle to the Hebrews. The term “faith” in that letter has about the same significance as “hope” in Romans.

Romans and Hebrews Compared

In all the letters that bear Paul’s name “faith” joins the believer to Christ, makes him a partaker of his Spirit (Rom. 8:9), makes him one with the Lord—a member in his very body, so vivid is the metaphor because so close is the union felt to exist. In Hebrews, on the other hand, the ruling conception is of a Christ in heaven, a Christ external to the believer and the church,—a Christ “passed into the heavens and seated on the right hand of the Majesty on high,” the “high priest forever, entered within the veil.” It is the conception of Bunyan’s Pilgrim Progress and of the poet who sang,

“Jesus, our all, to heaven is gone,
He whom we fix our hopes upon.
His track we see and we’ll pursue
The narrow way till him we view.”

This may be Bunyan’s Pilgrim but it is not Paul’s gospel. It is Jesus as *example*, but not Jesus as *life*.

Again, the characteristic phrase, “in Christ,” which is everywhere met with in Paul, occurs nowhere in Hebrews; and as for, “Christ in us,” an *indwelling* Christ,—you would find it hard,

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to extract such a doctrine from that epistle, albeit Hebrews is one of the most striking and important books of the New Testament.

I mention these points because they vividly illustrate the importance of our studying the different books in the light of the varying circumstances and conceptions of their different authors. Let us take one more enlightening instance.

The Epistle to the Hebrews, we know, deals throughout with the experience of salvation from the standpoint of the divine *worship* and the Jewish ritual and hence the writer calls it *sanctification*, for according to the teachings of the Law and, in fact, of all religions, only the “sanctified” can approach the altar or “draw near” to God. Romans, on the other hand, deals with the same experience of salvation but from the standpoint of the divine *righteousness* and *law*, and hence calls it justification. A careful study of the two epistles with mind released from predeterminations will show that both are referring to the same thing, though the terms and viewpoint are so different. This, of course, does not mean that justification and sanctification in the sense we use the terms, or in the sense they are used elsewhere in Scripture, are the same thing or refer to but one act or work of God’s free grace. Not at all. It only shows that these two terms are used differently by different writers.

These clear instances of difference, which might easily be multiplied, only go to show the importance of the suggestion made in the last lecture, that it is a risky thing to use the Bible as though it were only a dictionary of proof texts. It is that in some respects, but it is much more. It is a divine library of authors, whose works need to be studied by themselves and each in the light of its own viewpoint.

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If, then, we do not have careful regard to the usages of the different writers we will surely go astray in our exegesis and among enlightened people our arguments will often provoke a smile where they ought to have produced conviction. We have a message the whole world needs, the wise as well as the unwise, the Seminary-trained Bible student and the ignorant plow-boy, and we must qualify ourselves to teach all classes.

Occasional Nature of Bible Books

I have dwelt at some length on the significance of terms, and doing so always makes me feel a heightened sense of the importance and value of Bible study. But of equally as much importance as the noting of terms in the study of Scripture is noting the *occasional* character of its books. We should search out the particular circumstance or event that occasioned the writing of a book and, as far as possible, we should familiarize ourselves with the conditions existing at the time it was written, so as to apprehend clearly the essential message it was intended to convey to the particular people addressed. We can then more intelligently and consistently apply that message in our own case.

I mean, for instance, that Paul's letters were not written just because he took a notion to write or even because God spoke from heaven or in his soul and told him to write. His epistles, and about all the other books of the Bible, were born out of life. There were certain specific, existing reasons or causes for their being written, and it is in the light of these conditions or exciting causes that they are to be understood. There is simply no other way rightly to understand the books of Scripture.

The writers of the epistles had different but very definite purposes in mind when they took up their pens. They also wrote at

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different times and to different sorts of people,—some to Jews and some to Gentiles, some to new converts and some to old, some to those in danger of one heresy and some in view of another. So without carefully noting such facts and studying the various writings of the Bible in the light of their different settings and the different immediate historic causes of their production, no man, no matter how spiritual he may be, can understand the Bible as he ought.

Our Bible is a living book. It sprang out of human life and out of God's contact with human life. It speaks to us in the midst of human life and it must be studied in the light of that particular state of human life in the midst of which its different books were born. It throbs with human interest, and appeals to men everywhere, because it is such an intensely human book. It is like the Savior himself who is very God—and very man. It is the humanity of the Divine Christ that brought the divine life into human lives and it is the human element in the divine Book that serves to bring its message close home to our hearts. The Bible is the book, not of scholars and theologians only, but of our own hearts and hearths. Thank God for the Bible!

The Occasion of Romans

This letter of Paul's to the Romans then must have had its occasion. What it was is not at once so clearly apparent upon the face of the letter as are the occasions of most of his other epistles, Titus and Timothy, Philemon, Galatians, 1st and 2nd Thessalonians, for example. Just to mention these is at once to recall their occasions. The occasion for the writing of Romans is not so evident as in the case of these others, but certain points are tolerably clear.

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1. There had been no report of disorder and division at Rome, such as had called forth the letters to the Corinthians. I Cor. 1:11; 5:1.

2. Nor had any letter of inquiry been sent to Paul from the Roman church, as had been the case with Corinth. I Cor. 7:1.

3. Nor was the Roman church in serious danger from Judaising teachers so that he must write to them, as he did to the Galatians, in sore apprehension lest they should fall from grace,—the grace of Christ, under the yoke of the law. Gal. 1:6, 7; 3:1-3; 5:1-12.

4. They came in for no censure, but only praise. Ch. 15:14. Their faith is known “throughout the whole world.” 1:8.

Thus there seems to have been no particular cause in the Roman church itself for his writing to them. What then was its occasion? It may give us the key to the real nature of his epistle.

The occasion was that peculiar crisis in Paul’s ministry which came at this time, shortly before the Passover of about 58 A. D., the 4th year of Nero’s reign.

Paul is in Corinth, staying at the house of Gaius (Rom. 16:23). Tertius, a companion of Paul’s, receives the dictation and writes down the letter (16:22) just on the eve of Paul’s departure for Jerusalem on what is to be his final visit, with the alms collected by him in Macedonia and Achaia for the poor saints at Jerusalem. Rom. 15:25, 26.

Paul is the apostle of the nations. He has been an ambassador of Christ in that capacity for about 25 years. From Jerusalem round about even unto Illyricum, clear up into what is now the Balkan Peninsula, he has fully preached the gospel of Christ. He has

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operated first from Antioch as headquarters, and then from Ephesus. And now having no more place in all these eastern regions, and longing to fulfill his ministry, he, like the far-seeing Christian statesman he was, now proposes to make Rome itself the basis and center of a new evangelistic effort, with Spain and “the utmost bounds of the west” for its goal. Rom. 15:22-24, 28.

Romans, then, was written to intimate to the saints of the Imperial City his long-cherished desire to see them. “I would not have you ignorant, brethren, that oftentimes I purposed to come unto you and was hindered hitherto” (1:13). What had hindered the feet of this messenger of Christ? The very thing that has hindered many of God’s servants in our own day,—a controversy. Time and strength had been occupied defending his churches from the legalists and his calumniators so that he could not go about in accordance with his great commission. The world must go without the gospel because some one feels he must bind the law upon Paul’s converts. It is not the law that has bothered *us*, but it has been its exact equivalent, a legalistic conception of the gospel and of the New Testament, and it has done us much harm.

But for Paul, as for us, the controversy is now practically over and victory is won, so he writes this letter to prepare the church at Rome for his approaching visit. 1:17. He wants to interest them directly in his work and impart to them his doctrine, for he has never yet preached among them. He therefore in this letter launches out to set before them for their edification, such an exposition of his gospel as would make it fully known to them.

