



THE
**GALATIAN
& ROMAN
EPISTLE OF
PAUL**

STUART ALLEN

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epistles
of Paul

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THE GALATIAN AND ROMAN EPISTLES OF PAUL

by

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Author of
Letters From Prison
The Early & Pastoral Epistles of Paul
The Unfolding Purpose of God
On Reading The Bible
The Interpretation of Scripture
The Early Centuries & The Truth
The Kingdom of God in Heaven & on Earth
etc., etc.



THE BEREAN PUBLISHING TRUST
52A Wilson Street,
London, EC2A 2ER, England

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ISBN 0 85156 133 0

Typeset in Pless Roman

Printed and bound in Great Britain by
Short Run Press Ltd., Exeter

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Author expresses his indebtedness to Fred and Grace Ralph, Ron Sharples for their proof reading, and to Dan Kimball for indexing.

INTRODUCTION

The doctrine of 'justification by faith' which was preached by the apostle Paul brought a great new dimension to the worship of God. Though hidden in the scriptures of the prophets it could now be revealed in all its fulness, bringing freedom from the religious observances embodied in the Law given to Israel which had served only as types of shadows of the true worship of God. This could now be 'in spirit' instead of the letter of the law and outward form.

Although the majority of the believers in the churches in Galatia would be Gentiles, there would be many Jews among them. It was inevitable that these would be strongly attached to the elements of the Law, and it is evident that they considered its requirements essential in some form in the worship of God and sought to impose them on their Gentile brethren. Religious observances always have great attraction, and many Galatian believers seem to have been drawn away from the pure doctrine of grace as preached by the apostle Paul. A large portion of the commencement of his epistle is therefore devoted to refuting the teaching of such as would lead the Galatians back to bondage.

Coupled with this it emerges also that the authority of the apostle Paul had been called into question, for he takes up a large part of his epistle with proofs of his divine authority, and that to heed 'another gospel' as he describes it was a moving away from that which had been committed to him 'by revelation of Jesus Christ' (1:12).

The epistle to the Galatians was written before that to the Romans, and the likeness is noticeable. Paul taught the same truth on which he enlarges in the later epistle to the Romans. In both is maintained that though dispensational differences exist between Jew and Gentile, both have come short of the glory of God and need that redemption which is by the faith of Jesus Christ.

Galatians has been happily likened to a sketch for the finished picture of Romans. Once again the gospel of the grace of God is stressed in Romans 1:1-6. In the structure of the gospel this is balanced by the portion containing the words 'my gospel' in 16:25,26.

Romans is divided into three main portions: the first (1:1-5:11) demonstrates that both the Jew and Gentile are equally guilty before God, while the last (9:1-16:27) counterbalances this with the thought that both are equally acceptable to God in Christ. The central portion (5:12-8:39) goes right back beyond Abraham, Jew, and Gentile, to Adam. The teaching of Paul here can be summed up as follows:

The Law of Sin and Death in Adam
Condemnation

The Law of the Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus
o Condemnation.

The Roman epistle is placed first in the order of the three great doctrinal epistles, i.e. Romans, Corinthians, Galatians, and rightly so for it contains basic doctrine for all believers, then and now. Until its lessons are learned we shall know nothing of the fundamental principles of sin and death, Law and Grace, Jew and Gentile, justification by works or by faith. If we are wrong here we shall be wrong altogether.

This volume is presented therefore with the prayer that it will aid the reader to be enlightened in some measure in these most vital principles of our faith. To the Lord Jesus Christ be all the glory.

F.J.R.

CHAPTER 1**The Epistle to the Galatians***Galatians 1:1-5*

That the epistle to the Galatians is of great importance there can be no doubt, because it deals with the fundamentals of the Christian faith, as does also the epistle to the Romans, and in some senses it is the counterpart of this epistle. Before we can consider its contents we must understand what is meant by Galatia, for this will decide to whom the epistle is addressed and its date. We have to distinguish between the *kingdom* of Galatia which was situated north east of Asia Minor and the Roman *province* of Galatia, which, in addition to the kingdom went southwards to include Lycaonia, Isauria, Phrygia, and a portion of Pisidia in which area lay Antioch, Iconium, Lystra and Derbe.

The kingdom consisted of a broad strip of land over 200 miles in length, the chief cities of which were Tavium, Ancyra and Pessinus. To which of these portions of Asia Minor was the epistle to the Galatians sent? Some scholars champion the northern district and others the southern. If the northern theory is right, Paul founded the churches there on his second missionary journey; but if the southern theory is right, it was when he was on his first missionary journey that the churches were founded in the south east.

The northern theory is championed by Bishop Lightfoot and others, whereas the southern is held by Professor W.M. Ramsay and a number of expositors. The ancestors of the northern kingdom were chiefly Gauls who poured into Asia Minor in the third century B.C. and while the majority of believers in the churches situated there were Gallic Celts, there were certainly Jews as well, for the Galatian epistle assumes an acquaintance with the Old Testament which converted Gentiles could not be expected to have, except under Jewish instruction.

The northern Galatian theory was held until the nineteenth century, but since then Bible scholars, the chief of whom was Sir William Ramsay, have adopted the southern theory and others give the

epistle an earlier date. If the second visit of Paul is the one mentioned in Acts 16:6, the epistle must have been written *after* the council of Jerusalem in Acts 15. On the other hand if the second visit is identified with that mentioned in Acts 14:21, when Paul and Barnabas revisited the southern Galatian churches on their return journey to Antioch, the date may be before the council and consequently about A.D.49. This would mean that Galatians is Paul's first epistle and not 1 Thessalonians which is usually held to be his first writing.

There is no mention of the Jerusalem Council's decisions in the Galatian epistle and this is extraordinary if this letter was written *after* Acts 15, for it would have but stressed Paul's arguments concerning the law of Moses and greatly assisted his dealings with the Galatian apostasy.

We do not think it necessary to go into more detail of the southern and northern theories in these articles, but for those who wish to pursue the matter further we would recommend Mr. C.H. Welch's comments in *The Apostle of the Reconciliation*, pages 75-86 and those of Dr. Donald Guthrie in the second volume of his *New Testament Introduction*, pp. 72-79. Also Professor F.F. Bruce's *The Epistle to the Galatians*, pp. 5-18. Mr. Welch's summary of the advantages of the south Galatian theory are as follows:

- (1) By this view no visit of Paul to Jerusalem is suppressed.
- (2) The most forcible arguments that could be used at the time are used.
- (3) No inconsistency is intruded into the Acts.
- (4) Every phrase which bears upon the date is simply and naturally explained.
- (5) The authority of the Council at Jerusalem, and the decree made, remain unimpaired.
- (6) The epistle was written from Antioch or the neighbourhood.
- (7) The churches of Galatia were those of Pisidia, Antioch, Iconium, Lystra and Derbe.
- (8) The epistle is probably the earliest book in the New Testament.

(The Apostle of the Reconciliation p.86).

Accordingly we adopt the south Galatian position.

The object of this letter is clear. The Apostle had heard of serious trouble in the Galatian churches which was twofold, just as it was at Corinth. Judaizers claiming authority from Jerusalem, were trying to place the yoke of the Mosaic law on Gentile believers, and their method was to deny Paul's apostolic standing and discredit his teaching. The rapidity with which the Galatians had departed from the freedom of the gospel served as a goad to the Apostle and the urgency of the situation caused him to dispense with formalities and write in a style that was burning with deep feeling and indignation.

He therefore sets out in this epistle what was destined to become the charter of Christian liberty through the subsequent history of the professing church. Dean Farrar writes:

“St. Paul saw that it was time to speak out, and he did speak out. The matter at issue was one of vital importance. The very essence of the Gospel, the very liberty which Christ had given, the very redemption for which He had died, was at stake. The fate of the battle hung apparently upon his single arm. He alone was the Apostle of the Gentiles. To him alone had it been granted to see the full bearings of this question. A new faith must not be choked at its birth by the past prejudices of its nominal adherents. The hour had come when concession was impossible, and there must be no facing both ways in the character of his conciliatoriness. Accordingly he flung all reticence and all compromise to the winds. Hot with righteous anger, he wrote the epistle to the Galatians. It was his trumpet note of defiance to all the Pharisees of Christianity, and it gave no uncertain sound” (*The Life and Work of St. Paul* pp.427-428).

Coming now to the exposition of the epistle we first exhibit the structure as a whole:

- | | | | |
|---|-----------|---|---------------------------------------|
| A | 1: -2:14 | Paul's apostolic authority and gospel – Salvation | |
| B | 2:15-4:11 | Doctrine | { Faith v Works
Liberty v Bondage |
| B | 4:12-6:16 | Practice | { Spirit v Flesh
Liberty v Bondage |
| A | 6:17,18 | The marks of the Lord Jesus – Benediction. | |

The epistle sets out in startling contrast the *freedom* of the gospel and the *bondage* of the law. One is connected with the *spirit*, and the other with the *flesh*. One is linked with the Jerusalem which is *above*, and the other with the *earthly* Jerusalem “which now is” and is in bondage. The apostle Paul, in no uncertain language, shows the

Galatian believers where their defection is leading them – to utter slavery which in practice cancels the glorious freedom in Christ.

His opening words in chapter one are a challenge. There is no attempt to give a conventional introduction; the situation was too serious for that. First of all his Christ-given apostleship must be recognised, for without this, the message which he had to give would be of no avail. Over and over again Paul's enemies sought to disparage his apostleship. They accused him of being a self-appointed apostle; that no one could accept the story of his conversion, that he could not compare with the apostles at Jerusalem who had been appointed by Christ in His earthly ministry and had enjoyed close personal contact with Him. Paul had never seen Christ in the flesh and therefore in no sense could his apostleship be recognised.

We find the same opposition manifested in the church at Corinth and in the second epistle he is compelled to be a fool in his boasting to show that not only was his apostleship real and Christ-directed, but that he could go further in suffering for it than any other apostle (2 Cor. 11:5,16-30).

As Charles H. Welch has pointed out, the opening chapter of the epistle is so structured to throw into relief Paul's *apostleship*, the *gospel* preached by him and his *authority*. The sections are divided by the recurrence of the three common words "not", "neither" and "but". (Shown on next page to avoid splitting the structure).

Thus it was that, defying all conventions, he plunges straight away into the all-important question of his apostleship. His aim was not to magnify himself, *but his office* (Rom. 11:13), which had been given him by the risen Christ:

"Paul, an apostle (*not* of men, *neither* by man, *but* by Jesus Christ and God the Father, Who raised Him from the dead) and all the brethren which are with me, unto the churches of Galatia" (1:1,2).

The Greek word *apostolos* means "one sent by, and in the name of another", thus exhibiting the truth of Christ's words "he that receiveth you receiveth Me" (Matt. 10:40). While his commission differed from that of the Twelve in a number of respects, yet its *origin* was the same, namely from the Lord Jesus Christ, and it was

- | | | | | |
|---|---------|--|---|---|
| A | 1:1-5 | Paul's <i>apostleship</i> | { | <i>Not</i> from men
<i>Neither</i> through man
<i>But</i> through Jesus Christ |
| B | 1:6-10 | No change in gospel – “ye received” | | |
| A | 1:11,12 | Paul's <i>gospel</i> | { | <i>Not</i> according to man
<i>Neither</i> from man
<i>But</i> by revelation of Jesus
Christ |
| B | 1:13,14 | His past attitude – “ye heard” | | |
| A | 1:15-17 | Paul's <i>authority</i> | { | <i>Not</i> flesh and blood
<i>Neither</i> from other apostles
<i>But</i> he went into Arabia |
| B | 1:18-24 | His present attitude – “They had heard”. | | |

the *first apostleship conferred from heaven*. This God-given apostleship so vital to the truth he preached is brought forward in several of his epistles. In Romans 1:5 he writes “Christ by Whom we have received grace and apostleship”, he states in Romans 11:13 “I am an apostle of the Gentiles, I magnify mine office”. He throws out a challenge in 1 Corinthians 9:1 “Am I not an apostle? Am I not free? Have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord?” In 1 Timothy 2:7 he says, “I am ordained a preacher, an apostle (I speak the truth in Christ and lie not), a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth”.

There had been no problems about Paul's apostleship from the Galatian churches, for at the first they had received him “as an angel of God, even as Christ Jesus” (Gal. 4:14). But the old enemy was doing his deadly work of sowing doubt and distrust among them by the old tactic of undermining the *messenger*, so spoiling his message. So straight away he asserts his independence from the Twelve, and in fact from any human source. He had a divine commission and as such it was not received *from men*, neither was its origin *through man* (literally that is any human being), but it was “by Jesus Christ and God the Father”. This took place on the Damascus road as recorded in Acts 9:22 and 26 and is expanded in Galatians 1:15,16.

He continues by sending grace and peace from the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ:

“Who gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil world (age), according to the will of God and our Father to Whom be glory for ever and ever” (verses 4 and 5).

The Father gave the Son (John 3:16) and the Son gave Himself, thus comprising the greatest of all gifts, for it embraces everything. “The Son of God Who loved me and *gave Himself for me*”, Paul wrote (Gal. 2:20). “Thanks be to God for His unspeakable Gift” (2 Cor. 9:15).

Galatians 1:4-13

The reason given for the tremendous gift of the Lord Jesus Christ is stated in verse 4:

“that He might deliver us from this present evil age (world A.V.) according to the will of God and our Father”.

Exaireo (deliver) means to pluck or tear out and then rescue, set free. It is translated “rescue” in Acts 23:27. Every believer in Christ has been rescued from infinite danger, for this present age is controlled by the usurper, Satan and he is its god (2 Cor. 4:4) and runs the system behind it. Some may think Paul has exaggerated in calling it evil. Have we not made wonderful scientific advances in this age which have made life easier in many respects? While this may be so, from God’s standpoint it is evil, because it rejects Him and His Truth. All man’s increased knowledge of the universe brings him not one whit nearer God; in fact it seems to be the reverse, he gets further and further away from Him.

The wonderful deliverance by redemption causes the Apostle to pause and praise the Lord for it, “to Whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen”, and we should do the same. Usually Paul commences his epistles by some kind of commendation before he introduces his subject and the reason for his writing, but it is not so here. He is too deeply moved for that. He says:

“I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you by the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel – which is really no gospel at all” (verse 6 N.I.V.).

It was incomprehensible to the Apostle that believers who had been so gloriously freed from bondage, could act in this way and put themselves back into slavery again. The word “turning away” is in the present tense which showed that it was still going on as Paul wrote. Not only this, but they were doing it “quickly”, so soon after receiving the gospel, or it might mean so soon after the arrival of the false teachers from Jerusalem. In any case some of the Galatians had made no long stand for the truth. They had soon capitulated and even become enthusiastic for this new so-called gospel. In doing this they were not just turning away from Paul, but from God “Who had called them”.

This was a terrible thing and the Apostle does not mince his words:

“ . . . there be some that trouble you and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, if any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed” (verses 7-9).

These were strong words indeed, but they were absolutely necessary. Fundamental truth was at stake and there could be no compromise. What “we preached” and what “ye received” was the criteria *and it still is*. In religious circles there is scarcely a word that is more misused than the word “gospel”. It is on everyone’s lips whatever their persuasion, and from this one would think that its meaning was clear and evident to all. However, like the word “democracy” it can be made to mean anything the user wishes. All the professing churches assert that they are preaching the “gospel”, but so often this so-called gospel bears no relationship to the true one revealed in the Word of God.

There is a constant need for everyone who professes to be a true believer in the Lord Jesus Christ to test every “gospel” that he reads or hears by the one so clearly expressed in God’s Word. That gospel originates solely from God and was made known by His revelation to the apostle Paul and delivered through him as the channel.

“But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is *not* after man, for I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it *but by the revelation of Jesus Christ*” (verses 11,12).

Just what this gospel of God consisted of, Paul does not state, but it had been very clearly made known to the Galatians by his ministry. He had “placarded” (literally) Christ before them (3:1) and so magnified Him that they could have been in no doubt whatsoever that the good news centred in the Lord Jesus, and what He had accomplished for them on the cross and by His resurrection.

That gospel is clearly expressed in 1 Corinthians:

“For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures; and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day, according to the Scriptures” (1 Cor. 15:3,4).

This death was an atoning death; it was “for our sins” as Peter expressed it:

“Who His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness, by Whose stripes ye were healed” (1 Peter 2:24).

The work on the cross then, touches the root cause of all man’s troubles, namely sin and its consequence, death, and any gospel that does not do this is fraudulent, deceiving and completely empty of any virtue or power.

Here is the acid test for all gospel preaching, past, present and future. Does it present a Christ crucified for the sins of His people and risen again as the conqueror of death? If it does not do so, then the two greatest enemies of mankind, sin and death, are left dominating us for ever and we are as utter slaves without hope. This is what the Galatian Christian failed to realise. No wonder Paul was stirred to the depths of his being. He even put himself under God’s curse if he failed to deliver faithfully the good news of redemption committed to him by the Lord and worked out by Christ alone. Any mingling of “good works”, human merit or religious ordinances as a necessary part of the true gospel was heresy, even if an angel from heaven preached it.

Who were these troublers? There is little doubt that they were Jewish Christians from Jerusalem who were zealous for the law. We read of them in Acts 15:

“And certain men which came down from Judaea taught the brethren and said, except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, *ye cannot be saved*”.

A remarkable thing is that the problem of circumcision for Gentile believers is not dealt with in Galatians which strongly suggests it was written *before* Acts 15, when the Jerusalem Council settled this question, otherwise Paul would surely have referred to it as it would greatly have helped his stand on this point. He dismisses it by saying “If ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing” (5:2). It looks as though the Apostle feared that the Galatians had not appreciated the seriousness of their fall from the truth of the gospel, for he repeats himself saying “if any man preach any other gospel unto you than ye have received let him be accursed”. He then follows it with a protest:

“Am I now trying to win the approval of men, or of God? Or am I trying to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a servant of Christ” (verse 10 N.I.V.).

Why should he say this unless he had been accused of acting so as to get human approval and thus winning adherents, by suiting his message to his hearers? Whatever faults Paul may have had, he was certainly not a man-pleaser. So much so he now proceeds to give details of his past life showing that such a charge was completely false. He had long ago realised that trying to combine pleasing the Lord and pleasing man was impossible. Peter and the apostles associated with him had publicly declared the same truth for in Acts 5:29 we read:

“Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men”.

We need to remember constantly the same truth. All service and witness must be done as unto the Lord and not to man. To carry out the Lord's work with one eye on man and his approval is to court failure. Sometimes faithfulness to the Lord means that we have to say or do things that are unpopular and will not please. The temptation is then either to soften or avoid this in some way because we are afraid to offend others. Many a church minister is at the mercy of his congregation. He knows that if he tells them the truth there will be trouble and perhaps his job will be in jeopardy. This is specially true,

Paul warns, of the last days when “men will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears, and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto myths” (fables) (2 Tim. 4:3,4). Thus it is that these hearers get what *they want* rather than *what they need*, and in doing this, swerve from the truth and get embedded in error.

Paul intends to leave the Galatian Christians in no doubt of his faithfulness to God’s truth committed to him, so he now outlines the steps that led to his conversion and the experiences that followed:

“For ye have heard of my conversation (manner of life) in time past in the Jews’ religion, how that beyond measure I persecuted the church of God and wasted it and profited in the Jews’ religion above many my equals in mine own nation, being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my fathers” (verses 13,14).

In dealing with his past history the Apostle was honest and does not attempt to excuse his conduct. He shows how in his ignorance and darkness he treated the early church as heretics and did his level best to stamp them out. *Dioko*, the word for persecute is used in Acts 9:4 “Saul, Saul, why do you *persecute* Me?”. Little did he realise that in touching the Lord’s people he touched the Lord Himself, which only goes to show the wonderful unity made between the Lord Jesus Christ and His people.

As he looked back on this episode in his life, he felt nothing but shame, although, as he said later, “I did it ignorantly in unbelief” (1 Tim. 1:12,13). Nevertheless he describes himself at this time as a “blasphemer and a persecuter and a violent man” (1 Tim. 1:13 .I.V.). Surely then it was obvious that such a man could not have invented the gospel that he preached which was the direct opposite of all his thoughts and actions before his conversion. Let his critics bear this in mind, specially when they accused him of inventing the gospel that he preached.

Galatians 1:15 – 2:3

It is evident from Paul’s reference to the “Jews’ religion” in Galatians 1:13,14 that he regarded Judaism as a different religion from Christianity. As regards the former he made great strides and forged

ahead, outstripping many of his contemporaries. He was a man who never did things by halves. The Laodician spirit was absolutely foreign to his nature. He tells the Galatians that he was exceeding zealous (*zelotes*, a zealot) for the traditions of his fathers (1:14) and he was well aware of the bondage of the law, just as Peter was when he described it as a “yoke” which “neither our fathers nor we were able to bear” (Acts 15:10).

What he was so concerned about was the attempt of the enemy, through the Judaizers, to fasten the heavy weight of the Mosaic law upon the Galatian converts and so render their liberty in Christ null and void. Paul was the Apostle of freedom as the clarion call of Galatians 5:1 makes clear. He who had been so wonderfully freed by the Lord took the greatest care that the yoke of the law would never be placed upon the Gentile converts that were under his charge no matter where it came from. He sums up his conversion by saying:

“But when it pleased God Who separated me from my mother’s womb, and called me by His grace, to reveal His Son in me that I might preach Him among the heathen (Gentiles) . . .” (1:15,16).

It was the risen Christ Whom he met on the Damascus road causing him to make an immediate turn-round and place himself entirely at the Lord’s disposal by saying “Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?” (Acts 9:6). This the Lord made abundantly clear to him and he expresses it by saying “that I might preach HIM among the Gentiles”.