We may well thank God today for that combination of circumstances in Paul’s life which led the dear apostle to dictate such a letter. It is a moment of calm. The real storm of the Judaistic controversy is over. Paul’s mind is free. The moment is propitious

and in the providence of God he now dictates a comprehensively developed exposition of those principles for which he has stood all these years and which he had argued with such polemic vehemence in his letter to the Galatians. Romans then, may be said to signalize the victory of Pauline Christianity over the Judaistic reaction. It is, so to speak, the manifesto and doctrinal apologetic of his gospel, by which the great apostle of the Gentiles at this crisis in his ministry, when he feels that his work in the East is done and he is reaching out for the new and unevangelized fields of the West, seeks to establish relations with the Christian community in the capital of the Gentile world.

The Readers Addressed

And just who are the people to whom he writes? They are Gentiles, that is, believers of Gentile origin. For he regards them as within the special province of his apostolate. See Ch. 1:5, 6, 13; 15:15, 16, and also 11:13-32 where he addresses them as “you Gentiles” in distinction from Israel of whom in this epistle he generally speaks in the third person and whom he calls “my kinsmen,” not “your kinsmen” nor “our kinsmen.” 9:3.

But the Gentiles addressed were not like ordinary Gentiles,—such as the idolatrous Galatians, Ephesians and Corinthians had been. They were people of a different type; Gentiles indeed, but Jewish in religious education and ideas. We see this very clearly from several facts.

1. Their entire familiarity with the Old Testament scriptures is everywhere assumed. Romans is almost as full of O. T. quotations as are Matthew and Hebrews, books written especially for Jews.

2. Again, Jewish objections to points in the argument of the epistle are repeatedly recognized and carefully answered. Jewish

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difficulties are met. In fact, the letter reads in many essential parts like the appeal of a Christian Jew to Jews. Were it not for the plain references to his readers as Gentiles one might easily imagine that the epistle was “designed to win Jewish Christians to the Pauline standpoint, to overcome their prejudices and to wean them from dependence on legal righteousness.”

3. Then again the express statement in Ch. 7:1-5 shows their Jewish education. In view of all these facts, therefore, and of the moral culture and intellectual enlightenment which the whole tone and matter of the epistle imply as existing among the people addressed, it is evident that they were not late converts from idolatry but must have long been instructed in the truths of revealed religion.

The only class of people of Gentile origin that answers to this description are the proselytes, people that had been converts from heathenism to Judaism. That this class was very numerous in Rome is natural, for we know from history that Jews were in the Gentile capital in large numbers, and Acts 2:10 tells us that at Pentecost “sojourners from Rome, both Jews and proselytes,” were present. It is altogether likely that these on returning to Rome from the experiences of the day of Pentecost spread the gospel there and were the real founders of the church in that city. The Roman Catholic contention that St. Peter was its founder is absolutely baseless. Had he been in Rome when Paul wrote, or had this church there owed its origin to him, it is inconceivable that Paul in a letter of this nature would have made absolutely no allusion to the fact. Rome is to him a city where no apostle has ever preached. Ch. 1:11, 15.

The Subject of the Letter

We now have, I think, a fairly clear grasp of the situation and are prepared to enter upon the epistle itself. Sufficient time does not remain this evening for us to more than point out that, in keeping with the character and the experience of the man we have been studying, the great subject of his letter—his “Gospel”—is “The *Righteousness* of God.” Righteousness was Paul’s great theme as it had been his great problem, and now he has the necessary occasion for giving an ordered exposition of it. To him it was a three-fold problem, at once legal, moral and religious, and it was expressed in three great and pressing questions.

1. How can the guilty be forgiven and God be righteous?

2. How can the sinful be made holy so as to manifest God’s righteousness?

3. How are we to square the righteousness of God, and his consequent faithfulness to his word to Israel, with the fact of Israel’s apparent rejection?

The first of these vital questions, How can the guilty be forgiven and God be righteous or just? was the legal aspect of the problem and Paul found its solution in the death of Christ for the sinner.

The second question, How can the sinful be made holy so as to manifest or fulfill God’s righteousness? was the moral aspect of the problem and Paul found its solution in the life of Christ in the believer.

The third question, If God be righteous and faithful, how about Israel? was the religious or national aspect of the problem and Paul solved it by the doctrine of the election of grace.

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The legal and moral problems, relative to a man's forgiveness and his becoming holy, arose out of the needs of Paul's own mind and heart before his conversion. The religious and national problem arose out of the facts of his subsequent ministry.

Lecture IV (Part 1)

The Problem of Israel

The exposition of Paul's gospel as given us in his Epistle to the Romans, in so far as it relates to Christian experience and living, falls into three main divisions.

The first of these, setting forth his teaching as to Justification, and solving the *legal* problem referred to at the close of the last lecture, occupies chapters 1-5. The second, presenting his teaching as to Sanctification, and solving the *moral* problem, occupies chapters 6-8. The third, giving a practical application of the truth to the believer's life (1) in the church (2) in the world and (3) in his everyday contact with his fellow Christians, occupies chapters 12-15.

Coming between the second and third divisions is a section all by itself, having a beginning and conclusion all its own. This entire section may be lifted clear out of the Epistle without in the least breaking the chain of thought or detracting from the practical and spiritual value of the letter to us as an exposition of the gospel. Let us then first dispose of it so that we may conclude our lectures with Paul's essential message.

These chapters (9-11) are a treasure within the Epistle. They have to do, not so much with the legal or moral problem of how

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sinners may be saved from sin, as with the answer to the historical and religious problem of the unbelief of the Jews, the people whom God had elected to be his agent of blessing to the world in the gospel age but who were now as a whole rejecting that gospel.

Israel's unbelief was a very disconcerting fact to many in the apostolic age, and it constituted a great problem. In the minds of both Jews and Gentiles it easily led to a measure of skepticism regarding Christianity. The chosen people without a part in the kingdom of God! Impossible! Paul in his ministry was therefore met with such objections as these: The Jew said, "Your teaching of faith-righteousness implies that God has gone back on his law-covenant. His word to Israel as a nation counts for naught." The Gentile said, "If your gospel be true God's election of Israel has failed, for they are everywhere rejecting your message."

God Justified

The 9th chapter, which begins with a reference to his own intense sorrow at Israel's condition and a rehearsal of their ancient privileges (1-5), is Paul's attempt to explain the situation as not involving any unrighteousness or unfaithfulness on the part of God. He will justify God against all creaturely and carnal assumptions of privilege. And this he does by showing, first that God's election to any calling has never included all the physical descendants of an elect person.

"The word of God" to Israel as Abraham's seed, that in them all the nations of the earth should be "blessed" (and which they were mistaking to be a reference to the blessing of a political reign over the nations, under the Messiah), has not failed he says, for "Israel" does not mean everyone who belongs to Israel. V. 6.

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Not all Abraham's children were included in the original promise, but only Isaac; nor all of Isaac's children, but only Jacob. God made free choices then in relation to membership in the line to the Messiah, thus illustrating the fact that his eternal purpose was an "election of grace," not of works, vs. 7-13. Ishmael and Isaac, Esau and Jacob had done nothing either good or bad to determine God's election to position at that time, and so also now it is not the Jews' observance of the law nor the Gentiles' non-observance that determines God's election of them to blessing and salvation in Christ. Election to salvation or a place in the kingdom is for all who believe on Jesus—Jews or Gentiles, "for there is no difference." God's election in this matter is "in Christ," not in the Law, nor in birth in the line of physical descent from Abraham.

The self-righteousness and national pride of many of the Jews had blinded them to this truth and they thought that the election *was* of physical descent, "of works," "of him that willeth," and "of him that runneth," etc. They seem to have come to feel that their nation had something of a claim of right upon God, giving them, as Jews, a title to his kingdom and blessings which he was bound to respect.