What an example this is to all would be preachers whatever persuasion they are! The Lord Jesus Christ, His Person and Work should be the continual subject for all preachers, but how many sermons pass this test? So many consist of anything but this, yet they are all supposed to be Gospel preaching! No wonder there is a falling away in many a church today.

Paul now goes on to record his movements after his conversion, and it is not easy to identify these with those recorded in the Acts. There are differences of opinions among expositors and a lot of space could be taken up with discussing these. The Apostle states:

either went I up to Jerusalem to them which were apostles before me; but I went into Arabia, and returned again unto Damascus.

Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter and abode with him fifteen days . . ." (Gal. 1:17,18).

Where do the "three years" start from, his conversion or after his return to Damascus? We are inclined to say, from his conversion, but some do not take this view. In trying to solve the problems of chronology it is easy to miss the purport of this portion of the epistle to the Galatians and that is *Paul's independence of the Twelve and any other human source for his ministry*. Had we a fuller and more detailed chronology of this period in the Acts of the Apostles, doubtless chronological difficulties would vanish. Our exposition will therefore concentrate on the above main reason, which the epistle demonstrates, namely Paul's unique Gentile ministry and the gospel associated with it.

But before this took effect, he tells us that he made no attempt to get help from local believers or from the leaders at Jerusalem, but he went for a protracted period into Arabia, which presumably means the country around Damascus. In the quietude of this region apart from any other Christians, he could think things over under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, getting to know the Lord's will and deciding the next steps to take in his witness for Him (verses 15-17). This period ended by his return to Damascus (verse 17). Paul continues his epistle by saying:

"Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter and abode with him fifteen days. But other of the apostles saw I none, save James the Lord's brother" (Gal. 1:18,19).

Again we are faced with chronological difficulties. From what point do we date the three years, from Paul's conversion or from his return from Arabia to Damascus? And is this the visit recorded in Acts 9:27 (after "many days" had passed and this might cover three years Acts 9:23), or was it the "famine relief" visit of Acts 11:30? It would seem that the former is indicated, for the second visit was apparently paid from Antioch, not Damascus. What is clear is that for the first crucial years, the Apostle had not re-visited Jerusalem and by this time his gospel ministry was fully developed, so it was evident that he did not owe his gospel to the Jerusalem church and when he visited Peter (Cephas) it was to get to know him *personally*, and not to receive further details concerning the gospel which the risen Christ had communicated to him, though doubtless Paul would have been vitally interested to learn from Peter all he could reveal

concerning the earthly life and ministry of the Lord Jesus.

In addition to this, Paul met James, the Lord's brother, who was able to add further details concerning the Lord's home life, but apart from these two, "other of the apostles saw I none" Paul declared, even though he was in Jerusalem (Gal. 1:19). In other words he had no prolonged contact with the leaders of the Jerusalem church before his own gospel was formed, and this gospel therefore owed nothing to them, but was entirely "by revelation of Jesus Christ" independent of all human contacts.

So much was depending upon this, that he makes a solemn assertion, "now the things that I write unto you, behold, before God, I lie not" (verse 20) – the independence of his ministry from the Twelve was crucial, so there must be no misunderstanding and misinterpretation of the facts. He goes on to state:

"Afterwards I came into the regions of Syria and Cilicia and was unknown by face unto the churches of Judaea which were in Christ" (verses 21,22).

If the visit to Jerusalem just described was the one recorded in Acts 9:26-30 then the Apostle, omitting the brief stay at Caesarea, is now referring to his return to Tarsus, where we find him in Acts 11:25, for Tarsus was situated in the province of Syria and Cilicia. Paul preached in this area quite independently of the mother church at Jerusalem, for he owed nothing to them as regards the gospel that he ministered. Not only this, but he was unknown personally to the churches of Judaea, that is the country churches as distinct from Jerusalem (verse 22). Yet they recognised the gospel that he preached as being the truth, even though it came from its one time bitterest enemy, and "they glorified God in me" (verse 24).

CHAPTER 2

When we come to chapter two of Galatians we have another dating problem:

“Then fourteen years after I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, and took Titus with me also” (2:1).

Does the Apostle mean fourteen years after his conversion or fourteen years after the first visit to Jerusalem? The most natural way to read his words is that he has the latter in mind and if this is so, and the first visit is that of Acts 9:26, then this one must be either the visit of Acts 11:30 (the “famine relief” one) or the council of Jerusalem visit of Acts 15:2. In any case this represents a considerable lapse of time during which Paul was engaged in his Jewish and Gentile mission and there could not have been any doubts as to the gospel he preached during this period.

Why did he go to Jerusalem again? The Apostle is quick to tell us. It was “by revelation” (verse 2). The Lord had made it quite clear to him that this was in His will and right throughout his life, the Apostle had one dominant purpose, namely to carry out the will of Christ whatever the cost; for it was *His* approval that he coveted above all else. We give the structure of this section of the epistle which has been exhibited by Charles H. Welch in *The Apostle of the Reconciliation*, for he vividly sets out the essential points of this most important visit and its bearing on the truth. In this analysis, Paul’s absolute equality with the Twelve is made perfectly clear. The words of C.H. Welch are to the point here:

“Notice how the structure brings into severe contrast the two chief actors. Paul’s name is associated with a supreme fight for freedom and for the truth of the gospel. Peter’s name is associated with blame, dissimulation, and with a walk contrary to the truth of the gospel. With the champion of reconciliation (Paul) Barnabas stands firm, but with the vacillating minister of the circumcision (Peter) Barnabas wavers and falls. Titus a Greek is brought forward as Paul’s great object lesson. There, in the very citadel and shrine of the circumcision (Jerusalem), Titus, the Greek, was *not compelled* to be circumcised. Peter on the other hand, by his withdrawal from the table of the Gentiles, by the re-erection of the barrier broken down by God in Acts 10 . . . *compelled* these Gentiles to Judaize . . . Paul declares that at this most critical conference, when the whole subject of his ministry to the Gentiles was discussed “they *added nothing*” to him, “only that he should remember the poor!”

Galatians 2:1-14

- A 1,2 (a) Paul goes to Jerusalem for the faith
(b) Barnabas stands fast
- B 3-5 (c) Titus not compelled to be circumcised
(d) Paul's stand for the truth of the gospel
- C 6-10 (e) Those who seemed to be somewhat
(f) Added nothing to me
(g) Gospel of the circumcision PETER
(h) Gospel of the uncircumcision PAUL
(e) Those who seemed to be pillars
(f) Remember the poor.
- A 11-13 (a) Peter comes to Antioch; overthrows the faith
(b) Even Barnabas carried away
- B 14 (d) Peter's walk against the truth of the gospel
(c) Compelled Gentiles to Judaize

Galatians 2:4 — 2:16

In the visit to Jerusalem described in the second chapter of the epistle Paul found disturbing elements. After stating that Titus, a Gentile was *not* compelled to be circumcised,* the Apostle refers to:

“ . . . false brethren unawares brought in who came in privily to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage . . .” (2:4).

The words in the Greek suggest that these false brethren had been deliberately “planted” on the church and been brought in secretly to spy out their liberty in Christ and if possible to bring them back into bondage again. We cannot be sure whether the Jerusalem church or the Galatian church is meant, but it makes little difference. The

*Some may be disturbed by a footnote in the N.E.B. where it is stated that “some witnesses”, omitting *hois oude* at the beginning of verse 5 make the sense to mean that Paul *did yield* to the circumcision of Titus. The witnesses are not given, but full information is found in the critical notes of *The Greek New Testament* edited by Kurt Aland, Matthew Black, Bruce Metzger and Allen Wikgren. Most, if not all the modern translations ignore this reading as does the Nestlé text. Bearing Paul's character in mind and the crucial struggle for the truth of the gospel in the context, we can ignore it too.

main thing is that here was a Satanic onslaught on the gospel of the grace of God which the Apostle of liberty resisted to the utmost, so that its purity and its very existence might be preserved for the future:

“To whom we gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour; that the truth of the gospel might continue with you” (verse 5).

We little realise what we owe to the courageous stand of this man, so that the gospel might not be blotted out, but continue, not only with the believers of the time, but also right through to us today. At Jerusalem, in spite of the “somebodies” and “somewhats” and the insidious infiltration of the enemy, one man, by the grace of God, in the face of all odds, stands resolutely for the truth and refuses to yield. All the Jewish leaders could do was to ask him “to remember the poor!”. They could add *nothing* to him (verse 6). At a crucial time like this, personalities pale into insignificance. Truth must have first place. Let us always remember this fact. We little know what practical effects a faithful stand can have on others. Paul had been called and fully qualified by the risen Christ and this had been abundantly vindicated by the Lord in the saving response of many to the Christ-given gospel of grace, apart from works or merit, that he had faithfully preached. How many times such a situation has occurred in past history, only the Lord knows. It surely is perfectly clear, that today, with its increasing darkness, there is a need to exhibit such an unyielding response as that given by Paul at the beginning, even though we have to stand by ourselves, humanly speaking.

In his later letters, the Apostle gives practical evidence that he had not forgotten the material needs of believers who were poor, for he raised a substantial fund among the Gentile churches for them which he and others took to Jerusalem on the occasion of his last visit (1 Cor. 16:1-4). In Galatians 2:10 he asserts “which very thing I was eager to do” (R.S.V.).

Another very important thing that resulted from this visit to Jerusalem was the complete acceptance of Paul’s apostleship to the Gentiles by the Jewish leaders and recognition of the fact that there was perfect equality between him and the Twelve. This was sealed by giving the right hands of fellowship and was a sign of friendship and trust. What a blow all this must have been to the Judaizers! Not only was Paul’s gospel recognised by the leaders of the mother church at Jerusalem, but his apostleship as well. Thus, in a wonderful way, the Lord vindicated His servant.

But what did Paul mean by “the gospel *of* the circumcision”? and “the gospel *of* the uncircumcision”? This should not be read as the gospel *to* the circumcision (Jew) and uncircumcision (Gentile). At the same time we must recognise that there are not two different ways in which God saves sinners. This would be foreign to the whole Bible. The Lord Jesus as sin-bearer on the cross, in His death and resurrection forms the one all-sufficient basis for the salvation of the sinner, whether Jew or Gentile. In spite of this, there were differences in the *presentation* of the Gospel owing to the utter contrasting backgrounds of the Jew in covenant relationship with God and the pagan Gentile, in all his darkness and ignorance of God and His Word. One has only to read Ephesians 2:11,12 to see this:

“Wherefore remember that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh who are called uncircumcision by that which is called the circumcision in the flesh made by hands: that at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world . . .”

added to which desperate condition they had no written revelation from God to make Him known to themselves. This was Israel’s prerogative, for to them had been committed the “oracles” (words) of God, i.e. the Old Testament Scriptures. This is why the Apostle Paul, when confronted with the pagans at Athens, makes no attempt to quote these Scriptures for they would have meant nothing to them. On the other hand in his contacts with the Jewish synagogues on his missionary travels he reasoned with them out of the Scriptures (Acts 17:1,2); likewise the Apostle Peter in Acts 3:19-26. This context is a good illustration of the “gospel of the circumcision”. Peter addresses his hearers as “ye men of Israel” (verse 12) and bluntly accuses them of murdering the Lord Jesus Christ (verses 13-15). In spite of the magnitude of this sin, he proclaims to them (the circumcision) the good news (gospel) of forgiveness. He urges them to repent (change their attitude of mind) and turn back to God (be converted). The result of this would be that their sins would be blotted out (verse 19), Christ would return to them, and the earthly kingdom purpose of God which had been the theme of all the Old Testament prophets, would then be fulfilled and the kingdom restored. He reminded them that they were the children of Abraham to whom the Lord had made wonderful unconditional and eternal promises concerning the *seed* and the *land*.

If this was not good news in the fullest sense to sinning and back-sliding Israel, then words have no meaning. But it rested squarely upon the redeeming work of Christ on the cross, just as Paul's gospel did.

The leaders of the Jerusalem church, James, Peter and John fully admitted this and therefore sealed the matter by giving the "right hands of fellowship" (Gal.2:9), thereby showing that there was no rivalry between them even though they went to the circumcision (Israel), while Paul's sphere was the "heathen" (the Gentiles). In other words, it was recognised that his was a Christ-directed ministry independent of the Twelve and the mother church at Jerusalem.

It was only possibly a little while later that the incident recorded in verses 11-16 took place. It is always lamentable when violent disagreement occurs between believers over the Word of God and its practice, and even worse when it is in public with the possibility of unbelievers being present. Doubtless Paul would rather have dealt privately with Peter's inconsistent walk, but danger was not past, even though the result of the meeting with the Jewish leaders had proved satisfactory. By his actions, Peter was denying the reconciliation that commenced in Acts 10. There God had showed him that it was now His will that the barrier between Jew and Gentile should be removed, so that Gentiles could be saved and be grafted in to the stock of Israel and share their covenant blessings (Rom. 11:16-18) and also act as a spur to the nation "to provoke them to jealousy" (Rom. 10:19; 11:11).

It was logical therefore that Peter could now have close fellowship with Gentile believers and even share his meals with them. Before Acts 10 Peter's attitude would have been entirely different. As he said to Cornelius:

"Ye know how it is an unlawful thing for a man that is a Jew to keep company or come unto one of another nation, but God hath showed me that I should not call any man common or unclean" (Acts 10:28).

The divine reversal Peter had obeyed until "certain came from James . . . , but when they were come, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing them which were of the circumcision" (Gal. 2:11,12). Those who came were obviously Judaizers, hence Peter's fear, though we need not assume that they were *sent* from James

with his authority. In fact Acts 15:24 denies this. Peter probably remembered the rebuke the Jerusalem believers had given him for eating with Gentiles (Acts 11:1-18). The fear of man that bringeth a snare has been at the root of many an action that has resulted in backsliding. Fear can make cowards of us all. It was not only the lapse of a prominent leader that was to be regretted but the bad effect that this action had on others and even Barnabas:

“The other Jews joined him (Peter) in his hypocrisy, so that by their hypocrisy even Barnabas was led astray” (Gal. 2:13 N.I.V.).

Both courage and fear can be contagious. We can radiate both by our actions. Here at Antioch Paul had to act quickly before the rot spread any further and as a consequence he had to face Peter publicly and rebuke him, regrettable though this was, and once more make a public declaration of the truth of the gospel.

From verse 15 to the end of the chapter, there follows a passage of close theological argument, anticipating chapters 3 and 4. We have a problem like that which meets us often in John’s gospel, in deciding where Paul’s words to Peter end and his argument relating to the truth for the benefit of the Galatians begins.

Probably the whole section was delivered to Peter and the believers present, for all of it related to the pressing problem of the moment. Paul remonstrates with Peter by reminding him, that although he was a Jew by birth and hedged in by the food restrictions of the law, yet now, under God’s instruction, he fully shared meals with Gentile believers. Then, through fear he withdraws and puts up the barriers again:

“When I saw that they were not acting in line with the truth of the gospel, I said to Peter in front of them all, you are a Jew, yet you live like a Gentile and not like a Jew. How is it, then, that you force Gentiles to follow Jewish customs?” (Gal. 2:14 N.I.V.).

“For if I build again the things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor” (verse 18).

Not only was Peter’s action undoing what God had taught him in Acts 10, but it could be construed that works and law-keeping were necessary for acceptance with God. But the Lord Jesus, in His earthly ministry had made it clear that He had not come for people who thought themselves to be righteous, but for sinners who needed

repentance (Matt. 9:13). And later on, Paul, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, was going to declare that “there is none righteous, *no, not one*”, and that “all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God” (Rom.3:10,23). Consequently he continued by saying to Peter:

“Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified” (verse 16).

Justification by faith in Christ was at the heart of the gospel which had been committed to the apostle Paul. In English we can express “justification” by the word “righteousness”, but it is important to remember that there is no such distinction in the Greek word or its derivatives. “Just” and “righteous” are similar in thought. A righteous being, as God uses the term, is one that has never sinned once in thought, word or deed and is therefore perfect *inside* as well as outside. It should be obvious that no such being has walked this earth since the fall of Adam (Psa. 143:2), with the exception of One, Who is God manifest in the flesh.

All this and more is developed in Romans written later. What is the meaning of “the faith *of* Christ”? This could be construed as an objective genitive and be rendered “faith *in* Christ” as the Revised Version and many modern translations. On the other hand faith is often used as the equivalent of *faithfulness*, and then the constant faithfulness and unchangeability of the redeeming work of the Lord Jesus would be the basis of justification rather than the believers’ faith *in* Him. Both are of course true and can be looked on as two aspects of the great work of redemption which has been worked out by God alone in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Galatians 2:20 — 3:9

The apostle Paul finishes his address to Peter publicly in the well-known words of Galatians 2:20,21:

“I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of

the Son of God Who loved me, and gave Himself for me. I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain”.

These words are really a concise summary of the teaching he later gives in the epistle to the Romans, specially in chapters six and seven. Saul the zealous Pharisee, had to learn the real place of the law of God as it affects mankind as sinners. What meant so much to him in his pre-Christian life, he found to be useless in conquering the great problem of sin. Once he could say that “touching the righteousness in the law he was blameless” (Phil. 3:6). That is to say, as far as external observance of the law was concerned, he was correct in all details. What he had never realised to this point was that the law touches *the mind* first of all. He said:

“ . . . I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet” (Rom. 7:7).

Now lust originates in the *mind*, and the law of God shows this up remorselessly, but gives no power to conquer or eradicate it. The result for Paul was:

“For sin, taking occasion by the commandment (the law) deceived me, and by it slew me” (Rom. 7:11).

This painful experience proved to be the death knell to all the Apostle’s hopes for complete personal righteousness by his own efforts. The next move, if there was to be one, must come from God. And it did, by the same means, namely *death* followed by *resurrection life*, for the Lord unfolded to Paul the great truth of *identification with Christ*, in His crucifixion, death, burial and resurrection (Rom. 6:1-11), and it is noteworthy that this doctrine is only found in Paul’s writings.

When we understand this, we are able to plumb the depths of Galatians 2:20. “I have been crucified with Christ” declares the Apostle. The verb is in the perfect tense in the Greek, expressing past action issuing in abiding results. Nevertheless he is abundantly alive, for the power and life of the risen Christ now indwells him and takes complete control from this moment onwards.

Paul gladly yielded to all this, for it was the complete answer to all his personal problems. He did not attempt to frustrate the grace of

God that had worked in this marvellous way. He now realised that “righteousness inside and out” could never come by law-keeping. If it could then the sacrificial death of Christ with all its agony and darkness was a waste of time and of no value whatsoever (verse 21) to deal with the overwhelming problem of sin.

All these words he addressed publicly to Peter and those with him, doubtless hoping and praying they would recognise the great mistake Peter had made by re-erecting the barriers of the law. This matter was so basic and important that the next chapter takes it further, and what Paul had argued from his own spiritual experience, he now shows to be grounded upon the Scriptures themselves. And for this, he finds the example of Abraham a perfect illustration.

When we study the record of this patriarch, we find that all the basic truths of Christianity are reflected in his life. Consequently we find him also brought forward as an example in the epistle to the Hebrews and the epistle of James. Abraham was a Gentile, not a Jew, though he became their ancestor. He knew nothing of Moses’ law with its ritual, its types and shadows, nor of the temple that followed. The Judaizers quoted Moses, but Paul quotes Abraham with the promises of grace granted him by God. If they refer to centuries of tradition and practice, he will appeal to the great covenant based on grace that was older still.

CHAPTER 3

Paul now makes a personal appeal to the Galatians:

“You foolish Galatians: Who has bewitched you? Before your eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed as crucified. I would like to learn one thing from you; did you receive the Spirit by observing the law, or by believing what you heard? Are you so foolish? After beginning with the Spirit, are you trying to attain perfection by human effort?” (Gal. 3:1-3 N.I.V.).

Their stupidity amazed Paul. Had they been bewitched by someone? The word “bewitched” has links with the English “fascinated”. They had listened to the glib tongues from Jerusalem and doubtless these had presented their case very persuasively so that the Galatians had become fascinated by their arguments. And yet Paul, in his initial ministry to them, had so truthfully and vividly brought before them a crucified Christ as the only answer to their needs, that it was as though the Lord Jesus had been “placarded” before them. This is the sense of the Greek *proegraphie*. The large hoardings that carry advertisements by road sides would be a modern example. A crucified Messiah, so presented, cut the ground from under the Judaizers’ feet with all their talk about the law of Moses.

The Apostle now asks them a simple question, how did their Christian life begin? Did it begin by their own efforts, by their own faulty attempts to obey the law? Or did it begin in simple faith in that crucified One Who was ministered to them by the Spirit? That is, they received the Truth by *hearing* the Word of God as spoken by Paul and *believing* it without any works of merit on their part.

Furthermore, their belief had been followed by persecution from their fellow-countrymen. Had this been to no purpose and been utterly valueless? (verse 4). In verse 3 we have “spirit” and “flesh” put in antithesis. When Paul does this, the normal meaning is the new nature given by the Holy Spirit at the new birth as opposed to the sinful old nature inherited from fallen Adam. The ensuing conflict from these two opposites is described by Paul from his own experience in Romans 7. Here the Galatian believers are forcibly reminded that their salvation commenced with the Holy Spirit’s work, and did they imagine that further spiritual progress could be made by something as utterly imperfect as the sinful old nature?

The Acts period was one of evidential miracles which accompanied the ministry of the earthly kingdom in the days of the Lord Jesus and with the renewed offer of mercy to Israel as revealed during the Acts of the Apostles (Acts 3: 19-26). These special kingdom gifts are referred to in verse 5:

“He therefore that ministereth to you the Spirit, and *worketh miracles* among you, doeth he it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?”

To clinch his argument the Apostle immediately cites the example of Abraham, for he did exactly what Paul was urging the Galatian believers to do, namely to *believe God*, apart from any works of his own, and thereby it was accounted to him by God for righteousness. Abraham realised he could do nothing himself, but throwing himself on God, he reckoned that the Lord could do what he could not. Accepting this humble position of utter dependence, he was “justified” or accounted righteous. It should have been obvious to the Galatians that any other attitude would have been stubborn pride and self-satisfaction:

“Even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness, know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham. And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen (i.e. Gentiles) through faith, preached before the gospel to Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed. So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham” (verses 6-9).

It is striking how Scripture is personified as “seeing beforehand” and “preaching” to Abraham. The written Word is indissolubly linked with the Living Word, and is given the attributes of God, in this instance, *foreknowledge*. God’s choice by grace of the pagan Abram had one great object in view to produce a race that He would redeem and spiritually educate so that they as His representatives could take the knowledge of Himself and His salvation to the ends of the earth. This redemption and justification could only be along the same lines as those of their progenitor, Abraham, that is by complete trust in the salvation which God alone can provide. If they did not know in their experience this salvation by faith alone, how could they preach it to the world? They had to go through the long discipline of being under the law given through Moses not to save them but to prove the opposite, that this law with its great standard of absolute righteousness can only condemn sinners; it can never save or justify them.

All this and more the apostle Paul under the guidance of the Holy Spirit is going to argue from the Old Testament Scriptures, which was the Bible of believers living at this time.

In what sense could the Gospel be preached *before* the earthly coming of the Saviour and the sacrificial offering of Himself on the cross? This was possibly because in the divine foreview, the seed of Abraham had *Christ in view* as the seed as well as the nation of Israel (Matt. 1:1). This explains the rather perplexing argument in chapter 3:16 which we shall deal with in its place.

Paul can now firmly assert that “They which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham” (verse 9). These men of faith are one with Abraham in their firm trust in God and His provision by grace of that all-needed righteousness which they could never produce themselves.

It is the same today. Mankind can be divided into two classes, or at least those who have come under the sound of the gospel of Christ. Either like Abraham of old, they have realised their sin and failing and their utter inability to eradicate it and its consequence, death, or they persuade themselves that, given time, they will one day be able to work out their own salvation and make themselves perfect. None seem to agree as to how this is going to be accomplished, but they all delude themselves by wishful thinking that it can be realised if they work hard enough. The epistles to the Galatians and Romans show the utter falsity of such ideas. God’s good news about His Son and what has been accomplished by Him for sinners is the only answer, and this is the glorious gospel that we have to proclaim “in season and out of season” (2 Tim. 4:2-4) while opportunity lasts and this is what the apostle Paul was urging on the believers in Galatia.

Galatians 3:10-18

Having cited Abraham as an excellent example of the faith that takes God at His Word without trying to add human works or merit, the apostle Paul passes on to the law of God given through Moses. Doubtless the Judaizers would deem the reference to Abraham to be irrelevant. The main point to them was the law and the necessity for practising it in order to be saved and it was this fundamental error they were pressing on the Galatians.

Paul goes to the heart of the matter straight away by stressing that this law was not just a string of precepts to be talked about and admired. It was a rigid code to be *obeyed to the letter continuously without one flaw*, and the failure to do this brought the offender under nothing less than the *curse of God*. To prove his point he quotes Deuteronomy 27:26:

“For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse, for it is written Cursed be he that confirmeth not *all* the words of the law *to do them . . .*”

and this is followed by the first verse of the next chapter “and it shall come to pass, if thou shalt hearken diligently unto the voice of the Lord thy God, *to observe and do all His commandments which I command thee this day . . .*” (Deut. 28:1). It must never be forgotten that only one people of the earth received the law of God and that was the people of Israel and they undertook by solemn covenant to keep it in all its details. After reciting the law to the people, we are told that Moses confirmed the covenant by the sprinkling of blood on the altar and the people themselves:

“And he took the book of the covenant (the law) and read it in the audience of the people; *and they said, All that the Lord hath said will we do and be obedient*. And Moses took the blood and sprinkled it on the people and said, *Behold, the blood of the covenant, which the Lord hath made with you concerning all these words*” (Exod. 24: 7, 8).

There is much loose thinking today about the law of Moses. Too often it is forgotten that this was a solemn covenant made between Jehovah and His earthly people Israel alone. It was never given as a covenant to any Gentile nation. Therefore when the question is asked, who comes under the curse of God, the Scriptural answer is perfectly clear, the Jewish nation.

“Now we know what things soever the law saith, it *saith to them who are under the law*” (Rom. 3:19).

Consequently the Jew as a sinner was under a double disability. He was not only under the dominion of sin and death as the whole human race has been since the fall of Adam, but was in addition a breaker of the *covenant* of the law, the penalty of which was God’s curse. Contrary to popular opinion, Adam as a sinner was *not* cursed by God. It was the serpent and the ground that was cursed for

Adam's sake (Gen. 3:14, 17). While it is true to say that the whole human race as sinners have broken God's law for we are "all under sin" (Rom. 3:9) yet it was only one section of them (the nation of Israel) who had *covenanted with God* to keep this law, knowing at the same time what would be the consequence of breaking that covenant, namely coming under the terrible curse of God. It is noteworthy that God refers to the law as the old covenant which Israel 'broke' (Jer. 31:32).

It was in this sense that the Jew was not only under sin but "under the law" as Paul expresses it in Romans and Galatians and "as many as are under the works of the law are under the curse, for it is written, Cursed is everyone that continueth not in all things which are in the book of the law *to do them*" (Gal. 3:10), and this was clearly recited to Israel and not to any other nation. The conditions of this divine code had been made abundantly clear to this people. It consisted of commandments, *all* of which had to be kept in *practice* not theory, and this meant that not *one* slip in thought, word or deed could be tolerated during the span of human life. Ninety nine per cent obedience was not sufficient; it must be one hundred per cent. Nothing less than this would be counted as "keeping the law".

It should have been obvious that no failing creature could ever approximate to such a standard. As we have before pointed out, the law set out the high standards of God but gave no power or ability to keep them. All it could do was to show up the sinfulness of sin, and condemn it, bringing in the verdict of guilty (Rom. 3:9-19) and finally shutting us all up to one remedy and only one, namely Christ and His redemptive work for us. This is going to be the argument of Galatians 3:24:

"Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ that we might be justified by faith".

The Apostle therefore proceeds in his argument:

"but that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident for, the just shall live by faith. And the law is *not* of faith, but the man that *doeth* them shall live in them" (Gal. 3:11, 12).

Here we come to a key-text which forms the Scriptural basis of Paul's gospel ministry, "the just shall live by faith", quoted from

Habakkuk 2:4 and is also used in Romans 1:17 and Hebrews 10:38. The Hebrew *emunah* translated 'faith' in Habakkuk means steadfastness and fidelity and is accompanied by the pronoun 'his', whereas the Septuagint (the Greek translation of the O.T.) supplies the pronoun 'My' and reads "the righteous one will live by My faithfulness". Paul omits the pronouns but there can be no doubt that, taking the whole of this teaching on justification into account he means that the righteous one will live (in future resurrection life) because of his faith in the Lord's faithfulness; quite apart from any works or effort on his part.

Both Old and New Testaments regard righteousness in legal terms. We quote C.H. Welch here:

- (1) God is looked upon as a Judge (Isa. 1:7,8; Rom. 8:33)
- (2) The person to be justified is guilty. He is looked upon as exposed to the judgment of God (Rom. 1:32) and whose mouth is shut (Rom. 3:19)
- (3) There are three accusers (a) the law (John 5:45); (b) conscience (Rom. 2:15); (c) Satan (Zech. 3:2; Rev. 12:10)
- (4) The charge is drawn up in legal handwriting (Col. 2:14)
- (5) The gospel provides the guilty person with a plea (Rom. 3:23-25)
- (6) The Lord Himself is the Advocate (1 John 2:1, 2)
- (7) The sentence for believers is one of complete forgiveness, justification, acceptance and title to life and inheritance (Rom. 8:1, 33, 34; 2 Cor. 5:21) (*Just and the Justifier* p.18).

Thus it is that justification by faith in the teaching expounded by Paul and inspired by the Spirit of God, means that righteousness or complete rightness which is reckoned by God to the believer in Christ, in this way leaving him accepted and assured in Christ for ever.

It is important to realise that the three quotations of Habakkuk 2:4 found in the New Testament stress a different word each time. In Romans the emphasis is on the word 'just' or 'righteous', the two English words referring to the one word used in the Greek (*dikaïos*). In Galatians 'faith' is the important word as opposed to works and human merit; whereas in Hebrews the stress is on the word 'live' for here we have the personal response in spite of discouragement and difficulty, and the need to "go on to maturity" (perfection Heb. 6:1).

The apostle Paul, in the context we are studying, makes it quite clear that the law of God is certainly not “through or by faith”, that is, it has nothing to do with the thought of receiving a right standing with God as a gracious gift through faith in Christ. Rather it stresses that if works are to be the basis of forgiveness and life eternal, then such obedience to the law must be absolutely complete (Gal. 3:12) and that is utterly impossible for any human being because all the world is guilty before a righteous God. There is “none righteous, no not one” (Rom. 3:10, 19). Thus the emptiness and deceitfulness of the Judaizers’ contention that the law must be introduced into the gospel is made manifest.

Paul goes on to deal with the fact that, in breaking the *covenant* of the law the Jew came under its *curse* which was the terrible penalty imposed by the Old Testament upon law-breakers. Hence the need for their Messiah to bear that curse so that they could be for ever freed from it:

“Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us; for it is written cursed is everyone that hangeth on a tree” (Gal. 3:13).

The Apostle here quotes Deuteronomy 21:23 “a hanged man is accursed by God”. This does not mean that he was cursed *because* he hung from a tree, but rather that this was the outward sign that he had broken the covenant of law and brought the curse and punishment upon himself.

This was a death of degradation and shame and into this terrible experience the Lord Jesus willingly entered so that those under the curse might be freed from it for ever. He Himself became the accursed one to free those under the curse! (see also 2 Cor. 5:21). Perhaps it was at this point on Calvary’s cross that the Father had to turn away His gaze from His beloved Son, which wrung those words of agony from Christ “My God, My God why hast Thou forsaken Me?” (Matt. 27:46). During those hours of physical darkness we shall never know what bearing the penalty for our sins cost the Saviour. Keeping this in mind, may God constantly deliver us from a light estimate of sin.

Verse 14 which follows shows that the deliverance of Israel from the curse of a broken covenant of law was utterly essential if the earthly kingdom purpose of God was to be fulfilled, the Gentile world reached and the unconditional promise to Abraham realised, that in his seed *all families* of the earth should be blessed (Gen. 12). Paul expresses it in this way:

“... that the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith” (Gal. 3:14).

And now, lest anyone should argue that the law nullified these earlier promises of God to Abraham, the Apostle shows that this was impossible. In order to make this clear he gives as an example a man's last will and testament. The Greek *diatheke* can mean covenant or testament. In order to understand this passage we must remove from our minds the modern conception of making a will, as the legal requirements were different in New Testament days. For instance Paul says “though it be a man's covenant (or will), yet if it be confirmed no man disannulleth or addeth thereto”. Adding to a confirmed will was illegal, whereas today a codicil can always be added to a will provided it is properly witnessed.

We are greatly indebted in many respects to the researches of Sir William Ramsay in Asia Minor and in his *Historical Commentary on St. Paul's epistle to the Galatians* he deals with the process of adoption and will-making. He writes:

“The idea that they who follow the principle of faith are sons of Abraham, whatever family they belong to by nature, would certainly be understood by the Galatians as referring to the legal process called adoption, *huiiothesia*.

Adoption was a kind of embryo will; the adopted son became the owner of the property, and the property could pass to a person that was naturally outside the family only through his being adopted. The adoption was a sort of will-making; and this ancient form of will was irrevocable and public. The terms ‘son’ and ‘heir’ are interchangeable.

An illustration from the ordinary fact of society, as it existed in the Galatian cities, is here stated: ‘I speak after the manner of men’. The will (*diatheke*) of a human being is irrevocable when once duly executed. But, if Paul is speaking about a will, how can he say, after it is once made, it is irrevocable?

Such irrevocability was a characteristic feature of Greek law, according to which an heir outside the family must be adopted into the family; and the adoption was the will-making. The testator, after adopting his heir, could not subsequently take away from him his share of the inheritance or impose new conditions on his succession. The Roman-Syrian Law Book will illustrate this passage of the Epistle. It actually lays down the principle that a man can never put away an adopted son, and that he cannot put away a real son without good ground. It is remarkable that the adopted son should have a stronger position than the son by birth; yet it is so. The expression in Galatians 3, verse 15, 'when it hath been confirmed' must also be observed. Every will had to be passed through the Record Office of the city. It was not regarded in the Greek law as a purely private document. It must be deposited in the Record Office".

From this extract it will be seen that a man's will made at this period of history gave the apostle Paul a splendid illustration to show that the law of Moses given 430 years later could not abrogate God's unconditional promise to Abraham. Just as a human testament once made and completed could never be altered in early New Testament days, so the Lord's promises of grace to Abraham could not be changed or rendered null and void by Moses' law or by anything else:

"And this I say, that the covenant that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law which was four hundred and thirty years after, *cannot disannul*, that it should *make the promise of none effect*. For if the inheritance be of the law, it is no more of promise. but God gave it to Abraham by promise" (verses 17-18).

Some may have a difficulty with verse 16:

"Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, and to seeds, as of many, but as of *one* and to thy *seed* which is Christ".

This verse is beloved of amillennialists who want to spiritualise everything connected with the kingdom of God even if it relates to the earth. They reject the idea that Abraham's seed can refer to the literal people of Israel and this is the verse they frequently quote. But if they would only look down the chapter and read the last verse this is what they would find:

"And if ye (the Galatian believers) be Christ's *then are ye Abraham's seed and heirs according to the promise*".

So Abraham has a literal seed after all! Is Paul contradicting himself? No, not when one faces all the Scriptural facts. In verse 16 Paul is alluding to Genesis 21:12:

“ . . . for in Isaac shall thy *seed* be called”.

The Hebrew *zera* is a collective noun and is used here as a singular with a singular verb. But if we turn to Genesis 17:7 we read:

“And I will establish My covenant between Me and thee and thy *seed* (*zera*) after thee in their *generations*, for an everlasting covenant . . .”

Here *zera* is obviously treated as a *plural* (generations) and the truth of the matter is that the Seed, Christ and the seed (Abraham’s posterity) is looked on as a *unity* in the kingdom purposes of God and both are necessary in the divine plan. The Lord Jesus Christ is the one foundation for the whole redemptive purpose of God which embraces both heaven and earth. In this way the Apostle was able to dispose of objections that might be made by any Judaistic opposer, that the law of Moses cancelled the promises of grace made to Abraham four centuries before.

The Apostle now goes on to ask the question “What, then, was the purpose of the law?” (Gal. 3:19 N.I.V.) and we do well to pause and consider what the Scripture says the law of Moses can or cannot do, lest we start interposing our own ideas. We commence with the fact that it was “holy, just and good” (Rom. 7:12, 14, 16). It was God’s law and therefore perfect. Its main aim was to show up sin in its true colours, as the next verse in Galatians shows:

“It was added because of transgressions till the Seed should come to whom the promise was made” (3:19).

“I had not known sin, but by the law; for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet” (Rom. 7:7).

It is well that we note what the Word of God tells us what the law can and *cannot* do:

- (1) It cannot give eternal life (Gal. 3:21). In Old Testament days it could give as a blessing lengthened human life. In referring to the law relating to the obedience of children to parents, Paul could add in Ephesians “that it may be well with thee and *thou mayest live long on the earth*” (Eph. 6:2, 3).

- (2) The law could not give all-needed righteousness (Gal. 2:21).
- (3) It could not give a divine inheritance either now or in the future (Gal. 3:18).
- (4) The law cannot perfect or lead to spiritual maturity (Heb. 7:19).
- (5) It was only a “shadow” of good things to come (Heb. 10:1).
- (6) It was “weak on account of the flesh”, that is sinful human nature could not attain to its high standards (Rom. 8:3).
- (7) Its final purpose was to lead to Christ – to shut the sinner up to Christ as the only complete remedy for his sinful condition (Gal. 3:24).

It was summed up in one word “love”, *but God’s standard of love not man’s*. “Thou shalt *love* the Lord thy God with *all* thy heart”, “Thou shalt *love* thy neighbour as thyself”. “He that loveth another hath fulfilled the law . . . love worketh no ill to his neighbour, therefore love is the fulfilling of the law” (Rom. 13:8-10).

But it is this very thing that failing man cannot do. Love in terms of human conception must be banished from the mind. This is a poor sordid thing by comparison. But for the believer, God’s love has been “shed abroad” (poured out) in our hearts (Rom. 5:5).

However the Apostle did not seek to minimise in any way the law of God given through Moses. It was given in awe-inspiring majesty through the mediation of angels and Moses (Acts 7:53). It was “ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator” (Gal. 3:19). This shows there must be two contracting parties. God on the one hand and Israel on the other. When God dealt with Abraham, no such mediation was needed and Abraham was even put to sleep, that all might be of God’s doing (Gen. 15:12) for this was all of grace.

This is so much better than law which, in spite of its standards, cannot annul the promises of God.

Are these two in opposition? “Is the law against the promises of

God?” (verse 21). This is impossible for it would imply that there is inner conflict in the mind of God. Promise and law come equally from God but need to be related to the place the Scriptures reveal that they occupy in His purpose. The law shuts up (concludes) all under sin, leaving only one way out and that is solely through Christ Jesus by grace and received on the principle of faith (verse 22).

Paul illustrates what he means by being “shut up under sin” by giving the duties of a guardian slave, translated “schoolmaster” in the Authorised Version.

“Among the Greeks and Romans the name was applied to trustworthy slaves who were charged with the duty of supervising the life and morals of the boys belonging to the better class. The boys were not allowed so much as to step out of the house without them before arriving at the age of manhood” (Thayer).

The time in the experience of the Galatians that this illustrated was likened to bondage, but now they are all “the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus (verse 26) and the bondage is cancelled and in its place is sonship with divine inheritance in view. Not only this, but by the redemptive work of Christ which has completely liberated them, they are welded together as an entity in Christ Jesus. They are *one in Him* and all earthly labels and divisions have vanished.

“... there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female, for ye are all one in Christ Jesus” (verse 28).

“In Christ Jesus” gives their standing in Christ and they join the spiritual ranks of faithful Abraham and those who walked in his footsteps.

CHAPTER 4

The Apostle now contrasts the conditions under the sphere of the law with this new and wonderful position “in Christ” as being an heir with freedom and goes back to the illustration of the pedagogue:

“What I am saying is that as long as the heir is a child, he is no different from a slave, although he owns the whole estate. He is subject to guardians and trustees until the time set by his father. So also, when we were children, we were in slavery under the basic principles of the world. But when the time had fully come, God sent His Son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons. Because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, the Spirit Who calls out Abba, Father. So you are no longer a slave, but a son, and since you are a son, God made you also an heir” (Gal. 4:1-7 N.I.V.).

There is only one word that can describe the condition of those who are under the dominion of the law and the principles of the world, that is slavery. The heir, while he is a minor, knows nothing of freedom but is hedged around with restraints and prohibitions until he attains his majority. The Apostle now applies this to the time before redemption when all were in bondage. *Stoicheia* means “elementary principles” or stages of religious experience (whether Jewish or Gentile) which they have gone through in the past, but are now outdated and abolished by Christ. If the Galatians had been Gentile pagans before they were saved, they could scarcely have been said to be in slavery to Jewish law from any angle. The margin of the New English Bible translates Galatians 4:3 “elementary ideas belonging to the world”.

However some modern translators render *stoicheia* “elemental spirits of the world” which in popular belief were often linked in men’s minds with spiritual forces. These were thought to control the world as in astrology today. This was the ground from which the later Jewish gnosticism was to grow.

Paul describes these “elements” in verse 9 as “weak and beggarly” or poor, and marvels that the Galatians are prepared to go back to the slavery from which they had been redeemed. And the basis of this deliverance is given in verses 4 and 5:

“But when the fulness of time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons”.

Scripture asserts that there is a time and season to every purpose under heaven (Eccles. 3:1). The purpose or plan of God is called “the purpose of the ages” (literally Eph. 3:11). Nations had been permitted to grope in darkness and these times are called “the times of this ignorance”(Acts 17:30). Many forms of government had been tried and found wanting, Jewish religion, Greek wisdom and Roman power all stood self-confessed failures. The time had come for the Redeemer to be born, thus stressing His full humanity as well as His deity. Here at last is the promised Seed of the woman Who will crush the serpent’s head (Satan).

Not only this but He was born “under law” and as a Jew, this could only mean the law of Moses. Thus He might ransom and deliver those who were under the law with the penalty of God’s curse if it was broken. We are told that Christ, the sinless One, completely kept the law and was therefore in the position of rescuing those who were enslaved by it in order that they might receive the status of sons with a divine inheritance in view. To such God sent forth the Spirit of His Son in their hearts (verse 6). Exactly the same word *exapeteilēn* is used of God’s action as had already been used in verse 4 of His sending the Son. It is not strange therefore that the Spirit is described as “the Spirit of His Son”. The result of this is the intimate word “Abba” which is Aramaic meaning “my Father”. The two words Abba and Father come together in Mark 14:36 and Romans 8:15. Romans eight is the chapter of sonship, expressing a precious truth and priceless privilege. Those redeemed in this way leave slavery behind for ever.