John the Baptist had warned some of them against such an idea (Matt. 3:9). Jesus had taught against it (John 5:39, 40), and now Paul seeks to overthrow it in this chapter by recalling God's ways in Israel's own past history, where Isaac was chosen before Ishmael, and Jacob before Esau; the first-born, who had done no evil and who also possessed any natural rights there were, having been superseded by the younger brother who had done no good to merit it. God thus had shown that his elective purpose from the beginning was based not on human merit, or demerit, nor in birth, but on his free grace alone. Vs. 7-13.

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As further illustrating the truth of God's freedom to elect men to salvation by a way of pure grace, in Christ, involving as it did the acceptance of some Israelites (viz., those who believed) and the rejection of others (viz., those who disbelieved), Paul refers to what God said to Moses in Exod. 3:19, "I will show mercy and compassion upon whomsoever I choose to show it." He was not bound to save all Israelites (or even any Israelites) on the mere ground of their being Israelites and keepers of the law. Considerations of grace become a sovereign. Grace is his prerogative. Demands at such a court are not likely to be welcomed. Dictation is not man's prerogative. Pleas of privilege and pride of power are not in court before God. Vs. 14-22.

Not, of course, that God as Sovereign of the kingdom would choose or act arbitrarily in either 'showing mercy' or 'taking vengeance.' That is not Paul's meaning. His whole point here is that in saving sinners God is utterly untrammled and uncompelled. Throughout chapter 9 up to verse 29 he is simply maintaining God's freedom against Jewish presumption. "Vessels of mercy" and "vessels of wrath" were all chosen suitably, but they were also chosen sovereignly. The potter (God) does not *have* to treat the whole lump (Israel) alike. He has the right to make of one part (the believing) a vessel unto honor, and of the other (the unbelieving) a vessel unto dishonor. V. 21. In reality God's displeasure *finds*, not *makes* men "fitted to destruction." It is the presence or absence of the spirit of humble dependence upon God and trust in his grace that really determines in any age what disposition shall be made of men.

It may not be amiss right here to note that people who, in connection with any blessing or favor, try to influence God on the principle of coercion and demand, as of right, are departing from

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the true spirit of religion and will suffer many a disappointment and bitter lesson. Jesus never acted on that principle with his Father and neither did Paul or any of the other apostles with their Master.

Another point Paul brings out in this 9th chapter is that God is free even to withhold from an incorrigible man or a “gain-saying people” his just judgment upon their sin and perversity, in order that a purpose of mercy regarding others might be fulfilled. He had done this with Pharaoh and he had done it with disobedient and rebellious Israel. He was still doing it. The disobedient were not yet “destroyed from among the people,” as he had warned them through Moses they would be. Deut. 18:15; Acts 3:22. His “much long-suffering” had spared them that a “remnant” might be saved. Had not God’s prophets, too, foreseen the existing situation of the calling of the Gentiles into the kingdom and the rejection of all but a remnant of Israel? Verses 22-29.

Paul’s contention is that God is not to be blamed because a perverse and rebellious people had misinterpreted his purpose and misunderstood his ways. Psa. 95:7-11. There is no unrighteousness with God. Ch. 9:14. His word to Israel, as to its true meaning and intent, has not “come to naught” by the unbelief of the nation. For his mind and purpose for them had a spiritual and universal content, while their conception of it had been largely political and national.

So much for the Divine and for us largely speculative side of the question. Paul now turns to man’s side, the moral aspect of the situation, and points out that Israel’s national stumbling had a specific cause in themselves and that they deserved their rejection. 9:30-10:21.

Israel's Rejection Deserved

The paradoxical fact before us is that Gentiles, who were out of the way of righteousness which introduces to the kingdom (ch. 14:17), have obtained that righteousness, while Israel, intent upon a law of righteousness, has missed the mark. And why? Because they have rejected the way of faith, which the Gentiles have taken, preferring that of works. 9:30-32.

And why was that? Because, owing to their self-conceit and willfulness, they were blinded to God's way of grace. Bent on establishing their own righteousness before him, they did not recognize nor submit themselves to the righteousness of God. They deemed the Mosaic system to be eternal and so failed to see its end, its terminus and goal, in Jesus Christ. They stumbled at the old stumbling block marked in Isa. 8:14 and 28:16,—the demand for *trust in God* as the basis of salvation. 9:32-10:4.

This word of trust and faith is the word we preach, "That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth Jesus as Lord and shalt believe in thy heart that God raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved: for with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." It is by the preaching of it that this "word" of life is brought to the heart and mouth of the sinner as the atmosphere comes to the lungs. Man does not make it; he breathes it and lives. Ch. 10:5-10. It is God's gift, God's word. And it is as free for all as the air they breathe. There is no distinction between Jew and Gentile in point of need and no distinction in that the same Lord over all waits to save all and on the same conditions. This is the gospel era, the time of the kingdom of God, when the grace of God, having appeared to save all men everywhere, must be preached to all. The voice of the Spirit-filled preachers of this life-giving "word of Christ" is to go

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“into all the earth and their words unto the ends of the world.” 11-18.

And did Israel not know that the era of their special privilege would pass away and that God’s purpose would embrace the Gentiles? If they did not understand this they were culpably ignorant, for both Moses and the prophets had asserted it. 19-21.

Has God then cast off his ancient people? is the question. “Far be the thought,” Paul replies, for many Israelites, himself included, have seen the truth and accepted it. This is proof that God has not so turned to the Gentiles that his back is toward the Jews. No, he is inviting all alike. He had, it is true, once shut out Gentiles, as such, in order that he might separate Israel to himself for a purpose; but now that the time is fulfilled and he is accepting Gentiles he is not excluding Jews. The basis of relationship now is different from before, that is all. And it is a basis quite as well suited to the Jew as to the Gentile, viz., faith in Jesus Christ, the one Lord of both. And, as in the days of Elijah, when all seemed to have left Jehovah and Elijah was told that there were 7,000 in Israel that had not forsaken God, so now, as seen in Paul himself and others, there was a remnant still, a “first fruits” (11:16), a remnant elected by grace, not on the ground of works (vs. 5, 6). The faithful 7,000 had been “the Israel of God” then as the people of the believing “remnant” now are. The rest, the many, are rejected because of their unbelief, in accordance with the predictions of Isaiah and David. 11:1-10.

Their Rejection Not Final

But is their rejection absolute and final? Are they without hope? V. 11. Paul says they are not. As we missionaries in India have reason to believe that the conversion and consequent

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elevation of the “unclean” outcasts will provide an object lesson to the caste Hindus which will in time commend the faith to them and result in their conversion in large numbers where hitherto only individuals have obeyed the gospel, so Paul, supported by intimations in the prophetic scriptures, sees a purpose of grace even in the hardening of Israel. Their rejection of the gospel has led to its passing to the Gentiles. And from the words of the prophets he gathers that the divine purpose is thereby to provoke the unbelieving nation to jealousy and thus finally to save them. Having saved all he could by the first direct preaching of the gospel, God means to produce by the conversion of the Gentiles a reaction in the rest that will result in their conversion too. There is no reason why they should not be “grafted in again” to the body of God’s people, “if they continue not in their unbelief.” 12-24.

For the Lord is a God of infinite grace. He willeth not the death of any, but that all should come to repentance and he works to that end. He has “shut up all (not every *man*, but Jews and Gentiles) unto disobedience, that he might have mercy upon all. O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God!” Vs. 32, 33.