Having established this, the Apostle turns back to the problem of the Galatians slipping back to bondage “How turn ye again . . . ye desire again”. It was inexplicable to him that they were willing to step down from the high and wonderful position into which free grace had placed them to the rudimentary things of the law, with its ceremonies, its rites, its days and observances. If they were not returning to idolatry, they were going back to childhood with its lack of freedom.

Paul venerated the law; it was “holy, just and good” to him

(Rom.7:12) yet because of man's sinful nature, it was "weak on account of the flesh" (Rom. 8:3) and he does not hesitate to place it on a parallel with the elements of paganism when such a misuse of the law becomes a competitor with, or a perfecter of the gospel of grace (verses 7-11).

"I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed on you labour in vain" (verse 11).

No one worked harder than the Apostle, but he strongly objected to wasting his time and strength. In no sense was Paul "afraid of" the Galatians. Rather he means "I am fearful for you" (see Gal. 2:2; Phil. 2:16; 1 Thess. 2:1; 3:5).

Paul now sums up by saying:

"Brethren, I beseech you, be as I am; for I am as you are; ye have not injured me at all" (verse 12).

To put it more plainly "put yourself in my place . . . for I have put myself in yours". Is Paul saying in effect "let us be friends" or does he mean that he, a Hebrew and a Pharisee, had already become like a Gentile so far as the law was concerned and he appeals to the Galatians to take their stand with him? Moffatt's translation is very free:

"Do take my line, brothers, just as I once took yours".

We feel that the second interpretation is correct and fits in with the tone of the epistle.

The apostle Paul now makes a personal appeal to the Galatian believers, referring to their past love, their present zeal and the evil influence of the Judaizers which was taking them back from freedom to bondage.

The Apostle assures them that, rather than feeling they had injured him at all, he entertained the warmest recollection of the way they had received him:

". . . ye have not injured me at all. Ye know how through infirmity of the flesh I preached the gospel unto you at the first" (Gal. 4:12, 13).

There is the possibility that this illness is synonymous with Paul's

thorn in the flesh (2 Cor. 12:7). On the other hand it could read “the trial that you endured through the condition of my body”. Whatever the ailment was, it was not only incapacitating, but also unsightly yet they resisted any temptation to show disgust with his appearance.

“And my temptation (trial) which was in my flesh ye despised not nor rejected; but received me as an angel of God, even as Christ Jesus” (verse 14).

The word translated ‘reject’ is *ekptuo*, literally “to spit out”, suggesting that the sickness which had fallen on Paul possibly rendered him objectionable to look at.

“What has happened to all your joy? I can testify that, if you could have done so, you would have torn out your eyes and given them to me” (verse 15 .I.V.).

What was the illness which was afflicting Paul? There have been scores of guesses by expositors, but surely the Apostle has given us a clue here. Why should the Galatians have been ready to hand over their eyes to him? Would they have done so, if his eyesight had been normal? There would have been no point in using such a phrase. There can be little doubt that Paul suffered from some form of eye disease that possibly was prevalent in the East, and occurred through the weakness left by the overwhelming vision he had received on the road to Damascus which occasioned blindness. With such a disease, accompanied by a constant discharge, he would have been very conscious of the spectacle he presented. Yet this had not affected the Galatians. Rather they had joyfully received him as though he was an angel sent by God or even Christ Himself. With this in mind he adds:

“Am I therefore become your enemy, because I tell you the truth?” (verse 16).

Verses 17 and 18 deal with the troublers who were upsetting believers. The Authorised Version is certainly not clear and we give the N.I.V. rendering:

“Those people are zealous to win you over, but for no good. What they want is to alienate you (from us), so that you may be zealous for them. It is fine to be zealous, provided the purpose is good, and to be so always and not just when I am with you”.

From these words it is clear that the false teachers, being moved with envy, had attempted to exclude Paul from the Galatians. After this, the “allegorising”* of the story of Hagar and Ishmael, Sarah and Isaac is a further attempt to show the foolishness of the backward movement of these believers who were so dear to the Apostle. He says:

“My dear children, for whom I am again in the pains of childbirth, until Christ is formed in you, how I wish I could be with you now and change my tone, because I am perplexed about you” (verse 19, N.I.V.).

When Paul talks about an allegory, we must not conclude that he doubted the historical basis of the story in the Old Testament. It was sober fact to him but it illustrated the profound difference that existed between the two covenants, one of law and the other of grace and the impossibility of mixing the two together.

“Tell me, you who want to be under the law, are you not aware of what the law says? For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one by the slave woman and the other by the free woman. His son by the slave woman was born in the ordinary way; but his son by the free woman was born as the result of a promise. These things may be taken figuratively, for the women represent two covenants. One covenant is from Mount Sinai and bears children who are to be slaves. This is Hagar. Now Hagar stands for Mount Sinai in Arabia and corresponds to the present city of Jerusalem, because she is in slavery with her children. But the Jerusalem which is above is free and she is our mother . . . Now you, brothers, like Isaac, are children of promise . . . But what does the Scripture say? Get rid of the slave woman and her son, for the slave woman’s son will never share in the inheritance with the free woman’s son. Therefore, brothers, we are not children of the slave woman, but of the free woman” (verses 21-31 N.I.V.).

The story bears out in picture form the condition of one under the dominion of the law and in contrast one who has been freed from it by redemption. The two Jerusalems, earthly and heavenly bear this out too. The earthly one was still in slavery and subject to a Gentile power. The heavenly one was in a different sphere from earth and was in no sense in bondage. This is described in all its artistry and

* “The modern and common usage of the word *allegoria* is quite different from this Scriptural definition. According to the modern sense it is taken to mean a fictitious narrative which has another and deeper meaning than that which is expressed. Allegory is always stated in the *past* tense and *never in the future*. Allegory is thus distinguished from prophecy. The allegory brings other teaching out of past events, while prophecy tells us of events that are yet to come” (*Figures of Speech in the Bible* E.W. Bullinger D.D.).

beauty by the Apostle John in the Revelation (chapter 21). But we must remember that this revelation is not confined to John and his writings. Hebrews 11 and 12 make quite clear that Abraham saw it in a vision, although the Old Testament does not reveal this, and we believe that all the faithful who followed by overcoming faith, treading the same path as Abraham embraced, saw its wonders too. For them it was the “better country”, better than anything on this earth and worth going without a lasting home here and now, where they were only strangers and pilgrims.

The teaching that is implicit in this story is the contrast between freedom and bondage, between the law of Moses with its slavery and the glorious freedom resulting from saving grace. The Galatians had to decide which they wanted; they could not have both. So the Apostle uses every legitimate means to bring home to these Christians the intense seriousness of their choice and the results that would surely follow. His conclusion is:

“So then brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman but of the free” (verse 31).

But what if those who are free choose to go back to slavery? The context that follows makes this perfectly clear, “Christ shall profit you nothing . . . Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace” (5:2-4). The freedom that comes from Christ’s saving grace is the great key-note of Paul’s ministry. Yet thousands have never learnt this, some who even take the name of Christ. They still substitute their own imperfect doing for Christ’s perfect work of redemption and hope that somehow by mixing these two things they can gain favour with God.

CHAPTER 5

The words of Galatians 5:1 are a clarion call today for all who call themselves Christians:

“It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery” (N.I.V.).

“Ye shall know the truth and the *truth shall make you free*” (John 8:32), promised the Lord. Let us see to it that we never spoil this freedom, provided at such terrific cost.

The apostle Paul has used two great lines of argument. First he has argued from history in chapters one and two from his own experience and the experience of the Galatians. Secondly he has argued in chapters three and four from Scripture, showing that the teaching of the Judaizers is absolutely contrary to the Word of God.

He is now going to use another powerful argument namely the moral change which has been brought by the freedom of the gospel which all the prohibitions of the law of Moses had utterly failed to produce. But these were obligations as fruits of the gospel. God's freedom does not mean licence, as so many have misinterpreted the gospel as preached by Paul. And so with all the earnestness at his command he says to the Galatian believers (and we paraphrase here), ‘Look, I Paul tell you this, if you now accept circumcision, Christ will be useless to you. I say solemnly that every man who accepts circumcision is accepting an obligation to carry out *the whole* of the law. In trying to obtain a right standing with God in this way you have broken the bond that united you to Christ (the bond of faith in Him). You have slipped from the sphere where grace operates . . . Once faith is placed in Christ, neither circumcision nor uncircumcision is any good. The only thing that counts is faith in Christ which works out in love’.

We give the passage in the New International Version:

“Mark my words! I, Paul, tell you that if you let yourself be circumcised, Christ will be of no value to you at all. Again I declare to every man who lets himself be circumcised that he is required to obey the whole law. You who are trying to be justified by law have been alienated from Christ; you have fallen away from grace. But by faith we eagerly await

through the Spirit the righteousness for which we hope. For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any value. The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love" (verses 2-6).

The tenses are important in this passage "If you let yourself be circumcised". The verb is present subjunctive and does not refer to the past. Paul does not say "If you have been circumcised" for that would have excluded himself and every man who was a Jew. It was the contemplation of this rite and the attitude of mind that saw it as necessary to salvation. And in doing this the person concerned put himself in the position of not only being circumcised, but obeying the *whole* law, which had already been proved impossible for man who is a sinner and therefore constantly failing to reach the law's perfect standard.

Paul is now about to introduce a pointed contrast with those who, by their defection and legalism, were falling from grace:

"For we through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith" (Gal. 5:5).

"By faith" is opposed to "by law" of verse four. The Spirit can refer to the work of the Holy Spirit or the sphere in which He works through the believer, that is the "spirit", the new nature as opposed to the "flesh", the old sinful nature. "To wait for" (*apekdechomai*) means "to expect eagerly". The Judaizer expected to attain to righteousness by keeping the law, whereas the instructed believer looked for justification in the sphere of spirit through faith in Christ.

As a summary the Apostle now states:

"For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any value. The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love" (verse 6 N.I.V.).

Paul is not one-sided. He does not allow the Gentile to boast of his uncircumcised state, any more than he will allow the Jew to boast in his circumcision. Both are now unnecessary and irrelevant "in Christ". He has stated the same thing in Galatians 6:15 and 1 Corinthians 7:19. At the same time the Apostle does not say "faith only" for this could be an empty lifeless faith. Rather it is faith expressed by a practical love which is constantly concerned for others.

He continues in expostulation:

“You were running a good race. Who cut in on you and kept you from obeying the truth? That kind of persuasion does not come from the One Who calls you. A little yeast works through the whole batch of dough” (verses 7 and 8 N.I.V.).

The figure of a race, with its possibilities of defeat as well as the glorious possibility of a prize is a favourite one with Paul. Those who were being ensnared by law-keeping as their hope, were certainly not pressing forward, rather the opposite, they were turning backwards. Some in the Galatian churches may have replied by saying that this was only being done by a few. But Paul reminds them that only a little yeast is required to permeate a whole batch of dough, and yeast, in Scripture, is always used in a bad sense figuratively. Those who talk about the “leaven of the gospel” are most certainly confusing Bible metaphors. The Apostle is quoting a proverbial saying that was evidently well-known. Once again he stresses his amazement that any of the Galatian believers should fall out of the race by being ensnared in this way.

“The one who is throwing you into confusion will pay the penalty, whoever he may be. Brothers, if I am still preaching circumcision, why am I still being persecuted? In that case the offence of the cross has been abolished. As for those agitators, I wish they would go the whole way and emasculate themselves!” (verses 10-12 .I.V.).

Two different types of person come before us in this section of the epistle, “the troubler” and “the restorer” of 6:1. The agitators, whatever their number, were being led by someone who was possibly from the Jerusalem church. Paul warns them that such would have to answer to the Lord. Those who teach have an increased responsibility as James 3:1 stresses and would have to bear the Lord’s judgment when “every man’s work will be tested by the fire of God’s holiness” (1 Cor. 3:13).

Did anyone seriously claim that Paul advocated circumcision? If they did, it could only have been true of his pre-Christian days, when he would have advocated the law with all his might. It was certainly never true since his conversion. If he had done so there was certainly no reason to persecute him, rather the opposite! Some ancient witnesses omit the word *eti*, ‘still’ and that would make the sentence run “if I am a circumcision preacher, then . . .”. In any case the word

may be taken in a weak sense meaning “at the present moment”, with no contrast with a past period.

Some have felt that verse 12 is vindictive but the Authorised Version does not recognise that the verb “cut off” is in the middle voice in the Greek and means “cut themselves off”. The language is strong, but we must remember that their disruptive work amongst the Galatian believers was serious and could not be regarded lightly by anyone who valued the truth of God.

The Apostle now begins to contrast the two opposites in the believer, the old sinful nature – *flesh*, the new nature, *spirit*:

“You, my brothers, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature, rather, serve one another in love. The entire law is summed up in a single command, Love your neighbour as yourself. If you keep on biting and devouring each other, watch out or you will be destroyed by each other” (verses 13-15 N.I.V.).

Paul returns for a moment to the glorious gift of divine freedom stressed in verse one of the chapter, but this freedom must not be abused. This freedom never means that a believer is at liberty to do whatever he likes. As we have stated before, he is now free to do *what the Lord likes* and to fulfil His will. The real Christian has to decide which of the two natures he is going to follow and he is reminded in verse 16:

“This I say then, Walk in the spirit (the new nature) and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh (the old nature)”.

These two opposite natures with their practical effects are now going to be described by the Apostle so there could be no doubt as to what they involved in practice:

“For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the spirit, and the spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want. But if you are led by the spirit, you are not under law. The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law” (verses 17-23 N.I.V.).

The New International Version here consistently uses a capital 'S' in "spirit", making it refer to the Holy Spirit, but it is better to use a small 's', thus referring to the new nature, for it is these two opposing natures in the believer that form this section of the epistle. At the same time we do not forget that the Holy Spirit is the giver of the new nature implanted in the believer and this is the sphere through which He works.*

The apostle Paul does not make an exhaustive list of the works of the flesh and this is shown by the words "and the like" in verse 21. They seemed to be grouped in four sections (1) sensual passions, (2) superstitions, (3) disruptive movements and (4) excesses. All of them were rampant in the pagan world of the Apostle's day and have become typical of the present time. The works of the flesh under the third heading are, alas, never long absent from Christian circles: "hatred, variance, emulation, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings", and Satan does not have much difficulty in ruining the testimony of any Christian movement where these sins are permitted.

It is so refreshing to leave the uncleanness of the flesh, for the fruit of the spirit with its wonderful cluster of graces. One list starts with hatred; the other with love and love expands into a ninefold group that springs from the Spirit of Christ.

Chapter five of Galatians concludes with the words:

"Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires. Since we live by the spirit, let us keep in step with the spirit" (verses 24, 25 N.I.V.).

What does Paul mean by believers crucifying their sinful nature? In his experience this had been achieved, not by his own efforts, but by the work of Christ.

"I have been crucified with Christ"

he says in 2:20 and we should refer to his later epistle to the Romans, especially the inner section of chapters 5-8 that unfold the great doctrine of identification of the believer with Christ in crucifixion, death, burial and resurrection as unfolded in chapters five and

* Dr. E.W. Bullinger's book *The Two Natures in the Child of God* can be profitably considered here. It can be obtained from *The Berean Publishing Trust*.

six. This is entirely God's work, not the believer's, but he is exhorted to count on it or to "reckon himself dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom. 6:11). Thus he is delivered from the constant bondage of trying to overcome the flesh in his own strength and by his own efforts.

CHAPTER 6

In chapter six, in contrast to the “troubler”, Paul deals with the “restorer”. The word in Greek as a broken net (Matt. 4:21) is found in medical works for the resetting of a fractured limb. Instead of the overbearing spirit of the troubler the Apostle speaks of “the spirit of meekness” which seeks to restore one overtaken by a fault, considering himself lest he be likewise tempted:

“Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted” (6:1 A.V.).

The Apostle goes on to deal with burden bearing and there seems to be a contradiction. In verse 2 he exhorts believers to “bear one another’s burdens and so fulfil the law of Christ”. Yet in verse 5 he says “for every man shall bear his own burden”. Two words are used for burden here and two aspects of truth are presented. In verse 2 *baros* refers to pressure or weight and the believer is enjoined to assist another who is overloaded. But in verse five the Greek *phortion* refers to the equipment of a soldier which can be shared with none. There are responsibilities both in life and in the Lord’s service which are personal and cannot be passed on to someone else. Wisdom is needed here to discriminate between the two. The “spirit of meekness” will avoid any ideas of pride or aggrandisement, for “if a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself” and needs the warning of verse 7, “do not be deceived; God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. The one who sows to please his sinful nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life” (verse 8 N.I.V.).

When we come to verse 6 of chapter 6, we have to ask ourselves whether this verse is linked with what has gone before or does it start a new subject? The former seems to be true, for the Apostle is saying that, because every man must bear his own responsibility, this does not exempt him from sharing in the general welfare of the church as a whole, or of those whose calling may be dependent on their liberality. The New International Version translates verse 6:

“Anyone who receives instruction in the Word must share all good things with his instructor”.

This reminds us of Hebrews 13:16:

“But to do good and communicate (share) forget not, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased”

and Paul thankfully remembers the Philippian church when he departed from Macedonia “No church communicated (shared)” with him “as concerning giving and receiving” but this church only (Phil. 4:15).

The Apostle goes on to expand his thought under the figure of sowing and reaping. C.H. Welch has some helpful observations here:

“Under this figure of sowing and reaping is included the whole of life’s activities, and without using one word of philosophical jargon, nevertheless brings before us the whole philosophy of cause and effect. Every action may be likened to ‘sowing’. Reward and punishment alike may be compared with ‘reaping’, and just as men do not gather figs from thorns, nor grapes from a bramble bush (Luke 6:44), so any action that has the flesh as its goal must assuredly reap corruption; every action that has the spirit as its goal must assuredly reap life everlasting”.

The Scriptures add: “And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap if we faint not” (Gal. 6:9).

This should apply in our relationship to all as well as fellow-believers (verse 10). At this point it appears that Paul takes the pen from the amanuensis and writes himself. This was his usual habit since some had been forging epistles purporting to come from himself (2 Thess. 3:17, 18) and in each case there is a reference to grace.

“See what large letters I use as I write to you with my own hand!” (Gal. 6:11 N.I.V.).

There have been different opinions as to the meaning of this. Some think Paul wrote the whole epistle and did not employ an amanuensis. Others feel he took the pen at this point (and we take this attitude). It does not affect doctrine either way. Whether the large letters were for emphasis or the result of his eye trouble we cannot say for certain, but in any case we have an emphatic personal summary here dealing with circumcision, the cross of Christ, the crucifixion of self, the new creation and canon (rule).

“Those who want to make a good impression outwardly are trying to compel you to be circumcised. The only reason they do this is to avoid being persecuted for the cross of Christ. Not even those who are circumcised obey the law, yet they want you to be circumcised that they may boast about your flesh. May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world” (verses 12-14 N.I.V.).

The Judaizers' chief object in stressing the rite of circumcision was to make a good showing before men. Numbers of converts were what they were after to give an impression of success and in doing this they avoided all persecution for the cross of Christ. The very thing they wanted to avoid, was the truth that the apostle Paul gloried in proclaiming, namely the fulness that was in Christ through the cross and resurrection which made all such distinctions meaningless. This broke the connection with the outward world system with its empty show and Satanic domination. As he wrote to the Corinthian church:

“Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come” (2 Cor. 5:17 N.I.V.).

There was no possibility of blending these two opposites. God's answer to all the problems made by man's sin and fall from grace is His new creation, a completely fresh start in Christ. This was the rule or guide that all who rejoiced solely in Christ Jesus walked by as day succeeded day. Upon them was peace and mercy:

“Peace and mercy to all who follow this rule, even to the Israel of God” (verse 16 N.I.V.).

Is the “Israel of God” a covering title for all those who were saved during the period covered by the Acts of the Apostles? To judge by the way some use this title, one would judge that it was a frequent occurrence in the New Testament epistles to describe the church. The fact is that this is the only occurrence of the phrase in the New Testament. There is no need here to render the Greek *kai* as ‘even’. Its normal meaning of ‘and’ is sufficient.

Bishop Ellicott's comment on this verse is:

“It is doubtful whether *kai* is explicative, *namely*, upon the Israel of

God . . . it is doubtful whether *kai* is ever used by St. Paul in so marked an explicative force . . . and it seems still more doubtful whether Christians generally could be called 'the Israel of God'. St. Paul includes all in his blessing, of whatever stock or kindred; and then, with his thoughts turning (as they ever did) to his own brethren after the flesh (Rom. 9:3), he pauses to specify those who were once Israelites according to the flesh, but now are the 'Israel of God', true spiritual children of Abraham".

This we believe to be correct. There is no clear Scriptural foundation for using this title as a general title for the church of God today. The *stigmata* or brand marks which Paul bore in his body, from the lashes of the Roman whip and the gashes from stoning, were definitely associated with fellowship with the sufferings of Christ, and for ever separated him from those who, to avoid the offence of the cross, adulterated the gospel of grace with the dregs of Jewish ritual.

All slaves were branded. As the slave of Christ these were His brand marks. Could his enemies show such practical evidences of their devotion and faithfulness to Christ?

He ends the epistle, as he always does, with a reference to grace:

"The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brothers, Amen" (verse 18 N.I.V.).

The word at the very end of the sentence, apart from Amen is "brethren", a blessed word to end his epistle where so much feeling has been manifested and so much error exposed and condemned.