The mass of the Jews may be “enemies” to him for the Gentiles’ sake, since they opposed the giving of the gospel to the Gentiles (1 Thess. 2:14-16), but they are also “beloved for the fathers’ sake” in whom he chose the nation. That calling, so far as it relates to a place in the kingdom, still stands. He does not go back on it. Vs. 28, 29. The Jews, therefore, may still be saved. But only on one condition,—that they accept the gospel. If they are saved at all, they will be saved as Paul and all the other apostles were. They will enter the kingdom by becoming Christians,

members of the Messianic society, the church of God, whose calling is a heavenly one and whose destiny is eternal glory.

Their Looked-For Spiritual Restoration

What then becomes of the Jewish, national, political hope? All such earthly, material considerations are swallowed up in the excelling glory of the true Divine hope. Having thus “begun in the Spirit” by becoming partakers of the Holy Ghost, converted Jews like Paul and the rest are not going to be “perfected in the flesh” by lapsing to lower levels. God’s order is ‘first that which is natural, then that which is spiritual’ (1 Cor. 15:46). T’were a subversion of the Divine order and a degradation of Christianity for Christian Jews to cling to political hopes. They shall never be realized.

What then, says one, is the meaning in 11:25, “For I would not, brethren, have you ignorant of this mystery, lest ye be wise in your own conceits, that a hardening in part hath befallen Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in; and so all Israel shall be saved.”

It means simply this, I think, that the hardening spoken of in verse 7 as happening to the unbelieving part of Israel, was to be expected to continue until the Gentiles in their full strength should come into the divine favor, when the remaining Jews, provoked by the sight and the sense of their own loss of God’s favor, should turn from their unbelief and acknowledge their Messiah, as so many “myriads” of their co-religionists had already done. Acts 21:20. Gentile Christianity would provoke them to jealousy with the result that they too would be saved and enter the Messianic Kingdom. Compare Matt. 13:41, 47-50. Paul here seems to have in mind not only the eternal destiny of individuals but also, and perhaps especially, the broader, historical question of Israel’s

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preordained place as a people in the Messianic kingdom. But respecting any supposed restoration of the Jews as a body to God's favor little has been revealed except this, that it can be only through their obedience to the gospel. This is absolutely certain and clear from the entire New Testament. Paul's word "so" in the clause, "and *so* all Israel shall be saved," apparently points to the same fact, for it means "in the manner described," namely, by their being grafted in again through obedience to the gospel. Verses 20-24. "Shall," too, in the same phrase, is not a dogmatic or absolute assertion, as some have supposed, but a relative one, being plainly dependent upon the qualifying "if" in verse 23, "If they continue not in their unbelief."

We do not know what a great influx of Jews there may have been into the Christian Church after the days of Paul and the destruction of Jerusalem. It may be that Paul's expectation was largely realized. In any case the deliverance he refers to in verses 25 and 26, even if spoken of Israel as a whole, is a religious and ethical one. It has here no political significance whatever and nothing to do with any assumed return of the Jews to Palestine.

We should pray and hope for the conversion of the Jews that remain to this day and we should welcome any prospect of it. Their very continuance until now would seem to indicate that the Divine purpose has something yet in store for them, although it may be that he has upheld them all these centuries only as an abiding witness to the truth of his Word. But who has fathomed the wealth that lies in the wisdom and knowledge of God? "How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past tracing out! For of him, and through him, and unto him, are all things. To him be the glory forever. Amen." V. 36.

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Paul in the 15th verse of this chapter also asks (he does not assert) whether the receiving of the Jews, completing as he here conceives it will the evangelization of the world, will not also conclude the mission of the gospel and bring about the final consummation long desired, even life from the dead, at the Lord's return. Sayings of Jesus like that of Matt. 23:39 may have prompted Paul's hope in this connection. Only a believing people anywhere could say of the glorified Jesus, "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord."

"Believest Thou the Prophets?"

In concluding this part of our subject I should like to offer a suggestion or two in regard to certain Old Testament prophecies concerning "Israel" and "Jerusalem."

1. God's word or his words, we know, "cannot be broken." That is, he does not go back on them. And yet we must confess that they may be rendered void by the non-fulfillment upon man's part of conditions that are implied in them even if not directly expressed. For instance, at the giving of the law to Israel, God was on the point of setting aside apparently unconditional promises made to them and transferring their fulfillment to one small section of them, namely the descendants of Moses. He was only turned from his purpose by the intercession of that man of God. Exod. 32:9-14. Later on also, when provoked by Israel's unbelief, he cut off a whole generation of them from their promised inheritance, saying to them, "Doubtless ye shall not come into the land, concerning which I sware to make you dwell therein . . . your carcasses shall fall in this wilderness . . . and ye shall know my *breach of promise*." Num. 14:30-34. Such instances as these

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clearly show that God's word, spoken or written, can be rendered inoperative or made void by man's presumption.

Again, God's word to King Hezekiah by the mouth of Isaiah the prophet was most positive and explicit: "Thus saith Jehovah, Set thy house in order; for thou shalt die [i.e., of this sickness], and not live." Isa. 38:1. And yet the king's prayer brought about a condition which resulted in the abrogation of the prophecy. For yet another instance take the word of the Lord to Nineveh by Jonah. It was clear and positive: "Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown." Jon. 3:24. Nothing whatever is said of possible qualifying conditions, and yet as an actual fact a change in the people resulted in the non-fulfillment of the "word of prophecy." For "Jehovah repented of the evil which he said he would do to them and he did it not." 3:10. At this, you will remember, Jonah got offended, for it reflected upon his veracity as a prophet. He evidently had more regard for the letter of God's word than he had for the spirit of it. He was a strict and consistent literalist in this matter. But he learned better. May we not hope the same of some others today?

From these clear instances of the non-fulfillment of Divinely inspired words and prophecies, I think we may rightly deduce the principle that Divine inspiration does not require that every statement made by God through his prophets regarding either a person or a people *must* be fulfilled, when the attitude or condition of that person or people renders non-fulfillment more to the glory of God than fulfillment. The reason why every prophecy concerning Jesus himself was fulfilled doubtless was that he kept his will and life in all respects in perfect accord with God. Had he done otherwise the Scriptures concerning him could not all have had fulfillment. This would seem to be implied in Luke 22:37.

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Thus it seems clear that there may be specific prophecies in the Old Testament regarding the Jews and Jerusalem that have lapsed through their disobedience and never shall be fulfilled. They serve as a standing witness to them and the world of what might have been.

2. But, again, if we will observe the time when some others of these prophecies regarding Israel and the Jews were given, I think we shall see that not a few of them, that today are being referred by millennialists to the Jews as yet to be fulfilled, were fulfilled long ago in the return of the Jews from Babylon and the acceptance of the gospel by Israelites in the days of the apostles. An example of this kind of prophecy is Hosea's word in Hos. 3:4, 5, "The children of Israel shall abide many days without king and without prince and without sacrifice, and afterward shall they return and seek Jehovah their God and David their king, and shall come with fear unto Jehovah and to his goodness in the latter days." "David their king" is evidently an analogical expression having reference to the Messiah, Jesus the Davidic king, to whom they were to gather "in the latter days," the Christian era which began with Pentecost and will end with the Parousia or second coming of Christ. In the light of the plain references to Israel and the "twelve tribes" in the New Testament it is difficult to believe that the apostles had any idea of "lost tribes." See James 1:1, Acts 26:7, Rom. 11:1.

3. Again, and finally, if as we are surely bound to admit, God foreknew and from the beginning had in mind his New Testament people (Rom. 9:23-26), they must have been a subject of Old Testament prophecy. This is all the more sure when we reflect upon the fact that a spiritual people are much more to God and his prophetic Spirit than a fleshly people could ever be. But in speaking of the New Testament church and kingdom to carnal

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Jews how could he describe their spiritual elevation and excelling glory other than under figures with which they themselves were familiar? There was no other suitable way. We therefore read, among other figures, of the Lord's house established above the mountains, a city with walls and wells of salvation and gates of praise, a peaceful kingdom where wolves and lambs, leopards and kids lie down together, etc.