We trust we have seen that the truth presented in this glorious epistle lies at the very centre of the gospel of grace. Its importance cannot be overrated and all who have the responsibility of preaching and teaching must give this epistle a prominent place in their witness. It is a wonderful companion to the epistle to the Romans and was one of the main instruments, through Luther's ministry, of promoting the Reformation, and all who wish to be faithful to the truth which is centred in a risen and glorified Christ must give constant heed to its message.

The Epistle to the Romans

CHAPTER 1

If there is one part of the New Testament that is essentially basic to Christianity, it is the epistle to the Romans. While other portions deal with the gospel of God's grace, it is in this great epistle that the profound need of failing man and God's saving remedy for his condition is brought forward and expounded in depth and detail with inescapable logic. Great leaders of former generations such as Augustine, Luther, Calvin and Wesley, have been irresistibly drawn to this letter and have given their exposition of it.

We should remind ourselves that the risen Christ specially made known His gospel to the apostle Paul in what was probably Paul's first epistle, namely Galatians, and it was presented by the Apostle in no uncertain language:

“But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ”.

“But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed” (Gal. 1:11, 12,8).

But here there is no *reasoned* exposition of the good news except where the question of keeping the law was concerned. The atmosphere is tense, for the challenge of Paul's apostleship was in the forefront and this burning question had to be settled first and the opposition of the Judaizers defeated.

When we come to Romans the condition is entirely different. These problems have been resolved and there is a calm in the later epistle which is absent in Galatians, although in some respects they are covering the same ground from a doctrinal standpoint.

Authorship. There never has been any serious problem over this. The stamp of Paul is on it from the beginning to the end. As to the church at Rome, we have few details to help us. Certainly Paul did not found it. Neither the Acts nor his other epistles form any basis

for this, and we can say the same about Peter in spite of Roman Catholic doctrine.

The apostle Paul declared that he did not build on another man's foundation (Rom. 15:20), yet he regards the church at Rome as within the sphere of his commission. We know for certain that Peter was still in Jerusalem at the time of the council (c.A.D.50) whereas it is almost certain that a church existed in Rome before this. There is no reference to Peter in the Roman epistle and it is difficult to imagine that Paul wrote as he did if Peter had founded the church there. Moreover Acts 18:2, 3 shows that Aquila and Priscilla were already believers when they arrived at Corinth from Rome and there they became Paul's companions. This means the church existed before A.D.40, since they were banished under the edict of Claudius and this date is before Peter moved from Jerusalem.

There is evidence that in later years both Peter and Paul were martyred at Rome, but even if this is true, it tells us nothing about the origin of the church in this city. In Acts 2:10 we read of visiting Jews and proselytes from Rome and some could have been numbered amongst those who were saved on the day of Pentecost. In which case they would have taken the message of the gospel back to Rome. In any event, all roads led to the metropolis, and when we remember the rapid spread of the gospel in the Acts, the message of Christianity must soon have reached the capital where there had been a contingent of Jews for a considerable period.

As to the date of the composition of the Roman epistle, it seems evident that it was written towards the close of Paul's third missionary journey when he was at Corinth, or possibly Corinth's port, Cenchræ, where there was a church and Phoebe was one of its servants (Rom. 16:1). The year could be between A.D.57-59, though Professor C.K. Barrett gives reasons for A.D.55. What is important is that this epistle was the last one which the Apostle wrote during the Acts period, and its middle section (chapters 9-11) gives a most valuable divine commentary on the momentous things that were happening during that time, specially as they affected the people of Israel and their spiritual condition.

Broadly speaking the epistle is divided into three sections:

- (1) Chapters 1-8 Basic, dealing with justification by faith and the gospel of grace.
- (2) Chapters 9-11 The attitude of Israel to the gospel. Their failure and final restoration.
- (3) Chapters 12-16 Practice. The daily Christian walk and witness.

A more detailed structure is as follows:

- A 1:1-17 The Gospel promised before, for obedience of faith among all nations
- B 1:18-3:20 Jews equally with Gentiles guilty before God
- C 3:21-31 Come short of the glory of God
- D 4:1-25 Abraham's body now dead
- E 5:1-11 Reconciliation – basic
 - F 5:12-21 Condemnation in Adam The secret (mystery)
 - G 6 and 7 Question, repudiation and answer of Romans 16:25-26
 - F 8 No condemnation in Christ
- E 9-11 Reconciliation – dispensational
- D 12,13 Present your bodies a living sacrifice
- C 14-15:7 Received to the glory of God
- B 15:8-16:23 Gentiles equally with Jews acceptable before God
- A 16:24-27 A mystery (secret) silenced before. For obedience of faith unto all nations.

The balance between the sections is fairly clear and will become more apparent as we study the epistle closely.

Salutation and Introduction

The letter to the Romans commences with a prologue of 15 verses. The salutation at the opening is similar to Greek letters as a whole, but Paul expands it to give fuller details of himself than he usually does. In fact it is the weightiest of all his introductions:

“Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God, (which He had promised afore by His prophets in the holy Scriptures), concerning His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, Which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh; and declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead” (1:1-4).

The Apostle describes himself as a *slave (doulos)*, a seeming paradox coming from one who was the apostle of liberty! (Gal. 5:1). Yet this description was profound truth, for just as a human slave was the property of his owner in every respect, and completely at his

master's disposal, so Paul by redemption belonged to Christ. He was "not his own", but "bought with a price" which was nothing less than the life and sacrificial death and resurrection of the Son of God (1 Cor. 6:19, 20). Such a condition is likewise true of every believer in Christ and these tremendous practical implications the Apostle sought to impress upon all the members of the churches.

He was a "called apostle". There is no need for the extra words "to be" supplied by the Authorised Version. He had been set apart by God at his birth (Gal. 1:15), even as Jeremiah (Jer. 1:5) and the risen Lord's words recorded in Acts 9:15 confirmed this "he (Paul) is a chosen vessel unto Me, to bear My name before the Gentiles". In the earlier letter to the Galatians, Paul had made it quite clear that his ministry was centred in the gospel of God's grace, which the risen Christ had revealed to him quite independently of any human source. It was not "after man" declared the Apostle, "I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ" (Gal. 1:11, 12). Not only this, but it was the divine standard for all gospel preaching and still is, so much so that if even an angel from heaven preached any other gospel, God's curse would be on him (Gal. 1:8, 9). This good news is explained in 1 Corinthians 15:1-4:

"Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you . . . for I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received (i.e. from the risen Saviour), how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures; and that He was buried, and that He rose again on the third day according to the Scriptures".

The Scriptures here, refer to the Old Testament and such passages as Isaiah 53:12 dealing with Christ's sacrificial death, Psalm 16:10 (quoted in Acts 2:23-32), Jonah 1:17 (referred to in Matt. 12:40), setting forth His resurrection make this clear. Moreover the epistle to the Romans revolves round a verse in the prophet Habakkuk, "the just shall live by his faith" (2:4), and the tremendous implications of this verse are brought forth and elaborated all through this letter.

This "good news" is "concerning His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom. 1:3). The Lord Jesus is central in this gospel and without Him it would be no gospel at all, but just an empty shell. The word "gospel" is one of the commonest words used in Christian circles

today, but in what sense is it used? Too often the One Whom it is all about seldom gets mentioned, the word merely describing the acts of men with a religious veneer to improve things. We need to be on our guard against these sort of ideas which are widespread, and in view of the verses of Holy Writ quoted above, are sheer deception.

The Apostle states that the Lord Jesus Christ “was made (or better “was born”) of the seed of David according to the flesh” (verse 3). This does not mean that He was so, merely by human judgment, but rather as regards His humanity. He was a true descendant of David. There are two spheres in this context. “In the flesh”, He was born of the family of David. “In the Spirit” (the Holy Spirit), a divine sphere, He was declared to be the Son of God with power. The verb *horizo* rendered “declared” also has the force of “defined” or “appointed”. This is its meaning in Acts 17:31 where it is stated that a day of judgment for the world has been *appointed* by God. At Bethlehem the Lord Jesus was born and appointed to be the Son of God. But this was in weakness and lowliness. In resurrection the same appointed Son of God was with power – “all power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth” (Matt. 28:18) and His exaltation was “far above all” (Eph. 1:18-23; Phil. 2:8-11). This was “according to the spirit of holiness”. The latter phrase is a Hebraism for the Holy Spirit. The stupendous miracle of the resurrection is based upon the activity of the whole Godhead, Father (Galatians 1:1), Son (John 10:17, 18) and Holy Spirit (Rom. 1:4; 1 Peter 3:18).

Paul proceeds to state:

“By Whom we have received grace and apostleship, for (or ‘to’ margin) obedience to the faith among all nations, for His name” (verse 5).

His apostleship was a gift of grace as he declares in chapter 15:15, 16 “because of the grace that is given to me of God, that I should be the minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles”, hence the words “among all nations” of chapter 1:5. The object of his witness was with a view to *believing obedience*, that is to bring about the obedience that is based on faith in Christ. Belief without such obedience is barren and does not accord with the teaching of the New Testament.

The apostle Paul, having stated the divine origin of his apostleship, declares that “faith obedience” of the gospel was to the Gentiles. The Greek *ethne* (like the Hebrew equivalent *goyim*) can be

rendered Gentiles, nations, or heathen; the context must decide. Some attempt to render it “nations” in all its occurrences but this restriction only leads to difficulties and errors in interpretation. The Apostle here is confirming the fact that he was the Christ-directed apostle to the Gentiles, whereas Peter, James and John were primarily Christ’s representatives to Israel. The fact that Paul goes on to state, “*among whom* are ye also the called of Jesus Christ”, seems to indicate clearly that the majority of the Roman church were Gentiles, but the word cannot obviously mean “nations” as a whole. Such were the “called of God” and designated “saints” or holy ones, that is, called to be God’s holy people separated for Himself. The word “saint” looks back to the Old Testament. Exodus 19:6 describes Israel’s call by God to be, among other things, “a holy nation”, a nation chosen by Himself to carry out His earthly purpose for them. The Roman believers were likewise called to fulfil God’s will.

To them was given the greeting:

“Grace to you and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ” (verse 7).

This united the Greek and Jewish modes of salutation. The Greek would say *chaire*, rejoice, and the Jew *shalom*, peace.

The reader should note the weighty points contained in this introduction to the epistle:

- (1) Paul was the apostle to the Gentiles
- (2) The gospel as it relates to Christ
- (3) Christ considered according to the *flesh* and according to the *spirit*
- (4) The sphere of Paul’s ministry, “all nations”
- (5) The nature of his testimony “faith obedience”
- (6) The incentive, both for him and the believers to whom he wrote, “for the sake of His Name”.

These opening verses speak directly to every minister of the Word of God. C.H. Welch’s words to modern readers are to the point:

“You are not your own master, nor your congregation’s servant. You, like Paul, are the bond-slave of Christ. Whether you labour with your own hands in the workaday world, or whether your whole time is devoted to the ministry, you are separated unto the Gospel of God. You cannot

preach that Gospel and doubt the Old Testament Scriptures. Neither can you preach that Gospel and fail to preach Christ. Even though you preach Christ, you will not preach a full Gospel without Christ risen. Your own obedience and the obedience enjoined by you upon others is not a legal obedience, but an obedience of faith. Grace and peace be with all such" (*Just and the Justifier* p.9).

Paul now goes on to explain to the Roman believers the reason for his writing to them. Like the Thessalonian saints (1 Thess. 1:8), those at Rome had given such a fine witness that their faith was "spoken of throughout the whole world" (Rom. 1:8). For this the Apostle gave deep thanksgiving and assured them of his continued intercession for them:

"For God is my witness, Whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of His Son, that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers . . ." (verse 9).

Paul's service for Christ made continual searching demands on him day and night. Yet the great ministry of prayer for others was not neglected. Over and over again he records the fact that he never ceased from interceding for fellow believers (Eph. 1:15, 16; Col. 1:3, 9; Phil. 1:4; 1 Thess. 1:2; Philemon 4; 2 Tim. 1:3). Prayerless Christian service is fruitless Christian service. The Bible is full of the records of those who were outstanding men of prayer and what that constant prayer accomplished when it was based on the will of God.

The apostle Paul sought God's will always and he seeks to relate that will to visit them that they may both receive benefits:

"Making request, if by any means now at length I might have a prosperous journey by the will of God to come unto you. For I long to see you, that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift, to the end ye may be established; that is, that I may be comforted together with you (or encouraged) by the mutual faith both of you and me" (verses 10-12).

It is well to note that the Apostle did not expect to be a benefactor only, but also to receive some help from the Roman Christians himself. For some while Paul had wanted to visit them but had been hindered from doing so (verse 13). He does not say whether this was due to the activity of Satan or to restraint by the Lord. The old English "let" used in the Authorised Version in this sense is quite archaic and survives only in the semi-legal phrase "without let or hindrance". We know from what he tells us later on in the epistle that the visit to

Rome was part of a longer journey that he had in mind which would involve Spain (Rom. 15:24, 28).

His aim was for lasting spiritual results from his Roman visit:

“ . . . that I might have some fruit among you also, even as among other Gentiles” (verse 13)

and this again (see verses 5, 6) confirms the probability that the church at Rome was for the most part Gentile.

Not only did the Apostle desire to make personal contact with the Roman saints but above all he longed to preach the gospel of God's grace, and one reason that he gives for this is that he is *a debtor*:

“I am a debtor both to the Greeks, and to the Barbarians; (this term was used of all who were not Greeks) both to the wise, and to the unwise. So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also” (verses 14, 15).

In saying this he stresses his responsibility, for the knowledge of the truth always brings such responsibility. It is a perversion to regard grace as a release from all obligation, giving a liberty which is nothing more than veiled licence. Later in the epistle he reminds the Roman saints that they were debtors too (Rom. 15:27). When we realise what grace really means, we shall be glad of such responsibility, for it is a profound privilege to seek to “work out” in practice what God has graciously “worked in” us. So Paul goes on to say:

“For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ; for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek” (verse 16).

Here Paul uses a figure of speech which seems to *lessen* his real feelings towards the gospel. Actually he means that he glories in it, because in the gospel the very power and righteousness of God is revealed savingly to those who do not deserve it, that is, to sinners, and he goes on to show later that there is not one person who does not come under this heading (3:9-18, 23).

If we are ever going to understand this great epistle in any measure, we must have the conception of righteousness revealed in the Old Testament, for upon this the apostle Paul, guided by the Holy Spirit, bases his argument and links it with a verse from the prophet Habakkuk (2:4). This is the dominating theme of this letter, which is more or less an exposition of the prophet's words.

“The ideas of right and wrong among the Hebrews are forensic ideas, that is, the Hebrew always thinks of the right and the wrong as if they were to be settled before a judge. Righteousness is to the Hebrew not so much a moral quality as a legal status. The word ‘righteous’ (*saddiq*) means simply ‘in the right’, and the word ‘wicked’ (*rasha*) means ‘in the wrong’. ‘I have sinned this time’ says Pharaoh, ‘Jehovah is in the right (A.V. righteous), and I and my people are wrong (A.V. wicked, Exod. 9:27)’. Jehovah is always in the right, for He is not only sovereign, but self-consistent. He is the fountain of righteousness . . . the consistent will of Jehovah is the law of Israel” (*The Prophets of Israel* W.R. Smith p.71).

God is the personification of righteousness or rightness in thought word and deed. Human beings can only be called righteous, when, in His sight, they can be accounted absolutely and consistently right in these three respects. It should be obvious that no such person exists with such a standard of conduct.

“The gospel tells us first how men and women, sinners as they are, can come to be ‘in the right’ with God; and second how God’s personal righteousness is vindicated in the very act of declaring sinful men and women ‘righteous’ . . . the principle on which God brings people into the right with Himself is the principle of faith, and for this statement the Old Testament authority is adduced in the words of Habakkuk 2:4 ‘the just shall live by his faith’” (F.F. Bruce *Romans* p.78).

A word of equal importance to righteousness is the word “faith”. This can mean in English, faith, belief or trust in anything, but the faith of the Old and New Testaments is something deeper than an intellectual nod. The Greek words *pistis*, faith, and *pisteuo*, meaning, I believe, are profound words indicating more than just credence. In addition to this, they mean personal commitment to the extent of handing over one’s self to another person. Thus it is not mere intellectual assent, but rather wholehearted involvement in the truth believed. To believe in Christ is not only to accept what He says as being true, but to commit one’s self to Him and to become totally involved in the truths that are revealed in the New Testament concerning Him.

What does the apostle Paul mean by the phrase “from faith to faith”? (Rom. 1:17) – literally “by or out of faith, unto faith”. Various ideas have been put forward by expositors, but it would seem, judging by Paul’s usage of the word faith, to express the fact that in order to experience personally the eternal benefits of salvation, it is on the basis of faith and trust in Christ *from start to finish*, apart from any

works or merit on the recipient's part.

God's righteousness then, is revealed on the basis of nothing but faith or complete trust in Him. This faith is like a three-fold cord; it is (1) a *conviction*, that is, it rests upon the truthfulness and faithfulness of God; (2) it is a *cleaving* to Him, its outcome being love and hope, and (3) it is a *confidence* which controls the walk and manner of life.

Before he goes any further Paul is constrained to relate the gospel to the need of the pagan world around him. If God is a God of righteousness, then He was bound to take account of its terrible condition. The ugly picture which the Apostle draws is more than confirmed by contemporary pagan literature. It merited nothing less than the wrath of God:

“For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness; because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath showed it unto them. For the invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse” (1:18-20).

Many do not like associating “wrath” with God, probably because they think of Him only as love, and anger as it exists in human life, sinful spite and uncontrolled passion. But this is not so with God; His anger is the response of His holiness to deliberate wickedness and rebellion. It is a principle of retribution that must operate in a moral universe.

Moreover if we study carefully the wrath of God as it is revealed in the Bible we shall find that it is not poured out on sinners indiscriminately, but rather reserved for the Satanic system called “the lie” summed up in Babel of the Old Testament and Babylon in the New Testament. In the book of the Revelation this Satanic system is seen at the end time in all its naked horror and it is in this book that God's wrath and the day of wrath figure so prominently. Can it be that men have no responsibility, and that they are drawn by a force which they cannot resist into this terrible system of darkness and corruption? The answer is ‘no’, this is not true. Some may object and say that the Gentile world was in ignorance of God and therefore they could not be held responsible, but Paul proceeds to make it quite clear that the

opposite was the truth. Men could have known God in a measure, for *God had manifested Himself in creation* as Romans 1:19 and 20 clearly shows.

Moreover the knowledge that they possessed, they deliberately suppressed, they *held* the truth in unrighteousness. *Katechein*, to hold, means to hold fast, (7:6) and then to suppress. God had manifested Himself as Creator, but rebellious man deliberately suppressed and ignored this revelation. As long as there has been a created universe the invisible attributes of God can be clearly seen, so that as the Apostle says, “they are without excuse” (verse 20).

This revolt against the truth of God resulted in idolatry and then men plunged deeper and deeper into darkness and the moral depravity that goes with it. When they failed to honour God as Creator, their minds became infected and debased till at last they were not capable of truly rational thought about Him:

“Because that, when they knew God, they glorified Him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts and creeping things” (verses 21-23).

Idolatry touches the realm of worship and there is only One Who has the right to receive worship from created beings and that is God. Directly He is dethroned His place is quickly taken by Satan and the powers of darkness, demon spirits under his control. The apostle Paul showed that behind all idolatry is demonism (1 Cor. 10:20 where “devils” should be rendered “demons”) and this gives Satan what he longs for, namely God’s position and the worship of mankind.

Three times we read that men deliberately took a terrible downward step, by changing what was truth, into a lie, in order to gratify their lusts (verses 23, 25 and 26) and because of these actions three times we read that God “gave them up” (verses 24, 26, 28). In other words they were left by God to experience to the full the terrible consequences of their backsliding. Israel too, in the past, had been temporarily “given up” by God, as Acts 7:42 reveals, and for precisely the same reason, namely idolatry. The result for the Gentile world was a reprobate or depraved mind (verse 28). It is significant that the same list of vices which follow, are repeated in Paul’s last epistle, in the context which deals with the end of this age (2 Tim. 3:2-5).

On the surface it seems impossible that, after nearly 2000 years of Christianity, mankind will sink into such a state once more, but God's Word is truth and never exaggerates. As we look at the conditions of the world around us we cannot help but notice how standards are constantly being debased and the slide downward quickens as men get further and further away from God. The conclusion of the Apostle is found in verse 32:

“Who (the backsliders of the context) knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them”.

Such was the terrible condition of the pagan world in Paul's day.

The Apostle now turns to the Jew and examines *his* condition. There was no doubt that the people of Israel had been placed by God in a position of great favour. They had been chosen by Him to be the premier nation of the earth, the channel through which the knowledge of God and His gospel could spread to all mankind. This will explain why both the gospel and divine judgment for its rejection was “to the Jew first” (1:16; 2:8-10). It was recognition of Israel's highly favoured position, and explains the custom of the apostle Paul on his missionary journeys recorded in the Acts, always going first to the synagogue (Acts 13:14 [and note verses 46, 47]; 14:1; 17:1, 2, 10; 18:1, 4; 19:1, 8; 28:16-28). The importance of Israel's place in the earthly purpose of God can scarcely be overestimated and it becomes the central theme in the middle chapters of Romans, namely 9-11. A fuller consideration will be given to this when those chapters are reached.

In proceeding to deal with the Jew, Paul bases his argument on the most important fact, that greater knowledge of God leads to deeper responsibility. And it is impossible for it to be otherwise. This is a fact that we should always bear in mind, for it is just as true today as it was in the Apostle's lifetime. The Jewish moralist found ample scope in criticising the pagan world. But what was his own life and environment like? He had forgotten such a verse as Amos 3:2:

“You (Israel) only have I known of all the families of the earth: therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities”.

The first half of the verse he would revel in, but what about the other half?

CHAPTER 2

The Apostle now adopts the so-called diatribe style, used by philosophical teachers of the time. He imagines a critic intervening in the argument who is given replies which are searching in the extreme:

“Therefore thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest: for wherein thou judgest another, *thou condemnest thyself*; for thou that judgest doest the same things . . . and thinkest thou this, O man, that judgest them which do such things, and doest the same, that thou shalt escape the judgment of God?” (Rom. 2:1-3).

In other words the critic and judge is involved in the same acts as the man he condemns. As we have seen, behind all the sin and failure of chapter 1 lies idolatry, which results in man putting himself in the place of God, and in this, as past history had shown, the Jew had been equally guilty with the Gentile.

The human critic by his condemnation of his fellows, not only abrogates to himself God’s position but sets a standard for his own conduct. If he can see wrong in the actions of others, then he has no excuse if he indulges in the same things himself.

He may belong to the privileged people of God, but fails to realise that because of this, God demands a higher standard of conduct from him than from the darkened Gentile world. In ignoring this, declares the Apostle, he is only storing up for himself wrath in the future day of judgment, instead of the goodness and long-suffering of God leading him to humility and repentance now:

“And thinkest thou this, O man, that judgest them which do such things, and doest the same, that thou shalt escape the judgment of God? Or despisest thou the riches of His goodness and forbearance and long-suffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?” (verses 3 and 4).

One thing that cannot be questioned is the righteousness of God’s judgment. It is absolutely impartial and fair; it is “according to truth” (verse 2). There are no favourites with God where sin and failing are concerned. To the sinning Jew Paul asks, do you think that you, one of the favoured people, will escape? Especially when

you despise the riches of His kindness, forbearance and long-suffering (verse 4). The answer is definitely 'no'. In fact, the Apostle says, with your impenitence and false judgment you are storing up for yourself God's wrath which will be made known in the future day of wrath:

“ . . . after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up (storest up) unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God” (verse 5).

This righteous judgment will take into account a man's environment, the limits of his responsibility and his works:

“Who will render to every man according to his deeds: to them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life: but unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile; but glory, honour and peace, to every man that worketh good, to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile; for there is no respect of persons with God” (Rom. 2:6-11).

The Apostle does not quote any passages of Scripture, for the Old Testament is perfectly clear on this point. He doubtless had in mind such passages as Psalm 62:11, 12; Proverbs 24:12; Jeremiah 17:10; 32:19. The New Testament emphasises the same truth (Matt. 16:27; 2 Cor. 5:10; Rev. 2:23; 20:12; 22:12), although most of these Scriptures have the believer in view primarily.

The emphasis on human works here may raise a problem. On the surface it looks as though Paul is teaching salvation by works. If he was doing this, then it runs contrary to the consistent testimony of his witness as well as this epistle itself, namely that salvation is by grace and not works or merit. The Apostle was not the sort of man to indulge in such contradictions. The Apostle here is stressing the impartiality of God as between Jew and Gentile. The continuance in well doing of the genuine seeker is but the outward expression of his inward desire for the eternal things (glory, immortality, eternal life) which are resident only in God and not in man.

Did not the Lord say “By their *fruits* ye shall know them”? The “fruits” are the external evidence of persistent inward longing and appreciation of the truth of God. *Taken by themselves* and not as a result of internal desire they prove nothing. This explains a similar

passage relating to the apostle Peter (Acts 10:34). The sincere seekers that Paul is referring to, do not trust in their works alone, but in God Who is the only source of glory, honour and eternal life. Their continual seeking in action is only the practical outward expression of their inward sincerity.

But in it all, as we have seen, God is no “respector of persons”, that is, He never indulges in partiality or favouritism. Above all He is absolutely righteous and fair whether dealing with the believer or unbeliever, Jew or Gentile.

The absolute righteousness or fairness that the apostle Paul is stressing in the context we are considering, is now shown in God’s dealing with those who have never had a written revelation from Him, or for that matter a preacher to make known the gospel of salvation by grace through the Lord Jesus Christ:

“For as many as have sinned without law shall also perish without law; and as many as have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law; (For not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified. For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves; which show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another;) in the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel” (Rom. 2:12-16).

What this passage makes clear is that the Gentile who never had the standard of the law of God given through Moses, will not be judged by that standard. Nevertheless he is not without law entirely, for inwardly, he has a law which should be the regulator of his thoughts and actions, and this is *his conscience*. This is the moral law in miniature as it were. Conscience either condemns his wrong doing (accuses him) or witnesses that he is right (excuses him), and all this is open to God Who, unlike man, knows the thoughts and the intents of the heart in every person and in every particular.

Furthermore we are assured in Scripture that the righteous Judge of all is able to do what no human judge can, that is, He assesses what an individual would have done if his circumstances had been different. God’s judgment is dependent upon the amount of light a person has had and what the circumstances surrounding him were like. In

other words guilt is proportionate, and God is able to make a righteous comparison with the favoured and those who were not so favoured.

In the Old Testament God's earthly people, Israel, were compared with Sodom, which, on the surface, is surprising to say the least:

“As I live, saith the Lord God, Sodom thy sister hath not done, she nor her daughters, as thou hast done, thou and thy daughters . . . *they (Sodom and her daughters) are more righteous than thou*” (Ezek. 16:48-52).

It would be difficult to make any valid comparison between the Israelite and the inhabitants of Sodom, except to say that, with all the revelation and light contained in the law of Moses, the Jew was in a vastly more favourable position than the people of this city. This being so, their responsibility was much greater. Added light inevitably brings added responsibility in God's sight. Would that this was continually impressed upon the minds of all believers.

The same principle is expressed by the Lord Jesus in Matthew 10:14, 15:

“And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear your words, when ye depart out of that house or city, shake off the dust of your feet. Verily I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment, than for that city”.

In the next chapter of Matthew, the Lord continues:

“Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works, which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment, than for you” (Matt. 11:21, 22).

In addition the Lord refers to “the men of Nineveh” and “the queen of the south” in Matthew 12:41, 42. Tyre and Sidon did not repent. This is an historic fact. Tyre and Sidon would have repented if . . . ! That is the verdict of One Who will judge the secrets of men, the One Who “tries the heart and the reins”, Who therefore can righteously evaluate inner desire and outward performance. He may see triumph where others see disaster, and failure where others see

success. It is in the light of these revelations concerning the principles of future judgment that we must read Romans 2:4-16.

Nor must we forget that nothing that is written in this passage or elsewhere in the Scriptures can alter the privilege of hearing the gospel and the heavy responsibility resting on those who, having heard, do not believe.

On the other hand this passage does help in the great problem of dealing with the destiny of the unsaved in lands that are far removed from Christian revelation. When one thinks of the millions that have been born in past thousands of years in vast countries like China and Africa who have never had the privilege of hearing the good news of salvation, one is staggered. In addition to this we should remember that they had no responsibility for inheriting a sinful nature from fallen Adam, nor for being born in a place where it was impossible to hear the gospel. Does not Romans 10:14 recognise the limits of their responsibility?

“How then shall they call on Him in Whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in Him of Whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?”

The clear answer is they cannot do any of these things and a righteous God will recognise this. A crude orthodoxy may consign them to hell for eternity, but the teaching of the passage we are considering in Romans does nothing of the kind. It deals with them along the lines of conscience and the circumstances that surround them and states that they are a “law unto themselves” (2:14). They are a special case in other words, and the “faith obedience” to the gospel to which chapter one refers, cannot apply to them.

However, the Apostle goes on to deal with the Jew who *did* have a knowledge of God and His truth. He points out to them that it was useless for such to rest in the fact that they were the custodians of God’s law. This law was only of use *if it was obeyed*. Apart from this it could only condemn him. A Jew who breaks the law is no better than a Gentile. In fact a Gentile who carries out the spirit of the law will condemn a Jew who breaks it, no matter how well versed he may be in the Old Testament Scriptures, or how much he rests upon the law revealed therein.

He imagined that this provided him with a sure standing before God as did the fact that he was born one of the chosen people. The Apostle proceeds to strip from the Jew these false props:

“Now you, if you call yourself a Jew; if you rely on the law and brag about your relationship to God; if you know His will and approve of what is superior because you are instructed by the law; if you are convinced that you are a guide for the blind, a light for those who are in the dark, an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of infants, because you have in the law the embodiment of knowledge and truth – you, then, who teach others, do you not teach yourself? You who preach against stealing, do you steal?”

You who say that people should not commit adultery, do you commit adultery? You who abhor idols, do you rob temples? You who brag about the law, do you dishonour God by breaking the law? As it is written: God’s name is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you” (Rom. 2:17-24 N.I.V.).

The law of God was only profitable if it was obeyed and carried out in practice, otherwise it could only condemn and render guilty. So Paul continues “Circumcision has value if you observe the law, but if you break the law, you have become as though you had not been circumcised” (verse 25 N.I.V.).

It was futile for a Jew to look on circumcision as though it was a passport to salvation. It had an internal meaning without which it was an empty rite. The putting off of the flesh stood for the abandonment of human effort and merit, and in its place was put a complete reliance (faith) in God and His provision of righteousness. Regarding the law, Galatians reinforces the argument of Romans, “every man that is circumcised . . . is a *debtor to do the whole law*” (Gal. 5:3). Without this, the law became man’s enemy, not his friend, for a broken law could only lead to God’s curse (Gal. 3:10), and moreover it made the sacrifice of Christ valueless:

“Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace” (Gal. 5:4).

But what of the Gentile who, though uncircumcised, pleased God? He would certainly show up the shortcomings of the disobedient Jew and judge him even though he had kept the letter of the law (Rom. 2:27). Now the Apostle gives a description of the true Jew which was more than just outward conformity to ritual:

“A man is not a Jew if he is only one outwardly, nor is circumcision merely outward and physical. No, a man is a Jew if he is one inwardly; and circumcision is circumcision of *the heart, by the Spirit*, not by the written code. Such a man’s praise is not from men, but from God” (verses 28, 29 N.I.V.).

There was an internal attitude of mind, which was essential if one wished to be recognised by God as the true seed of Abraham. Circumcision of the heart is an Old Testament doctrine as much as the fleshly rite, (Deut. 10:16; Jer. 4:4) where it means man’s humble response to God’s gracious love and the absence of boasting and indulgence in some supposed superiority over others. On the other hand one cannot rule out the physical side altogether, for later on in the Roman epistle the apostle Paul is going to state that the true seed came only through Isaac, and not through any other child of Abraham (Rom. 9:7, 8) – “in Isaac shall thy seed be called”. In other words there is an internal as well as an external side to the real seed of Abraham and both are essential to the purpose of God.

CHAPTER 3

When we come to chapter three of the epistle, the presentation of the Apostle's theme in the form of an argument still continues. We can imagine someone reading his conclusion of chapter two and saying: "if it is being a Jew inwardly that really matters, is there any real advantage in belonging to the Jewish nation and being circumcised?" Paul's reply to the question, "what advantage has the Jew?" (Rom. 3:1) is definite:

"Much every way; chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God" (verse 2).

Among the many privileges bestowed by God upon Israel was the fact that He had made them the custodians of His written Word. This was an honour indeed, such as no other nation had received. Later on the Apostle gives an imposing list of Israel's privileges in Romans nine:

"... my kinsmen according to the flesh: who are Israelites; to whom pertaineth the adoption (sonship), and the glory (the external symbol of God's presence with them), and the covenants (every covenant in the Bible pertains originally to Israel except the covenant with Noah), and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises; whose are the fathers (Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and his twelve sons to whom so many divine promises were made), and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came. Who is over all, God blessed for ever, Amen" (9:3-5).

We shall have to consider this list of high privileges in detail when we reach chapter nine, but when we take them all together, the answer to the query as to whether there was any advantage in being an Israelite is overwhelming. The evidence of the Old Testament makes it clear that God planned the Jewish people to be the premier nation of the earth through whom this truth was to reach to the ends of the world (Exod. 19:3-6; Deut. 28:1), and for this reason the Psalmist concludes Psalm 147 by saying:

"He sheweth His word *unto Jacob*, His statutes and His judgments *unto Israel*. *He hath not dealt so with any nation*: and as for His judgments, they have not known them. Praise ye the Lord" (verses 19, 20).

At the same time Israel should have remembered what has already been stressed, namely that God's light and truth bring great responsibility, and even though they were unfaithful yet this did not

alter or make void the faithfulness of God:

“What if some did not have faith? Will their lack of faith nullify God’s faithfulness? Not at all! Let God be true, and every man a liar” (verse 3 N.I.V.).

The untruth or the failure of man only sets into relief God’s absolute faithfulness and reliability. In a court of law God will always prove to be in the right.

“As Scripture says, That Thou mayest be proved right when Thou speakest and be victorious when Thou enterest into judgment” (verse 4 C.K. Barrett).

Another objection now follows. Someone may argue: “If my failure shows up God’s faithfulness, why should He find fault with me, because if this is true He is the gainer by my sin? So, is God just in exacting retribution for sin?”. The Apostle apologises for bringing in such a human argument. The sentence in Greek is so worded as to expect the answer, No. If this accusation was true it would be impossible for God, as the moral Governor of the universe, to execute judgment upon mankind. “For then how shall God judge the world?” (verse 6), and it is quite clear from Scripture that this is precisely what He will do (Acts 17:30, 31; Rom. 2:14-16), and the fact that man has been created a moral being in the image of God brings responsibility and demands it. The only alternative is to regard man as a puppet with no responsibility for his actions, which is unscriptural and completely untrue.

The objector however persists:

“If my falsehood enhances God’s truthfulness and so increases His glory, why am I still condemned as a sinner?” (verse 7 N.I.V.).

As a matter of fact this argument was certainly made by Paul’s enemies against the gospel which he preached. If human works do not enter into the scheme of salvation, if it is just by faith only, then one can live just as one likes and forget about sin and failing. But this was complete falsification of the truth. In a later epistle, the Apostle expresses the good news of salvation in this way:

“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that (salvation by faith) not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should

boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus *unto good works, which God hath before ordained (margin: before prepared) that we should walk in them*" (Eph. 2:8-10).

Thus Paul did not teach antinomianism, and this is reinforced by the first two verses of Romans six:

"What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin (after salvation), that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?" (6:1, 2).

This being so, those who slandered the Apostle and misrepresented the gospel that he preached, came under God's condemnation (damnation A. V.) and this condemnation was just. They said in effect that Paul taught that doing evil was permissible if good came from it (verse 8). This is a highly dangerous and deceptive statement that still creeps into human affairs, and even into the religious world. How often do we hear that wrong doing is allowable if some good springs from it? And there are some who do not hesitate to say that even God can take this attitude in His purposes, that He wills evil in order to show up His love and kindness in forgiveness!

Such slander comes perilously near blasphemy. We can be assured of one thing: a thrice-holy God does not need to bring sin into His plans in order to further them and bring them to a glorious conclusion. God may and does permit sin. The very fact that He has made man a moral being allows this. He can also over-rule sin, but this is something entirely different. God's permissive will must not be confused with His direct will.

Chapter three continues with another argument from the foregoing. If it is a great advantage to belong to the nation of Israel, then surely Jews are superior to Gentiles? The Apostle's answer is clear. Jews are sinners equally with Gentiles and in some respects worse than them because of their greater enlightenment and failure, so from the standpoint of sin and failing there is no difference:

"What then? are we (Jews) better than they (Gentiles)? No, in no wise: for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin" (verse 9).

This contrast with the opening verses of the chapter may be set out in this way:

- A 3:1 What advantage and profit has Israel?
 B 3:2 Much every way – chiefly because God had given them the revelation of His Word
 A 3:9 Are we (Israel) then better than they (Gentiles)?
 B 3:9 No, because Israel together with the Gentiles are sinners and guilty before God.

This guilt, says the Apostle, is the verdict of Scripture and he goes on to cite six passages to prove the point:

“We have already made the charge that Jews and Gentiles alike are all under sin. As it is written,

‘There is no-one righteous, not even one; there is no-one who understands, no-one who seeks God. All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no-one who does good, not even one’ (Psa. 53:1-3).

‘Their throats are open graves; their tongues practise deceit’ (Psa. 5:9).

‘The poison of vipers is on their lips’ (Psa. 140:3).

‘Their mouths are full of cursing and bitterness’ (Psa. 10:7).

‘Their feet are swift to shed blood; ruin and misery mark their ways, and the way of peace they do not know’ (Isa. 59:7, 8).

‘There is no fear of God before their eyes’ (Psa. 36:1).

“Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be silenced and the whole world held accountable to God. Therefore no-one will be declared righteous in His sight by observing the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of sin” (Rom. 3:9-20 N.I.V.).

The “law” here means the Old Testament Scriptures as a whole.

Having now dealt with all mankind in the two-fold division of Jew and Gentile, and shown that *all* are sinners and are therefore guilty in the sight of God – the Judge of all the earth, the apostle Paul returns to the implications of the wonderful gospel of grace which he stated in 1:17. Man is not only a sinner but is unable to rescue or save himself from this condition, no matter how much he tries. Since the fall, men have been struggling to do this very thing, but have never

attained to it, and as Scripture reveals, never will. Max Muller, as he considered the many religions in the world, observed the fact that although they differed in many respects, in one thing they were all united, that man must *do* something to achieve salvation. He must make his contribution or work it out for himself, in other words. The idea of salvation as a free gift, perfect and complete, being brought before men and received personally by faith or trust never enters their conceptions, but this is the heart of the gospel made known to Paul by revelation of the risen Christ (Gal. 1:8-12).

We have reached a point in Romans where God now steps in to meet the deepest needs of man and provides him with that righteousness or absolute rightness which completely nullifies his guilty condition, so much so, that if he accepts it by simple faith, in God's court of law he now can be pronounced "not guilty" by the Judge of all the earth, the very opposite of the "guilty" verdict declared in Romans 3:19:

"But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by His grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus" (Rom. 3:21-24 N.I.V.).

In the section we are studying we have seen that God's answer to man's sin is the provision of His own righteousness, resting on the basis of Christ's redemptive work on the cross and received personally by the sinner on the ground of faith or trust in Him. There can be no doubt that "righteousness" and the verb "to make righteous" are key words in this great epistle, and they run right throughout like a golden thread as the following summary shows:

	Romans
God's righteousness <i>revealed</i> in the gospel	1:17
God's righteousness <i>required</i> and found wanting in human attainment	1:18 – 3:20
God's righteousness <i>provided</i> through faith in Christ	3:21-31
A <i>concrete</i> illustration of this – Abraham. How God reckons	

righteousness to a sinner	Chapters 4 and 5
God's righteousness and the <i>freedom it brings to serve Him</i>	Chapters 6 and 8
<i>Israel's attitude to this righteousness</i> and their failure through not receiving it	Chapters 9-11
<i>God's righteousness in practice</i> in the daily life	Chapters 12-16

As stated before, the terms "righteousness" and "make righteous" are terms of the law-court. These words do not mean "to make virtuous" or "to make sinless", as is evidenced by the fact that the redeemed sinner is still capable of sin and does not attain absolute perfection until resurrection glory when he is then presented "holy and unblameable and unproveable in His (God's) sight" (Col. 1:21, 22). In the exposition of Galatians we pointed out that the process of justification is expressed in terms of law in the Old and New Testaments. We repeat it here:

- (1) God is set forth as the Judge of all the earth (Gen. 18:25; Isa. 1:7, 8; Rom. 8:33)
- (2) The person to be justified is guilty. He is looked upon as exposed to the righteous judgment of God (Rom. 1:32). The sinner's mouth is shut (Rom. 3:19)
- (3) There are three accusers (1) the law of God (John 5:45); (2) conscience (Rom. 2:15); (3) Satan (Zech. 3:2; Rev. 12:10)
- (4) The charge is drawn up in legal handwriting (Col. 2:14)
- (5) The gospel provides the guilty person with a plea (Rom. 3:23-25)
- (6) The Lord Himself is the Advocate (1 John 2:1, 2)
- (7) The sentence for all believers is complete forgiveness, justification, and acceptance by God, and title to eternal life and inheritance (Rom. 8:1, 33, 34; 2 Cor. 5:21).

Such are completely cleared and acquitted by God, Whose righteousness is beyond question. This is done on the principle of *grace*,

since men, being sinners, cannot be acquitted on the grounds of any merit of their own. It is God's gracious favour that meets all their needs, at the same time satisfying the demands of justice, His holiness not being compromised in any way. This is all because of the sacrificial death of the Lord Jesus Christ Who bore the penalty for the sins of all His people.

The apostle Paul says more about grace, God's favour to the unworthy, than any other New Testament writer. This wonderful redemption and justification is based upon the "riches of His (Christ's) grace" (Eph 1:6,7), leading to "exceeding riches of His grace" in the ages to come which will be experienced in resurrection glory. The Apostle knew in his own experience what it was to be the recipient of the grace and mercy of God, as he looked back on his pre-conversion days and described himself as the "chief of sinners" (1 Tim. 1:12, 13, 15). And this can be true of every sinner who puts his trust in the redemptive work of Christ alone. It matters not of what race, nationality, class or colour he belongs to, this infinite grace and mercy can be his on the grounds of trust in Christ Jesus:

"... this righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by His grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. God presented Him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in His blood. He did this to demonstrate His justice, because in His forbearance He had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished - He did it to demonstrate His justice at the present time, so as to be just and the One Who justifies the man who has faith in Jesus" (Rom. 3:22-26 N.I.V.).