God has had to educate men much as we educate children, by employing first that which is natural and discernible by the natural senses, then that which is spiritual and discernible by the mind. He has educated mankind in the earlier stages partly by ceremonial *laws* and partly by *promises*. Systems of laws and ordinances have had their place and rightly claimed obedience until their purpose has been served, that is, until the practical lessons they were designed to teach have been learned or until the higher, spiritual truths they have concealed under "the protecting husk of symbolism" could be apprehended or received without disguise. Then their work was done and men were no longer bound by them. The material shadow has given place to the spiritual substance. In the same way there were promises made under the old dispensation which were but symbols of deeper and more spiritual blessings that in the moral childhood of the race would not and could not have appeared attractive. We interest a child and secure his obedience by motives that would not appeal to an adult. So in the moral childhood of humanity God, who looked forward to maturity, made some promises under material forms that *meant* something else. They were not *delusions* but *illusions*, "some better thing" having been provided to take their place. This is the great lesson of the Epistle to the Hebrews which some folks who would still contend for the material, political, national shadows need to learn. Only the child that has refused to advance to manhood can feel

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disappointed at the Father's substitution of life eternal for long life, a spiritual offspring for a numerous literal seed, "an inheritance among the sanctified" for one among olive yards, vines and fig trees, and a priest-king upon a throne in the heavens for one ruling with a literal rod of iron in his hand in Palestinian Jerusalem.

Lecture IV (Part 2)

The Epistle to the Romans

In order to gain the right understanding of any Bible book and especially of the Epistles, a good introduction is of supreme importance. In our first three lectures, therefore, the object was to so familiarize ourselves with Paul's own religious experience as well as with the particular circumstances in which his letter to the Romans was born that we might be able to understand the latter and to grasp clearly the great apostle's conception of the everlasting gospel. Nothing else can ever satisfy us, and until the soul attains its desire it cries after discernment and lifts up its voice for understanding. It seeks her as silver and searches for her as for hid treasures.

As an aid to the student in attaining his heart's desire in this connection the present course of lectures was given and we now conclude them with an exposition of the main argument of the Epistle itself.

Basic Truths in Paul's Thought—Four great ethical truths are plainly basic in all Paul's thinking.

The first is that man's true felicity and the goal of his existence are only to be found in the favor of God. This conviction, we saw lay at the root of all Paul's earnest strivings as a Pharisee;

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and when he became a Christian it remained with him, only transformed by the new relationship to God in which he found himself through Jesus Christ.

The second truth is that while in the nature of things God's favor can rest only upon the righteous, as a fact of experience men everywhere are in a state of sin and consequently are exposed to God's anger. "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God." Man's righteousness has failed. "For the bed is shorter than that a man can stretch himself on it; and the covering narrower than that he can wrap himself in it." Isa. 28:20.

The third great truth, fully demonstrated in Paul's own experience, is that an external law, however holy, just and good, is futile as a means of securing the coveted boon because it cannot save from sin. It can give us a better knowledge of our sin but no strength to overcome it. It is too "weak" to enforce its own spiritual demands against the contrary disposition of carnal human nature.

The fourth and crowning truth is that in the fullness of time in the gospel of Christ, "the grace of God has appeared" for the present salvation of every sinner that will accept of it.

The great theme of the epistle therefore is the Gospel, which is the power of God unto salvation for the reason that "therein is revealed a righteousness of God" which meets the needs of the situation and secures to all believers that divine favor in which man's true felicity lies and the goal of his existence is attainable.

Outline of Doctrinal Analysis

I. Doctrine of Justification. Chs. 1-5.

1. All men need this justifying righteousness. 1:18- 3:20.
2. It has been provided through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. 3:21-31.
3. Justification apart from legal obedience is no innovation 4:1-25.
4. The present blessed results of justification by faith in Jesus Christ. 5:1-11.
5. A contrast of Adam and Christ with regard to the effects of their respective acts. 5:12-21.

II. Doctrine of Sanctification. Chs. 6-8.

1. Why believers in Christ cannot continue sinning. Ch. 6
2. The means, the end and the necessity of their release from the law. Ch. 7.
3. The victorious life of the Spirit-led Christian man and its glorious issue. Ch. 8.

III. Doctrine of God's Free Election. Chs. 9-11.

1. God's freedom justified as against all creaturely assumptions. Ch. 9:1-29.
2. Israel's stumbling their own fault and their rejection deserved. 9:30-10:21.
3. The final outcome looked for,—the salvation of all, even the now rebellious. Ch. 11.

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IV. Practical Application to Life's Relations. Chs. 12-15.

1. Toward God. 12:1, 2.
2. Toward ourselves. 12:3, 16; 14:22.
3. In the church and toward the saints. 12:4-13; 14:1-15:13.
4. Toward our enemies. 12:14-21.
5. Toward the authorities. 13:1-7.
6. In all social relations. 13:8-14.

Exposition of the Epistle

I. Doctrine of Justification. Chs. 1-5.

After an elaborate salutation (1:1-7) for he is introducing himself to a new community, and after some personal explanations (8-15), Paul states his main theme (16,17) nothing that the righteousness of which he speaks is “a righteousness of God”—a righteousness of which God is the source and which is both attained and maintained by faith (17). Then he plunges into the argument, his first point being that

1. *All men need this righteousness.* 1:18-3:20. God's anger rests upon the entire race. It rests upon the Gentile world of the ungodly (18-32) who have been thrice ‘given up’ because of their wickedness (24, 26, 28) and who reveal in their awful condition the just recompense of their sins against light; and it rests upon the censorious moralist and the formal Jew (2:1-29), whoever vainly thinks that a moral and religious creed will answer for practical righteousness; for fate at the judgment will turn on action, not opinion, and “patient continuance in well-doing” is the evidence that men seek eternal life.

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The first part of Paul's indictment of the world, bearing upon flagrant sin, terminates with ch. 1. Its second part, bearing upon sin disguised by moral professions, occupies ch. 2. Then in ch. 3:1-8 he pauses to barely notice a purely Jewish objection, which need not detain us, and in vs. 9-20 we have the final summing up of his impeachment:

“What then? How are we to understand the situation? Are we (Jews) better than they (Gentiles)? No. In no wise. All are charged with being under sin.” Since, of course, the Jew readily acknowledged this as true of the Gentile, Paul supports his universal accusation by a lengthy appeal to the Jews' own Scriptures in order to stop “every mouth” the Jews' own in particular. His closing assertion (20) that law as to its inward effect simply brings the knowledge of sin, awaits explanation until ch. 7. He now passes at once to his second point, which is really the heart of his message:

2. *This “righteousness of God” has been provided through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ.* 3:21-31. It comes through Christ alone, not through the works of the law, i.e. not by a statutory obedience upon our part. The law and the prophets are its witnesses, not its source. Its source is God and its means is faith in Jesus (21-24) whose propitiatory death in satisfaction of the just claims of the law makes God “just,” i.e., dispensationally consistent, while justifying the sinner without regard to his obedience to the law (25, 20). Jewish “glorying, therefore, is excluded” (27). Salvation, justification before God, is now for all men alike and on the same terms.

Such a single and universal method, Paul now asserts, is consistent with the divine unity (28-30). For if all men have the same need of salvation and God is indeed the one impartial God of

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them all, they must all be saved upon the one basis. And since the merit basis, or the way of obedience to law, is ruled out by the fact that what law imparts is the consciousness of sin not justification from it, there remains only the grace basis, the way of faith in Jesus, a way suitable to all. So then, “there is one God who will justify the circumcision as they believe and the uncircumcision on the score of their believing,” and all through the blood of Christ (30). God’s way is equal.

“But in that case,” a Jew will object, “this faith way nullifies the law.” “Perish the thought,” replies Paul, “it rather establishes it” (31). How this can be he does not directly say, but he shows it clearly in the next five chapters.

“The law” to Paul, was of course the entire Pentateuch, containing the spiritual promises of God to the fathers and the ethical standard given through Moses. The former are fulfilled in the Christian church (4:9-16) the latter is fulfilled in the Christian life (Chs. 5-8). And the whole law system is “established” within its own proper sphere by being shown to be a dispensational thing, the cross of Jesus being its termination through the full satisfaction of its claims as “a divinely ordained method of discipline which had to be honored even in the act of its being transcended.”

Note. Before we pass to Paul’s third point, two words in the present section should be noted. The first is “freely” (3:20). Note it well. “Being justified freely,” that is, gratuitously, for nothing. In Scripture, to justify is to declare or count righteous, whether in the past the subject has been such in conduct or not. The term is a legal one and refers to status. The change in character, which is demanded by the moral sense, by God’s own nature of which that is a reflection, and by the new status itself, ensues, as Paul will show in the next section (Chs. 6-8). But if sinners, “the guilty” are to be justified at all it must be gratuitously, for they have nothing. Christ is their only wealth and only plea. And while on the one hand, moral presumption—a hoping to be justified by Christ while still holding to sin—will never save, on the other hand an undue emphasis upon the “meeting of conditions” and a pointing to that accomplishment as the ground for

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believing in God's pardon is apt to misguide souls at the very outstart by leading them into an imperfect trust in Christ. This results in a more or less imperfect Christian life, ethically upright and careful no doubt, but lacking unction, joy, freedom and stability, and marred by self-consciousness, self-centeredness and legality. Luke 17:10 defines the right attitude for us to take toward ourselves and all that we do.

The second word is "propitiation" (25)—"Jesus, whom God set forth to be a propitiation . . . in his blood." This word bears reference to the anger of God which has been resounding in this epistle from 1:18 onwards. In heathen propitiations the guilty seek by various offerings and self-inflicted sufferings to appease the displeasure of their gods. Here God himself in infinite wisdom and love both provides the means of an adequate propitiation and bears its cost. The intervening clause, "through faith," makes men party to God's redeeming action so that the propitiation avails for us as we identify ourselves with it.

3. We pass now in ch. 4 to Paul's third point, namely, that *this way of justification on the ground of faith apart entirely from legal obedience is not an innovation* but is in entire accord with the Old Testament spiritual order, having been exemplified long ago in the case of Abraham prior to the law and being implied in words of David spoken under the law.

The line of argument goes back to 3:28, "We reckon therefore that a man is justified by faith apart from the works of the law." But if so, objects a Jew, what of righteous Abraham (4:1)? Was he not justified on account of his actions? If so, answers Paul, he has something to glory in, but not before God. Even in his case our contention holds, for what saith the Scripture? "Abraham believed God and it was reckoned (imputed) unto him for righteousness." With all his uprightness and obedience therefore he still lacked the righteousness requisite for justification before God, and so the Lord was pleased to count his faith for it and accept him. It is equally true in the case of those who have not been hitherto obedient or righteous, but transgressors, "ungodly" (5); for David, in Psa. 32:1,2, himself describes the bliss of the man who has

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righteousness counted to him apart from what he has done, saying, “Blessed are they whose breaches of the law are forgiven, whose sins are covered! Blessed is the man whose sin the Lord will not impute to him.”

The rest of the chapter need not detain us, the argument simply going to show that as Abraham’s circumcision *after* his believing makes him the father of all the circumcised who share his faith or dependence upon God, while his justification *before* circumcision makes him likewise the father of all uncircumcised people who believe, he has therefore become “the father of us all,” and thus the promise that he should be “heir of the world” (13) or “a father of many nations” (14-17) is fulfilled. We might, however, note the fact that while in Heb. 11:17-19 and James 2:21-23 the climax of Abraham’s faith is his consent to Isaac’s death, here in Rom. 4:18-22 it is his anticipation of the child’s birth. In both aspects, however, his faith is equivalent to that of Christians, for in the one case he believingly obeyed God, in offering up Isaac, when it meant entire dependence upon God’s grace and, power to raise him up, and in the other case he believed God when it meant the same dependence upon God’s grace and power to bring about his birth. We likewise believe God when it means that for salvation we depend entirely upon the undeserved favor of him who gave Jesus for us in the first place and also raised him from the dead. He delivered him up for our trespasses (8:32) and raised him again for our justification 23-25.

What then follows for us from the foregoing? Wonderful blessings follow.

4. *The blessed results of our justification by faith in Jesus Christ.* Ch. 5:1-11. We have *peace* with God, plus the enjoyment

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of his positive *favor* and the joyous hope of one day sharing his eternal *glory*. (5:1, 2).

“Peace with God,” for the war is over. Its final storm-center was the cross of Christ, where he stood for us, “bore our sins in his own body,” was “made to be sin for us” and reconciled us to God by his death. Consequently, as believers, we have come unto the state of “peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ.” “For if, while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, much more being reconciled, shall we be saved in his life.” 10. Therefore Paul adds:

“Through whom also” etc. By his agency we are not only saved from a ruinous war with God, but are also (and “by faith,” too, not by any works of ours) brought into the state of God’s positive favor, “wherein,” instead of falling down ashamed or trembling with fear, “we stand” and even rejoice in expectation of that glory of God of which our sin had made us to come short.

“And not only so, but we also rejoice in our tribulations,” etc. In view of such a glorious prospect our sufferings for the faith do not crush us; we rather exult in them, knowing as we do that suffering produces fortitude and fortitude approvedness and approvedness hope of the crown that awaits us (Jas. 1:12). And what assures us that this hope will not put us to shame is the present realization of God’s love for us, “poured out into our hearts by the Holy Spirit which was given unto us.”

Note 1. “Was given unto us.” There was little delay In Paul’s time between believers being justified by faith in Jesus Christ and their being baptized by him in the promised Spirit. Consequently those whom Paul addresses in his epistles are all presumed to have received the Holy Ghost. For this reason we never meet with exhortations to his readers to receive the Spirit but everywhere we find counsels to walk in the Spirit and instructions how to do so.

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Note 2. “God’s love.”—implied in the gospel revelation of him as Father. “Shed abroad” (Gr. “poured out”), speaks of its lavishness. “In our hearts,” speaks of its inward apprehension and realization.

A Striking Parallel. We now come to a striking parallel or contrast which Paul makes between Adam and Christ in order to show that as sin and death had been communicated to the world of Jews and Gentiles through the one man Adam so also it is consistent that righteousness and life should be communicated to all men through Jesus Christ. What Adam’s relation is to his kind in point of transgression, Jesus Christ’s relation is in point of righteousness. The redemption thus fully covers the fall. Ch. 5:12-17. The originally condemned in Adam are the originally redeemed in Christ.

Note 1. Thus the salvation of infants is secured. In personal experience, however, condemnation comes directly by personal transgression, which identifies us personally with Adam in his conscious sin and guilt, just as personal faith in Jesus Christ joins us to him and relates us savingly to his “act of righteousness” (in dying for our sins) and his status of justification (as raised from the dead). Thus in Paul’s argument the ultimate result, whether of condemnation or of justification may be said to be mediated; in the former case by the Individual’s own sin, in the latter by his faith.