It is clear from the foregoing wonderful facts which stress that justification and forgiveness are God's acts alone, and achieved solely through the sacrificial work of the Lord Jesus on the sinner's behalf, that human boasting must be excluded. What has any sinner, thus forgiven, to boast about? If he boasts at all, it must be in the Saviour Who has given His life on the cross on his behalf and borne the penalty of his sins.

It is this perfect offering "once for all" (Heb. 10:9, 10, 12), that God continually looks at where sin is concerned and it is because of this that He could overlook the sin of previous generations and be forbearing, holding back His hand in punishment. Christ's redemptive work can be retrospective as well as looking to the future.

Compare Paul's proclamation to the Athenians "... the times of ignorance God overlooked; but now ..." (Acts 17:30 R.V.). Yet at the same time, in forgiving the sins of His people, God's holiness was not compromised in doing this. "He was just" and at the same time "the *Justifier* of him who believeth in Jesus" (Rom. 3:26).

Sin had not been ignored by Him or swept under the carpet so to speak. It had been fully borne by God Himself in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ "For He hath made Him (the Lord Jesus) to be sin (or a sin offering) for us, Who knew no sin; (He was sinless Himself) that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Cor. 5:21).

How wonderful that the God Who pronounced the penalty for sin to Adam, namely death (Gen. 2:17), bore it Himself so that His creature should not have to bear it for eternity! This is surely love beyond our comprehension. No wonder in the New Testament the love of God is so often described in terms of the giving of Himself in the person of Christ for us (John 3:16; Gal. 2:20; Eph. 5:25). Even in the human realm the Lord said "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends" (John 15:13). It is all beautifully expressed in the children's hymn:

"It is a thing most wonderful,
Almost too wonderful to be,
That God's own Son should come from heaven,
And die to save a child like me"

BISHOP W.W. HOW

Some have judged from verse 25 that we have the pagan idea that God needed to be appeased. The word 'propitiation' *hilasterion* is related to the verb *hilaskomai* which in pagan Greek did mean 'to placate'. In the Septuagint the word is parallel to the Hebrew *kipper* ("Make atonement") and among cognate words we find *kapporeth*, "mercy seat". These words acquired a new meaning from their Biblical context. We should note carefully in Romans, it is not man who is trying to placate God, for Paul insists that it is God, not sinful man Who has provided this mercy seat (verse 25), as He did typically in the Old Testament.

Some modern translations seek to avoid the word "propitiation" and substitute "expiation" and "the means of expiating sin" (R.S.V.

and N.E.B.) which mean to wipe it out. This is certainly true of Christ's redemptive work. God has so dealt with His peoples' sin and removed it, so that it can be said with truth, "their sins and iniquities I will remember no more" (Jer. 31 :34); "As far as the east is from the west, so far hath He removed our transgressions from us" (Psa. 103:12); "Thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea" (Micah 7:19).

On the other hand we cannot Scripturally remove the wrath of God from the problem of sin. Has not Paul already said that "the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men?" (Rom. 1:18). How then is this wrath to be removed? It can only come through the *hilasterion*, "propitiation" that *God has provided* whereby *through Christ* men's sins can be righteously cancelled, in which case retribution (the wrath of God) does not arise. The wrath of God is not a popular theme in modern theology but it is inevitable in a moral universe and is one of the revelations of Holy Writ.

The Apostle sums up this section of the epistle by saying:

"Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law. Is He the God of the Jews only? Is He not also of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also: seeing it is one God, which shall justify the circumcision by faith, and uncircumcision through faith. Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid; yea, we establish the law" (verses 28-31).

Is any distinction to be made in the prepositions 'by' and 'through' faith? (*ek* and *dia*). It appears that the Apostle uses them interchangeably. *Ek* is used in Romans 1:17, *ek* and *dia* in connection with *law* in 3:20: and *dia* in 3:22, 25 joined with faith and in Galatians 2:16. Likewise in English the words 'by' and 'through' can have the same meaning.

One thing is certain, and that is, from the Apostle's argument, there is only one way to justification for Jew and Gentile, namely the way of faith in Christ's work of redemption.

He asks, do we do away with the law if we stress faith? Paul uses the word law in more than one sense; sometimes with the definite article and sometimes without it. But in every sense that he uses it

the declaration that law is established, not made void by faith, is true. If it means the Old Testament as a whole, it is true, for justification by faith contradicts not one of its statements nor is inconsistent with its doctrines or promises. If it refers to the Old Testament typology then these were but shadows of which Christ was the substance (Heb. 10:1) and they were *fulfilled* in Christ, not proved spurious. If it means the moral law then again this is not weakened by the law of faith, for by it no moral obligation was weakened or penal sanction disregarded. No, the law is established by faith, for the Old Testament teaches that both Abraham and David were justified gratuitously by faith and without works on their part.

Having come to this point, the Apostle is now going to give a concrete illustration of what justification by faith means, and he found in Abraham an excellent example of this truth. Several New Testament writers refer to Abraham to prove their points of doctrine for the very good reason that in this man's life all the basic truths of Christianity are illustrated. We find justification, sanctification, the power of prayer, fellowship with God, consecration, and the goal of maturity all exhibited in his walk before God. To the Jew, Abraham was their father and their supreme human example. No more telling practical setting forth of the foundational doctrine of justification by faith could be made to an Israelite. Thus it is that the fourth chapter of Romans which follows, shows how faith in God and His promises forms the very basis of Abraham's life and witness.

CHAPTER 4

The apostle Paul now proceeds to set forth the case of Abraham and he continues to use the style of question and answer. If ever there was a man whom the people of Israel revered it was Abraham, for not only was he their human father, but his character was such that even God Himself could say:

“Abraham obeyed My voice, and kept My charge, My commandments, My statutes, and My laws” (Gen. 26:5).

This was high commendation indeed, and if a man’s works could justify him in God’s sight, then Abraham could go further than most. But Paul has clearly shown that even the best of human beings cannot reach God’s standard of perfection by their own efforts:

“What then shall we say about Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh? For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. For what does the Scripture say? Abraham believed God and it was reckoned to him as righteousness” (Rom. 4:1-3 R.S.V.).

It will be well to pause here and consider the word translated ‘count’ in this context as it is vital to the argument. The word in the Greek is the verb *logizomai* which occurs no less than eleven times in this chapter. It is translated ‘count’ in verses 3 and 5, ‘reckon’ (verses 4, 9, 10), ‘impute’ (verses 6, 8, 11, 22, 23, 24). Looking carefully at the context we note that it is used in two different ways (1) of imputing something, (2) imputing one thing for another. The former sense occurs in verses 6, 8, 10, 11, 23, 24. In these passages one thing is not imputed for another, wages, righteousness and sin are actualities. But in verses 3, 5, and 22 faith is imputed *for* righteousness. We have the same thought in 2:26, “therefore if the uncircumcision keep the righteousness of the law, shall not his uncircumcision be *counted* for circumcision?”

The principle of faith is of extreme importance, but we must not go to the length of making it another “work”. If we do, then we empty the gospel of the grace of God of all its meaning. Faith is not a work, although it leads to works, but this is another matter. We have a comparatively modern example of these two expressions. There was a time in the history of our country when the standard coin of

the realm was the golden sovereign. One could never have said with truth that the golden sovereign was *reckoned for* twenty shillings for it was actually worth twenty shillings whatever happened to it. Today we have a pound note. Its purchasing power is exactly the same as that of a golden sovereign, but it would be very unwise to conclude that the note itself was *actually* of the same value as the gold; it was and is merely “reckoned for” £1. The intrinsic value of each would be evident if both were dropped into the fire. The sovereign would survive, but the note would quickly be reduced to ash. On the other hand we must not think that the value of the £1 note is fictional, for behind it are the resources of Great Britain.

So it is with faith or trust. Faith is *not* righteousness; but is reckoned by God *for* righteousness. The real righteousness is found only in the Lord. Nevertheless faith is precious and is the one thing necessary to please God (Heb. 11:6), but we must not magnify it into a procuring cause or a work of merit on our part. As C.H. Welch expresses it so aptly, “there, in the great capital Bank of Heaven, is the genuine gold of perfect righteousness, wrought by Another (the Lord Jesus) on our behalf, that alone makes our faith of any value” (*Just and the Justifier* p.77).

The section of the epistle we are now dealing with stresses three things:

(1) The relation of circumcision to the argument; (2) The nullifying of God’s promises if the law and human works are introduced; and (3) The supreme example of Abraham and the way he was justified by God. Romans 4:3 reads:

“For what saith the Scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness”.

The Apostle is clearly quoting Genesis 15:6, but we have a problem here because in the Genesis record we are assured that Abraham believed God some time before this. Hebrews 11:8 states that “By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out unto a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went”, and this takes us back to Genesis 12:1, so why is this passed over? The answer is found by considering the background of Genesis 15. At this point, Abraham had come to an end of himself. He said “I go childless” (Gen. 15:2). Yet God assured him that, in spite of this seeming impossibility, he

would nevertheless have a son: "He that shall come forth out of thine own bowels shall be thine heir" (Gen. 15:4). Abraham was then told to look towards heaven and attempt to number the stars. This command was followed by the promise, "so shall thy seed be" (Gen. 15:5). Next we have the statement of the sixth verse "And he believed in the Lord; and He counted it to him for righteousness". The remaining verses in Romans four stress that Abraham did not believe God in a general way, but that he believed *the God of resurrection*. He was the "God Who quickeneth the dead" (Rom. 4:17). This aspect of Abraham's faith is seen further in connection with the offering of Isaac "Accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure" (Heb. 11:19). That the great basic doctrine of resurrection is linked with justification is clear from the conclusion of Romans four:

"Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him; But for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on Him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for (because of) our justification" (verses 23-25).

The debt incurred by our sins was paid by the Lord's death. Our acquittal was received in resurrection and it is for this reason that Genesis 15:6 is the place where Abraham's justification is revealed. He most assuredly believed in a God Who was able to give life to dead people when he believed the promise of a literal seed, at a time when both he and his wife were physically unable to have children owing to their old age (Rom. 4:17-22).

Looking more closely at the section of the epistle before us we find the apostle Paul commenting on the fact that Abraham's works were not the basis of his justification:

"Now when a man works, his wages are not credited to him as a gift, but as an obligation. However, to the man who does not work but trusts God Who justifies the wicked, his faith is credited as righteousness" (Rom. 4:4, 5 N.I.V.).

The argument is obvious; a workman earns his wages by his works. His pay is not a gracious gift! If Abraham could earn his justification before God by his own efforts then faith was not necessary. But it has been made abundantly clear that neither Abraham nor any other human being has the capability of doing this (though alas,

thousands imagine that they have). Justification or acquittal must come from God Himself. All human sources or attempts are useless. It is God alone Who can justify the sinner! The phrase that God “justifies the ungodly” is surely startling, for it is in direct contradiction to the Old Testament Scriptures:

“ . . . I (God) will not justify the wicked” (Exod. 23:7).

“He that justifieth the wicked and he that condemneth the righteous, both of them alike are an abomination unto the Lord” (Prov. 17:15 R.S.V.).

So here, in Romans apparently, we find God doing what He absolutely prohibited! Yet God’s way of justifying a sinner is such that His own holy character is untarnished. He can be “just” and yet the “justifier of him who believeth in Jesus” (Rom. 3:23-26), for, as we have seen, He, in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, has paid the penalty for the sins of the believer. For He was made sin for us Who Himself had no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him (2 Cor. 5:20, 21).

The force of the verses quoted above from the Old Testament clearly indicate that “to justify” is a forensic term, a term from the law-court, which does not mean to make perfect or holy, but “to acquit” as innocent.

The Apostle now introduces David as a further example:

“Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin” (verses 6-8).

The conclusion to be drawn from this is, “the counting of righteousness” is equivalent to “the not-counting of sin”. What a joy and relief this was to David as the Psalm which he wrote testifies and from which this quotation is made (Psa. 32). David had grievously sinned, but he was dealing with a merciful God Who would cover and put away his sins on the basis of the future sacrifice of Christ (Rom. 3:24, 25). No wonder he finished that Psalm by saying:

“Be glad in the Lord, and rejoice, ye righteous, and shout for joy, all ye that are upright in heart” (verse 11).

Paul now deals with the question as to whether this glorious forgiveness and acquittal was the privilege of the Jew only. Could it extend to the Gentile?

“Cometh this blessedness then upon the circumcision (Jew) only, or upon the uncircumcision (Gentile) also? for we say that faith was reckoned to Abraham for righteousness. How was it then reckoned? When he was in circumcision or in uncircumcision? Not in circumcision, but in uncircumcision” (Rom. 4:9, 10).

The answer to the query of verse nine is settled by noting Abraham's condition when he was justified by faith. Was he circumcised then or uncircumcised? Again the answer is clear. The circumcision of Abraham does not take place until Genesis 17, at least fourteen years later, and then it was only an external seal of that righteous status which God had given him long before, by virtue of his faith. *Abraham was a Gentile* when he was justified by faith! Thus it is that he could be the true father of all, whether Jew or Gentile, who trust God and take Him at His Word.

The rite of circumcision or its absence is irrelevant to a man's status before God as a Judge:

“And he (Abraham) received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had yet being uncircumcised: that he might be the father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised; that righteousness might be imputed unto them also” (verse 11).

If circumcision had nothing to do with the justification of Abraham before God, then the law had even less to do with it; for in Galatians Paul had already pointed out that the law was given 430 years later than God's promise to Abraham and could not either contradict it or set it aside (Gal. 3:17). Thus it is that God's dealings with Abraham on the principle of grace are an illustration of what He can do for *anyone, Jew or Gentile*, who exhibits the same trust in God that Abraham showed. It was because of this that God changed his name from Abram as he was formerly called to Abraham, and said “I have made thee a father of many nations” (Gen. 17:4, 5) and this must therefore include the Gentile.

Thus it is that chapter four of Romans, dealing with Abraham, shows that his case is a practical example of justification by faith on the principle of grace, whichever way it is looked at, either from the

standpoint of circumcision, or any kind of law; whether given later through Moses or otherwise:

“For the promise, that he (Abraham) should be the heir of the world, was not to Abraham, or to his seed, through (the) law, but through the righteousness of faith. For if they which are of (the) law be heirs, faith is made void, and the promise made of none effect: because the law worketh wrath: for where no law is, there is no transgression. Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed; not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham; who is the father of us all, (as it is written, I have made thee a father of many nations,) before Him Whom he believed, even God, Who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were” (verses 13-17).

Sometimes Paul drops the definite article before ‘the law’ and possibly from this he is referring to law generally.

These verses extend the argument set forth in verses 1-12, namely that God’s dealings with Abraham were not on the basis of law *but of promise*, and this was given by grace and received by faith. The title, “the heir of the world”, is an interpretation of the promises which refer to “all families of the earth” (Gen. 12:3) and “all nations of the earth” (Gen. 18:18; 22:18). The Apostle argues that if these are received by law keeping, then faith is ruled out, and owing to men’s inability to keep the law, these divine promises can never be fulfilled:

“For if those who rely on the law are heirs, then faith has been emptied of meaning, and the promise has been brought to nothing” (verse 14 C.K. Barrett).

In addition to this is the fact that the law produces wrath, for it inevitably imposes penalties for failure to keep it. Where no law is there is no transgression. Here the Apostle is anticipating what he expands in chapter five verses 12-14. All the law can do is to show up sin in its true colours. It can never save or justify the sinner. Because of this, God’s way is the principle of grace which is appropriated by men only through faith in Him and what He has accomplished through Christ on their behalf. Only in this way can God’s promise be secure to all the seed (whether Jew or Gentile). If it rests on sinful men it can never be sure and certain, but if it rests on God alone then there can be absolute assurance.

In Abraham's case, as we have seen before, all this was worked out in spite of the fact that both he and his wife, around the age of a hundred years, were beyond the capability of having a son. Abraham looked to and completely trusted the God of resurrection to keep His promise and give him an heir from which a posterity would spring. Verses 18-21 record this. Some Greek manuscripts omit the negative in verse 19 and read "he considered his body now dead", but the sense is not altered. Even if he did consider his aged body, he did not allow this to affect his faith in the promise of God, but looked to the One, Who can overcome death and quicken the dead, to keep His Word:

"... before God, in Whom he believed, God, Who quickens the dead and calls into being the things which do not exist. This Abraham believed, hoping against hope, so as to become the father of many Gentiles (according to the Scriptures), So shall thy seed be. He considered without weakening in his faith that his own body was as good as dead (since he was about a hundred years old), and also the dead state of Sarah's womb. Looking rather to God's promise, he did not waver in unbelief, but gave God the glory, was fully convinced that what God had promised He had the power to do, and grew strong in faith, that is why it was accounted to him for righteousness" (verses 17-22).

We give Dr. C.K. Barrett's translation here as it makes the sense of the passage more clear than the Authorised Version. The Apostle brings all this to bear on the believers of his day and for those who would follow after. Our justification as believers in the Lord Jesus Christ is the same as Abraham's, for it is based and rooted in the free grace of God Who counts faith in Himself as righteousness and this is possible because the Lord Jesus was "delivered up because of the sins we had committed and raised up because of the justification that was to be granted to us" (verse 25 C.K. Barrett).

CHAPTER 5

Having made clear how it is possible for a holy God to justify sinners, chapter five starts by enumerating the rich blessings that follow:

“Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through Whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out His love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, Whom He has given us” (Rom. 5:1-5 N.I.V.).

Some translations (A.V., R.V. margin, R.S.V.) read “We have peace with God”. The R.V. and R.S.V. margin, read “let us have peace with God”. Some Greek texts read the indicative of the verb, *echomen*; others the subjunctive, *echömen*. One has the short ‘o’, the other the long ‘o’ and both were practically identical in pronunciation. Both readings are well attested. However there is no conflict in doctrine. One says we have peace because we are justified; the other, we have peace through justification and let us continue in it and enjoy it. This blessed peace comes from the sin question being completely settled and put away. It is not merely a cessation of hostilities as it is so often in human affairs. Once as sinners we were ‘alienated and enemies’ to God (Col. 1:20-22). Now, God’s justifying work has completely removed the barrier between us. This leads to quietness and assurance and free access to Him. We are brought now into a special place of favour, “this grace wherein we stand” (verse 2). The believer’s “standing” is no longer in Adam with its condemnation, but in Christ, and the righteousness provided by His great sacrifice is the procuring cause of this “access”. Because of this, “we (both Jew and Gentile believers) have access by one Spirit unto the Father” (Eph. 2:17, 18), and this gives us “boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus” (Heb. 10:19, 20) or as Hebrews 4:16 states, “let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need”. The standing of the believer in Christ is perfect, for he now stands clothed in God’s righteousness. All rests upon this glorious fact and in no sense depends upon the believer or his attainments. He can now have “boldness and access with confidence *by the faith of Him*” (Eph. 3:12).

The distinction must therefore be made with the grace wherein the believer stands, and his *state* apart from this. As such he is still a failing creature, but his position in Christ now gives him strength and encouragement, so that his daily life and walk can begin to approximate to the perfect “standing” he has been given by God. This glorious position leads to rejoicing “in hope of the glory of God” (verse 2). As a sinner he “comes short of the glory of God” (3:23). The glory of God will be the great characteristic of the resurrection life to come, and now the believer has it as a sure and certain hope that can never fail. In all its fulness, those in Christ will enjoy it for evermore in this unending future life.

The apostle Paul goes on to say:

“And not only so, but we glory in tribulations *also*” (verse 3).

This last word ‘also’ is important, for no sane person boasts in tribulations for their own sake. As Romans 12:12 expresses it, we can be “patient in tribulation”, because we “rejoice in (this) hope”, Afflictions, tribulations, difficulties, are viewed as the normal experience of the Christian in the New Testament. Did not the Lord Jesus say “In Me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation” (John 16:33). And can the servant expect to have different treatment from his Master?

One of the reasons that God permits tribulations to be experienced by His children is because of its salutary effect on their spiritual development. The difficulties of life cause the believer to lean more and more upon the Lord and His gracious promises. They give his faith *exercise*, so that “little faith” grows into “great faith”. Hebrews 12 declares that chastening and discipline are the necessary accompaniments of true sonship in Christ and although this is not pleasant but grievous, afterwards it yields the “peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them *which are exercised thereby*” (Heb. 12:6-12).

Thus we see that such experiences are not the result of God’s displeasure, but rather the wisdom of a heavenly Father Who is concerned about the spiritual development and character of His children and therefore leads them into experiences that will achieve this goal. Once this is realised, the sting is taken out of many of the disappointments of life. Then we can better understand the words of

Peter to Christians who were undergoing severe tests, teaching them that, “the *trial of your faith*, being much more *precious* than gold that perisheth . . . might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ” (1 Peter 1:4-7).

Such words remind us of Job, who though sorely afflicted could say:

“When He hath tried me. I shall come forth as gold” (Job 23:10).

Romans 5:4 leads on to “patience”, or better “endurance” and in turn this results in “steadfastness of character” (experience A. V.), both of these traits being most necessary in the Christian life, so that the believer does not capitulate under the difficulties that come his way, but, strengthened by the Lord, is able to press on looking to the future glory, knowing that:

“For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal” (2 Cor. 4:17, 18 N.I.V.).

The climax of the blessings that result from justification by faith is found in Romans 5:5:

“And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us”.

In chapters 9:33 and 10:11 the Apostle quotes the Septuagint of Isaiah 28:16, “Whosoever believeth on Him shall not be ashamed”. A hope that is not realised does lead to shame and embarrassment, but a hope based on God’s promises is certain of fulfilment, and believers have the God-given assurance that His love is poured out in their hearts by the work of the Holy Spirit. That exceeding love (Eph. 3:19) which did not find its cause in any action on our part:

“But God commendeth (or proves) His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Rom. 5:8).