Note 2. “For that all sinned” (12), appears to be simply a repetition of the cardinal declaration in 3:23—“for all have sinned.” If we relate it to personal sin, then, the death directly referred to throughout this section (12-21) would be spiritual death, personally experienced by us in the day that we sinned as it was by Adam in the day that he sinned. Gen. 3:15; Rom. 7:9. It “reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those whose sins were not like Adam’s transgression.” And when the law came it gave no spiritual life. Gal. 3:21, 22. Consequently this death reigned from Adam even unto Christ, who came to give us life and give it abundantly, so that now “they that receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through him” (17).

If, on the other hand, the death Paul here speaks of as coming upon men by sin be physical death, then he must refer also to some sort of racial relationship to or involvement in Adam’s transgression, for physical death comes upon even infants who know no personal sin. The truth seems to be that in Paul’s mind there was no sharp and essential distinction being made here between spiritual

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death and physical death. It was all “death,” which he traces back in this instance to a racial unity with Adam that involves all mankind in sin and manifests itself in personal transgression. It is because of this racial unity that he sees all men Jews and Gentiles “by nature (Gr. birth) children of wrath.” Eph. 2:3.

Conclusion. “So then, as through one trespass the judgment came unto all men to condemnation; even so through one act of righteousness the free gift came unto all men to justification of life. For as through the one man’s disobedience the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience (Phil. 2:8) of the one shall the many be made righteousness” (18, 19). Was sin imputed to Jesus upon the cross? Then righteousness may be imputed or reckoned to those who believe on him. Note the future tense of that last clause in verse 19. It shows that here Paul speaks of *experience*, the progressive justification of mankind by the gospel. The free gift may, in the abstract, have come unto all men in order to justification, but they are only justified (i. e. “made righteous”) as they personally hear and receive it. Thus the obligation to preach the gospel. Rom. 1:14, 15; 10:14, 15.

And what of the law? What is its relation to this original plan (5:20, 21)? “It was brought in later on, so that transgression might increase.” *Weymouth*. “It slipped in to aggravate the trespass.” *Moffatt*. “It came in besides, that the trespass might abound.” *Standard*. Bold words indeed for a Jew to use of God’s law! But what does he mean? Just this, that the law came in that the grace of God might be the more clearly revealed, the added revelation of sin making more manifest the much more abounding graciousness of God.

If then it be the case that “abounding sin” has brought “much more abounding grace,” are we to infer that we are to remain on in sin so that there may be all the more grace?—grace here being not

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an influence but a way of treatment. If to multiply sin is to multiply grace, as has just been said, then let us sin on! “Let us do evil that good may come.” (Compare 3:5-8.) O Paul, your doctrine of justification by mere faith in Jesus Christ is convicted here of moral laxity! This objection Paul now meets in the second division of this great epistle:

II. *The Doctrine of Christian Sanctification.* Chs. 6-8.

In ch. 6 he will show why those that are justified by faith in Christ cannot continue sinning,—“cannot,” of course, having reference not to any physical impossibility in the matter, but to an existing moral impossibility, as when a mother says, “I cannot kill my child.”

In ch. 7 he will show the means, the purpose and the necessity, for holiness, of our release from the law, and in principle from all legalism in our life of service to God. The filial spirit must displace the legal and reign supreme as it did in Jesus Christ.

In ch. 8 he will depict the victorious life of the Spirit-filled and Spirit-led man and the glorious end in which it will finally issue.

1. *Why we as believers cannot remain on in sin.* Ch. 6.

a. Because as united to Christ, we are necessarily dead to sin, *positionally*, having died with Christ (2, 8). To continue on in sin therefore would be a denial of our having any real connection with him at all. United with him our position is that of those who have died in relation to sin. And “we who have (thus) died to sin, how shall we any longer live therein?” (2). Our very baptism implied such an incorporation into his death (3). Hence also a second reason:

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b. Because as united to Christ, we are necessarily alive unto God, *positionally*, having risen with Christ, as our resurrection from the baptismal waters further implied. For us to continue sinning, therefore, would be the absolute denial of our being united to Christ in any real sense, for “he liveth unto God” (4-10).

Paul’s whole argument here turns upon the truth that Christ’s death was a death in relation to sin and that his living is a living unto God. Therefore our union with him, which to Paul is no mere creedal concept but a real thing in the spirit, experienced by a faith-committal of ourselves to him in trust and love, requires or involves our participation in both his death and his living again. This is the meaning of the baptismal symbolism, he says. “We were buried, therefore, with him through (our) baptism into (his) death (3); that like as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory (power) of the Father, so we also might walk in newness of life” (4). Therefore,

c. Since, as joined to the living Christ, we are legally, positionally and implicitly dead men sinwards and living men Godwards, we must so “reckon” or regard ourselves (11) and act accordingly by presenting ourselves and our members, not “unto sin as instruments of unrighteousness,” as formerly, but unto God for the service of righteousness as men alive from the dead (12, 13).

Thus, unless we are to “deny the faith,” our sanctification to God must follow our justification from sin as Christ’s rising followed his dying. And this presentation of ourselves to the obedience of God as believers (16-19) is no mere “good resolution” made in human weakness. It is an agreement of our hearts with God’s own revealed mind and will concerning us in

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Christ Jesus. It is a dedication of ourselves in a “form of teaching” (17) that is throbbing with the power of God.

The fact is, God and sin both claim possession of the body. Sin has long held control and “reigned” (12). But now that “the faith,” “the word of truth, the gospel of our salvation,” the saving “form of teaching” has come, *its* bonds are upon us. And while action, in thus believingly presenting ourselves to God (13) and our members as servants to righteousness unto sanctification (19) depends upon us, power depends upon God. Grace, realized through the Holy Spirit, will make effective what law and good resolutions could not do, and sin shall not have dominion over us (14). We shall be able to live a holy life.

d. Finally, baptismal symbolism and its implications aside, God’s service and sinning are mutually exclusive. We are the servants of the one we obey, whether of sin, whose service ends in death, or of obedience to God, whose service is crowned at the last with eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord (15-23). There is therefore no condoning of sin in the Christian life and no moral laxity chargeable to justifying faith.

Note 1. “So many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ” (v. 3 A.V.), does not mean that some of the Christians were unbaptized, for that was impossible in that age. See R.V.

Note 2. “Our old man” (6), in Paul’s writings, is not an entity, like an old tooth, but rather a condition of our whole human nature. It refers to our old humanity, our human nature as it was in the state of moral weakness and alienation. The related phrase, “the body of sin,” is a metaphor referring: to the sin-possessed condition of our body, the body as the slave of sin. The condition implied in both of these terms is, of course, past to those that are established in their union with Christ.

Note 3. “Even so reckon ye also yourselves to be dead unto sin but alive unto God in (union with) Christ Jesus” (11). God so reckons us as believers. We must arm ourselves with the same mind. Observe: we could hardly be told to reckon or account as true what we have already felt to be true or subjectively

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experienced as an actual fact. Thus it is of our objective, positional, sanctification to God in Christ that Paul has been directly speaking in the preceding verses. And upon this he now bases his exhortation to us to sanctify ourselves. Vs. 11-13.

The idea is a little strange to our usual habits of thought but would be easily grasped by minds of Jewish training. The first-born of Israel for all time were presumptively and intentionally sanctified to God in that first Paschal sacrifice on the day of the exodus. Ex. 12:1-14; 13:2; Num. 3:11-13. In the same way the believers of all time have been, upon God's part, objectively and intentionally redeemed and claimed by him for holiness in Christ's act of redemption as "our Passover." In that one historic sacrifice God sanctified us to himself just as he did Israel's first-born at the first Passover. We are therefore the church of the sanctified (1 Cor. 1:2),—the sanctified first-born ones who are enrolled in heaven. Heb. 12:23. Here lies the firm, historic, divinely-laid basis of Christian consecration and of the obligation of all believers to be holy unto the Lord. "For God called us not for uncleanness, but in sanctification." I Thess. 4:7. We must, therefore, "purge out the old leaven that we may be a fresh lump even as (Christianly considered) we are unleavened." I Cor. 5:7.

2. *The means, the end and the necessity, for holiness, of our release from the law*, and consequently from the operation of the legal principle itself in all our service of God. Ch. 7.

a. The *means* of our release was Christ's crucified body. Christ was born under the law, lived under it and died under it. For him it ended forever at the cross and so for us also who have become united to him. We have been "made dead to the law by the body of Christ" (1, 4).

b. The *end* or purpose of our release was that by having thus died to the law we as justified believers are free to be joined in perpetual and blessed union to the risen Christ so that we might serve God in a new way,—“not in the oldness of the letter” of the law, as before, but “in the newness of the spirit” of it. Or, as Moffatt more clearly puts it, “not under the written code as of old but in the Spirit” (4, 6).

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c. The *necessity* of our release lay in the fact that from its external character the law—and in principle all statutory conceptions in religion—could never produce true inward holiness. It could not enforce its own spiritual demands against the contrary nature of “the flesh” which, until the spirit of a man is regenerated, has dominion within him (7-25).

Throughout this famous passage the struggle is all between “I” and “sin,”—not between the “flesh” and the “Spirit,” as in the Christian. The Spirit is not once mentioned here. The description is clearly of the experience of an awakened but still unregenerated man, but written of course by a Christian and seen through his regenerate eyes. Paul uses the first person throughout so as to give the more vivid picture. In verse 25 he recapitulates and gives the conclusion of this whole matter of the experience of the man who seeks righteousness by means of law: “So then I of myself (i.e., without Christ), with my mind or reason indeed serve God’s law, but with my flesh sin’s law.” In purpose the former is sovereign, in practice the latter. “Wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me out of this body of death?” Christ! only Christ, and so we pass on now to:

3. *The Victorious life of the Spirit-filled, Spirit-led Christian man and its glorious issue.* Ch. 8. In this chapter we reach the summit of Paul’s epistle. Here we see Jesus Christ become by the Spirit the Divine source of a new and victorious life inwardly realized and which, through all the possible sufferings that may come upon us for his name’s sake, is destined to issue in a glorious immortality. Creation groans (23), we groan (23), the Spirit groans (26), all in unison, giving a three-fold testimony to the truth of the Christian hope—our coming “adoption,” the long-desired manifestation of the sons of God (19). God’s glory awaits us;

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God's *Son* is the pattern of what we shall be; God's *Spirit* is our present help and comfort; God's *purpose* shall be fulfilled. "For whom he foreknew, he also foreordained to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the first-born among many brethren; and whom he foreordained, then he also called; and whom he called, them he also justified; and whom he justified, them he also glorified" (29, 30). "Glorified"! The tense here is amazing. This declaration is "the most daring anticipation of faith that even the New Testament contains."

Paul's Doctrine of the Holy Ghost. Romans 8 has been called the chapter of the Holy Ghost, and with reason, for here is the maturest and fullest expression we have in the Bible of the place and work of the Spirit in the Christian life. No greater contribution was ever made to practical theology than in Paul's thought-out, consistent, *ethical* conception of the work of the Spirit. That conception of the Spirit as an abnormal fitful energy or power, which we see in the prophets of old and manifesting itself largely in outbursts of religious enthusiasm, tongues and prophecy in later times, becomes transformed, in Paul's writings, into the abiding principle of the believers' moral life. For him, the result or effect of the Spirit's indwelling and fullness is not primarily or necessarily power to speak with tongues, work miracles or prophesy, though he had personal experience of all three and manifestations of them in his ministry. It is "righteousness and peace and joy" (14:17) and all that holy "fruit" which he alone of all New Testament writers has clearly defined in direct relation to the Holy Spirit. At no point is the disciple closer to the master's mind and teaching than right here. There is something so *sane* about Jesus and his great apostle, something so dignified and worthy in the conception of Christianity we get from them. Their *emphasis* everywhere is on the ethical purpose of the gospel, not

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on the marvelous or phenomenal “powers” and “gifts” that may accompany it.

Note. The early church began with the miraculous powers or manifestations of the Spirit in their midst and had to be led into a clear understanding of the Spirit's fundamentally ethical purpose. We today have from the beginning been well grounded in the ethical side of the Spirit's work in the heart as the Spirit of holiness. We need now to be led into the realization or experience of more of the Spirit's miraculous and phenomenal powers. God “set them in the church” I Cor. 12. Has he recalled them? Rom. 11:29. If not, where are they?

Chapter 8 forms the final stage in Paul's answer to the objection that if the law is invalid for righteousness there remains no safe-guard for morals. There is such a safeguard, he says, for the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus which frees from the state depicted in ch. 7, yields a life of righteousness in which the ordinance or righteous requirement of the law is fulfilled in us (2). And the sanctions constraining a man to live this life,—to walk “after the Spirit” and “put to death” the doings of his lower nature, are such as appeal to the Christian, for whom they are intended, viz.,

1. The obligations arising from his sonship to God in union with Christ. Vs. 9-11, 15-17.

2. The sure hope of eternal glory in Christ's image, as the crown at the end of a life lived after the Spirit. Vs. 6, 13.

3. The certainty of eternal death as the only possible result of a life lived after the flesh. Vs. 6, 13.

The law, for which some were so solicitous, gave no such freedom as this gospel, brought no such power into the soul, and had no such sanctions to induce a hearty obedience. As a method of governing the people of God it has therefore given place to “better things.”

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“What shall separate us from the love of Christ?” (35) Nothing! “The love that bled for us on the cross and pleads for us on the throne is ours in deathless union.” Though anguish, calamity and martyrdom, with all the round of life’s mysterious trials and reverses, may by their very nature tend to separate us from Christ’s love by suggesting doubts of his sympathy or of his power to aid, we are “more than conquerors” in them all. Faith triumphs “through him that loved us.” Yes, and he still loves; but the firm and imperishable basis of all our confidence and strength of heart lies in that wondrous act of manifested love upon the cross—“the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” He “loved me and gave himself for me.” That love silences for us all the seeming contradictions of our lives.

Note 1. In ch. 6 it is faith and baptism that unites men with Christ. In ch. 8 it is the Spirit. “A three-fold cord is not quickly broken.”

Note 2. “Spirit of God,” “Spirit of Christ,” “Christ,” in verses 9, 10, are not theological distinctions but the language of experience. The Spirit is the mode of the Divine Savior’s indwelling.

Note 3. “The body is dead because of sin” (10). That is to say, though for the present the body is a dead thing owing to sin, it being not yet saved from death, “the spirit is life as the result of righteousness,” i.e., of Christ’s “act of righteousness” in dying for us (5:18) and our own justification. Not simply that our spirit is “living.” Paul says it is “life,”—because as quickened by Christ it has become the seed of eternal life within us.

Note 4. “The entire creation.” In verses 20-23 the whole world of nature seems to be brought within the scope of Christ’s redemption as was the whole world of mankind in ch. 5:12-21. Thus it appears that the “all things new” (Rev. 21:5) include a ransomed and transformed “creation” suited to the nature of the glorified sons of God who are to dwell therein forevermore. 2 Pet. 3:13.

Conclusion. Chapters 9-11 have already been explained and chs. 12-15, bearing on the practical application of the foregoing gospel to all the varied relations of our lives, must for lack of space be left to the student himself. They are a perfect gold mine of

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“healthful teaching” from which we may gather the gist of all Paul’s practical instruction to his churches.

Doxology

“Now to him that is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery which hath been kept in silence through times eternal but now is manifested and, . . . according to the commandment of the eternal God, is made known unto all the nations unto the obedience of faith; to the only wise God, through Jesus Christ, be the glory forever. Amen.”