God gave no less than Himself in the Person of His Son on behalf of sinners. This is the consistent testimony of the New Testament. He died for the ungodly (verse 6) (compare John 10:11; Rom. 8:32; 14:15; 1 Cor. 15:3; 2 Cor. 5:15; Gal. 1:3,4; Eph. 5:2, 25; 1 Thess.

5:9,10; 1 Tim. 2:5,6 (and see 1:15); Titus 2:11,12,14; Heb. 2:9,10,14; 1 Pet. 2:21-24; 3:18; 1 John 3:16). God's love is not just an emotion. Real love is shown by the constant spending and giving of one's self for others without any thought of return, and when that giving goes so far as giving of a life for others, that is not a common human experience as verse 7 of Romans 5 testifies.

But God did this very thing in the Person of Christ for *His enemies*, not His friends, for "*While we were yet sinners*, Christ died for us" (verse 8) and the glorious result is:

"Since we have now been justified by His blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through Him" (verse 9 N.I.V.).

This verse reminds us again, as in Romans 3:25 that the shed blood speaks of life laid down on our behalf as a sacrifice for our sin, and it is only in this way that a thrice holy God can justify sinners! (Rom. 3:23-26) thus exempting them from condemnation and wrath:

"For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life" (verse 10).

Colossians 1:21 is parallel to this:

"And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath He reconciled in the body of His flesh through death".

It is in man that this hostility and estrangement are found, not in God, for it is He Who takes the initiative in His great love in providing "the redemption which is in Christ Jesus".

"For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by Whom we have now received the atonement" (verses 10,11).

A new word, reconciliation, comes in here ('atonement' should read 'reconciliation'), which gives us another aspect of Christ's redeeming work. Reconciliation pre-supposes enmity, that of rebellion against God, and this reconciling work cancels this enmity, in the same way as justification deals with sinners who have broken

God's laws and are arraigned before Him as Judge.

It is important to realise that the Authorised Version's "atone-ment" in verse 11 means reconciliation, for in 1611 the word stood for "at-one-ment" (to make at one), which meaning it has now lost, and all modern translations correctly render the Greek word used, *reconciliation*. God is always the Reconciler in the New Testament and man the object of His reconciliation. The "life" of Christ in verse 10 is *His resurrection life*. The perfect earthly life of the Lord Jesus by itself is never brought forward as the basis for salvation, but His resurrection life is, as Romans 4:25 has already stressed; the resurrection of Christ is therefore an integral part of the gospel, and this is confirmed in chapter 10:9 and 1 Corinthians 15:3,4.

It is important to note that the doctrine of reconciliation in its various aspects is confined to the ministry of the apostle Paul. It is in his ministry alone that we find that God's reconciliation deals with:

- (1) the alienation from God, in Adam, apart from personal sins (Rom. 5:12)
- (2) the alienation from God, as Gentile nations (Rom. 1:18 and 11:15)
- (3) the alienation from God, by sins committed (2 Cor. 5)
- (4) the alienation perpetuated by the distinction of circumcision and uncircumcision which has been abolished in "the new man" of Ephesians 2:13-16
- (5) the alienation of the whole Body of Christ from its destined sphere of blessing "in the heavenlies, far above principalities and powers" (Col. 1:18-21).

The first of these, that sets aside the alienation introduced by Adam, lies immediately before us in the new section of Romans that covers 5:12-8:39 which deals with Adam and Christ. The words of C.H. Welch are to the point here:

"We now enter the great inner section of this epistle . . . we leave behind the question of *sins* for the deeper question of sin, the disobedience to the law of Sinai, for the one transgression of the garden of Eden. Moses and Abraham fade from view, and Adam is revealed as the channel of sin, death and its dominion. Here we are to learn the utter ruin of the creature as something deeper than the failure of the Gentile under the law of conscience, or of the Jew under the law of Moses. Here we shall plumb the depths of the depravity of our nature; here we shall come face to face with the dread fact that in our flesh dwelleth no good thing. This is a more terrible revelation than that of Romans 3:12. *There* we read that there is none that *doeth* good; here we are to learn that, apart from deeds altogether, there are not any that *are* good, or that have any

hope or possibility, in themselves of pleasing God. The cry of Romans 7:24 "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" will startle us, as though we heard the echo of our own heart's cry beat back to us" (*Just and the Justifier* page 102).

The argument that the apostle Paul now begins to develop concerning Adam and the human race shows that he accepted the facts recorded in Genesis 1-3 as events that really happened:

"Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned" (Rom. 5:12).

The ten verses that follow contain the word "one" no less than 12 times. There must be a reason for this emphasis. What we shall discover by careful study in the new section of the epistle before us is that there is something deeper and fuller than *substitution*, and that is *identification*, which is set forth in chapter 6 and shown in such phrases as "baptised into His death", "planted together in the likeness of His death", "our old man crucified with Him", "dead with Christ". These statements require substantiation by something more intimate than substitution and that is *identification with Christ*. This is another aspect of truth that is peculiar to the ministry of Paul.

The doctrine of identification must be shown to exist as a fact, and this is demonstrated by the Scriptural doctrine of the organic unity of the human race. The essential oneness of the race with Adam is the consistent note of Romans 5:11-21. Paul included this in his address to the Athenians, "He hath made of one (blood) all nations of men" (Acts 17:26). Adam was more than an historical individual, for his name in Hebrew means "mankind", and the whole of mankind is viewed as having existed at first in Adam. Not only this, in order for Paul's argument to be valid there must also be a real and vital union of the Lord Jesus with the human race and this is seen in the fact that He is the Second Man and last Adam (1 Cor. 15:45,47). Underlying this doctrine is the Old Testament conception of the Kinsman-Redeemer. The type is set forth in the law given in Deuteronomy 25:5-10 and ramifies throughout the book of Ruth in the relationship of Boaz and Ruth. Boaz's interest in Ruth would have been useless without the *essential element of Kinship*. The margin of Ruth 2:20 shows that the *goel*, the next of kin, is the "one that has the right to redeem" and no one else could claim this right. Thus it is that it was imperative that the great Antitype, the Lord Jesus

Christ, should be made a partaker of “flesh and blood” and become related to us:

“Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise took part of the same; that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage” (Heb. 2:14,15).

Christ, to fulfil His great mission, must come as the Seed of the woman, the Seed of Abraham, the Seed of David, the Son of man and the Son of God. His genealogy necessitated that He should have a lineage that went back to Adam (Luke 3). The virgin birth of Christ made it possible for Him to be related to man without partaking of the sin, death and condemnation that came upon the race through fallen Adam. The doctrine of Romans 5 is impossible apart from the organic unity of mankind, the headship of Adam, and the new headship of Christ, and the identification that comes from this relationship.

The seed, true and false

Not only must we recognise the truth of the Kinsman-Redeemer in order to understand the section of the epistle now before us, but also the Scriptural teaching of the two seeds among mankind. When Adam and Eve fell into sin through the deception of the serpent (Satan) God said to the deceiver:

“And I will put enmity between thee (Satan) and *between thy seed and her seed . . .*” (Gen. 3:15).

The first two men to be born illustrate the fact of these two seeds, for the New Testament teaches us that “Cain was of (*ek*) that wicked one” (1 John 3:12). *Ek* here expresses *origin*. The distinction between the two seeds is maintained by Christ in His argument with the Pharisees in John 8. They claimed to be Abraham’s seed (verse 33) and this was admitted by the Lord in verse 37: “I know that ye are Abraham’s seed”. He continued:

“I speak that which I have seen with *My Father*: and ye do that which ye have seen with *your father* (verse 38),

and in order to prevent their misunderstanding Him He said to them

in verse 44:

“Ye are of (*ek*) your father the devil”.

Not only this, but in verse 47 He added:

“He that is of (*ek*) God heareth God’s words: ye therefore hear them not, because *ye are not of (ek) God*”.

In the Lord’s teaching here we have the fact of the false seed stated positively and negatively.

The Pharisees, in spite of their physical descent from Abraham, did not originate (*ek*) from God – but they *did* originate (*ek*) from Satan. We can surely understand why Christ was not popular with the religious leaders of His day! And we may say that this doctrine is not popular today either. Some professing Christians flatly reject it because it does not square with their ideas, but we would remind them that this doctrine comes from One Who said “I am the Truth” (John 14:6) and Christians are not at liberty to disagree with Him!

The doctrine of the two seeds is also clearly taught by the Lord in the parable of the tares (Matt. 13:24-30), and it was this one out of all the other parables that the disciples asked the Lord to explain (verse 36). It should be noted that the Lord disclaims any connection with the tares. They did not emanate from Him. “An enemy has done this”. He said (Matt. 13:27,28). “The tares are the children of the wicked one; the enemy that sowed them is the devil” (verses 38,39) the Lord declared. One thing is perfectly clear; tares remain tares right to the end of the age, when they are gathered together by angels and destroyed in a “furnace of fire” (verses 40-42). Not a single tare is changed into true wheat, nor does the true wheat ever become tares. They represent two totally different classes, the true wheat, the children of the kingdom, and the tares, the children of Satan introduced by him in his attempt to thwart and overthrow the kingdom purposes of God. Similar teaching is given by the Lord Jesus when He said “Every plant, which My heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up” (Matt. 15:13). Not all those who are in the garden of mankind are planted by God. Satan has introduced his weeds and they will surely be eradicated before God’s kingdom becomes a glorious reality.

One may ask the question, as the true seed of God are born into this world as sinners (as Romans clearly testifies), can they not be regarded as “tares” before they are saved and justified? The answer is definitely “no”. They come under the dominion of sin and death certainly, and need the redeeming work of Christ to remove this condition, but never are they regarded as originating from Satan and being the children of the devil. Nor, as stated before, do we find a single tare in the above parable, changing into true wheat. They remain Satan’s seed right to the end, when they are “rooted up” and destroyed. They are outwardly human, but inwardly the seed of the devil. Such is the sinister picture which the Word of God portrays whether we like it or not. We must therefore take great care that we do not mix or confuse these two companies or our conclusions will be wide of the mark of truth. Physical connection with Abraham does not constitute them the true seed, as the apostle Paul demonstrates in chapter nine of Romans:

“They are not *all* Israel, which are *of* Israel; neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they *all children* (i.e. of Abraham); but, *In Isaac shall thy seed be called*. That is, they which are the children of the flesh, *these are not the children of God*; but the children of the promise (i.e. through Isaac) *are counted for the seed*” (Rom. 9:6-8).

Ishmael and Esau were “children of the flesh”, but that does not constitute them the true seed. The true seed are the children of promise who originate from God. They are “in Isaac” if true Israelites, and “in Christ” in the wider application of the figure.

Once we have grasped this, it will help us considerably to understand the Apostle’s argument in Romans five which centres round the words “many” and “all”. Otherwise these words constitute a real problem which makes verses 15-19 very difficult to interpret. Just as “they are not *all* Israel which are *of* Israel”, so, bearing in mind what we have seen regarding the two seeds, we can say “they are not *all* in Adam that are *of* Adam”.

As Charles H. Welch says:

“There are men who, though ‘*of* Adam’, are not ‘*in* Adam’: such was Cain. For all ‘*in* Adam’ Christ became Kinsman-Redeemer, and their names are in the book of life. We shall find in Romans 5 that the interchange in the use of ‘all’ and ‘many’ is because at one time the whole of the true seed are in view by themselves, ‘all’, and at another, the whole of the physical descendants of Adam, when the true seed are differentiated

and spoken of as 'the many'. Just as one star differs from another, though both be in glory, so we shall find that, when it is a question of 'receiving' and 'reigning', 'many' is used, but when it is a matter of justification unto life 'all' is the word employed. When once we see that 'all in Adam' does not include all that are 'of Adam', every text of Scripture can be accepted at its full value. We do not become Universalists and spoil the insistent teaching of Scripture concerning the Kinsman-Redeemer. We have no need to alter the wording of 1 Corinthians 15:22. All 'in Adam' and 'all in Christ' are co-extensive. Only by closing our eyes to the divine principle of Romans 9:5-7 can we assert that 'all Israel' of Romans 11 is as universal as the physical connection" (*Just and the Justifier* p. 107).

We can now approach the section of the epistle covered by verses 12-21:

"Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned – for before the law was given, sin was in the world. But sin is not taken into account when there is no law. Nevertheless death reigned from the time of Adam to the time of Moses, even over those who did not sin by breaking a command, as did Adam, who was a pattern of the One to come" (verses 12-14 N.I.V.).

The insistence here is upon two opposite words, *death* and *life*. Why do human beings die? What is the cause of death? Did God create men and purpose that they should die? Such a thought makes nonsense of the divine plan. There is no satisfactory explanation of the origin of death except that contained in verse 12. Adam's obedience was put to the test by God. He was given an explicit command and disobeyed it in spite of God's warning. By this act the virus of sin entered into him and it spread to all his descendants with its inevitable end – death. In the light of Scripture death is always seen as something hideous, an enemy right to the last. "The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death" (1 Cor. 15:26). Men may try to glorify death and dress it up in attractive colours, but God regards it as an enemy to His divine plan right to the end, and this enemy with its root cause sin, must be eliminated if ever that tremendous plan is going to reach its glorious fulfilment.

Paul points out that those who lived from Adam to Moses did not have specific statutes as Adam had, or as those later given through Moses. Therefore, they were not like Adam who broke a specific commandment of God. Yet death was there just the same, which proved that sin was present but it was not charged against men at

that time by God, for the absence of a code of law, a divinely given norm affects the way God reckons sin against men. Adam, the Apostle asserts, was a “figure”, *or type* of Christ, and elsewhere he designates Him as “the last Adam” and “the Second Man” (1 Cor. 15:45,47). The typological relation between them was one of contrast, rather than resemblance, for Christ was sinless, which was essential if He was to become the bearer of human sin.

The Apostle proceeds:

“But the gift is not like the trespass. For if the many died by the trespass of the one man, how much more did God’s grace and the gift that came by the grace of the One Man Jesus Christ, overflow to the many!” (verse 15 N.I.V.).

It is important to note the definite article before the words “many” and “all” which are unfortunately omitted by the Authorised Version. It is “the many” and “the all”, the two phrases representing the “true wheat”, the “true seed”, who are united to Christ in His headship as the Second Man and last Adam. The Apostle uses three words to denote sin. One is *hamartia*, which represents sin in itself (verses 12,13,16 verbal form). Another, *parabasis*, means disobedience to a revealed command (verse 14 “transgression”). The third is *paraptoma* with a meaning similar to *parabasis*. It is the act of sin.

Over against this act of sin on Adam’s part stands the great act of grace (*charisma*) performed by the Lord Jesus Christ, and these are not exact equivalents. The Lord’s act of grace in the giving of Himself on Calvary’s cross does not just balance the act of sin; *it overbalances it*. Hence the “much more” in the argument of the verses before us:

“Again, the gift of God is not like the result of one man’s sin. The judgment followed one sin and brought condemnation, but the gift followed many trespasses and brought justification. For if, by the trespass of one man, death reigned through that one man, how much more will those who receive God’s abundant provision of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one Man, Jesus Christ. Consequently, just as the result of one trespass was condemnation for all men, so also the result of one act of righteousness was justification that brings life for all men. For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one Man the many will be made righteous” (verses 16-19 N.I.V.).

The Apostle piles up words to emphasise the greatness, the freeness, and the graciousness of the gift of Christ and His righteousness. This not only undoes all that Adam did, but goes far beyond. Adam brought in death; Christ brings in life eternal. Adam brought condemnation; Christ brings in justification of life and acquittal. Adam puts death on the throne, “death reigned” (verse 14); Christ puts His people on the throne with eternal consequences (verse 17). And just as surely as by the disobedience of Adam were all the true seed “constituted sinners”, so by the obedience of Christ they finally are all “constituted righteous”. Where once the believer fell “in Adam” he now stands “in Christ” for ever and in grace.

What joy this should bring to everyone who fully trusts in the Lord Jesus! The believer should continually rejoice in the Lord as he realises this with its tremendous implications.

The climax comes in verses 20 and 21:

“The law was added so that the trespass might increase. But where sin increased, grace increased all the more, so that just as sin reigned in death, so also grace might reign through righteousness to bring eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord” (verses 20,21 N.I.V.).

It is helpful to note the key-words of these inner chapters of Romans. In chapter five it is *death*; in chapter six *sin*; chapter seven *law*; and chapter eight *spirit*. In chapter five it is a matter of life and death; in chapter six of sin and righteousness; in chapter seven of law and grace; and in chapter eight of flesh and spirit. The matter contained in chapter six arises from the doctrine set forth in Romans 5:20 and 21 that “where sin increased (or abounded) grace increased all the more”. From this a critic of the Apostle might have said, If this is so, why not go on sinning, so that grace may further increase? The fact is that from time to time people *have* criticised the doctrine of grace set forth in Paul’s epistles. They assert that such teaching leads to laxness in conduct. Surely, they argue, if sin is to be controlled, the best way to do it is to legislate against it. They forget that law merely sets a standard, but gives no wisdom or power to keep it. In other words the law can never turn sinners into saints.

CHAPTER 6

We shall have to consider the Scriptural teaching concerning the law later on. For the moment we would say the main reason for the law in the Bible is to show up sin in its true colours. The Apostle in this section of the epistle deals with four possible objections to his teaching and in each case he strongly repudiates it by saying “God forbid” (A.V.). Other versions render *me genoito* “by no means!”, “certainly not!”, or “of course not!”. Then follows in each case his argument to show the falsity of the objection. The four questions are these: (1) “Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?” (6:1); the repudiation and answer (6:2-14). (2) “Shall we sin because we are not under the law, but under grace?” (6:15); the repudiation and answer (6:15-7:6). (3) “Is the law sin?” (7:7); repudiation and answer (7:7-12). (4) “Was that which is good made death unto me?” (7:13); repudiation and answer (7:13-25).

Let us consider the first objection which opens chapter six:

“What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning, so that grace may increase?” (6:1 N.I.V.).

The Apostle gives a definite reply straight away: “of course not”. Those that asserted that his doctrine could be construed in this way, had a total misconception of it. As Paul expressed it so clearly in a later epistle – “We are not saved *by* good works, but *unto* good works” (Eph. 2:8-10). In other words salvation by grace leads to a life of practical conformity to the standards of God. The Apostle continues his answer by saying:

“We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer?” (Rom. 6:2 N.I.V.).

A dead man is beyond the capability of sinning! Let us note that it is not a question as to whether the believer will ever fall into sin or discover some hidden imperfection, but whether he will “continue in” sin, that is, make a practice of it. To reinforce his argument Paul brings in the great doctrine of identification with Christ as set forth by the doctrine of baptism:

“Don’t you know that all of us who were baptised into Christ Jesus were baptised into His death? We were therefore *buried with Him through baptism into death*, in order that, just as Christ was raised from

the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life” (verses 3 and 4 N.I.V.).

The point to be settled here is whether Paul is alluding to the baptism of the Holy Spirit which identifies a believer with the risen Christ or does it refer to water baptism? Does it refer to the reality, the work of the Holy Spirit, or the shadow that represents it? Because we are creatures of time and sense, what we see, hear, touch or feel appears to be more real than anything spiritual. But we should remember that all ritual is but an *illustration*, a “shadowing forth”. It can never be the reality which is eternal and spiritual and God asks us to walk by faith in these glorious realities and not by sight, feeling or sense (compare Heb. 10:1 and Col. 2:16,17).

Dr. Merril Unger in *Bibliotheca Sacra* writes:

“In these passages (Rom. 6:3,4; Col. 2:12; Eph. 4:5) the holy Apostle is not considering ritual baptism at all. The sublimity of thought, the context of the argument, the exalted nature of the spiritual verities taught, support this position. He is speaking of something infinitely higher, not of a mere symbolic ordinance that is powerless to effect intrinsic change, but of a divine operation which places us eternally in Christ, and into His experience of crucifixion, death, burial and resurrection”.

In his book on *Romans* (chapter six), Dr. Martyn Lloyd Jones states, in expounding verses 2 and 3:

“The conclusion therefore at which I arrive is that baptism by water is not in the mind of the Apostle at all in these two verses; instead it is the baptism that is wrought by the Spirit . . . Again take the statement which the Apostle makes in Galatians 2:20 which is so frequently misquoted: ‘I have been crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me . . .’ Now there you have the identical doctrine (as Rom. 6:2,3), but baptism is not mentioned. That is because water baptism does not achieve union, it does not produce it; indeed at that point it does not even represent it. This is a baptism which is carried out by the Holy Spirit when He incorporates us into, engrafts us into the Lord Jesus Christ” (page 36).

It is only fair to say that Dr. Lloyd Jones is not a dispensationalist and accepts that water baptism has its place, but certainly not in Romans 6, Colossians 2 or Ephesians 4. This makes his testimony all the more telling. It is this spiritual baptism effected by the Holy Spirit that is the baptism of Romans 6. In Ephesians 4 it is “*one* baptism”. As to “hope”, “Lord”, “faith”, “God” there is little, if any,

difference among true believers. But when we come to baptism, so many forget that the *one baptism* is mentioned in equal terms with the above words. The emphasis on “one” is in opposition to corporate diversity in the Body of Christ.

There are those who suggest water baptism can be blended with the Spirit’s baptism here and yet be looked upon as *one* baptism. We do not understand this kind of mental jugglery, but it cannot be true, not only in view of the above arguments, but also because water baptism did not form a necessary part of the commission Christ gave Paul. “Christ sent me *not* to baptise, *but* to preach the gospel” (1 Cor. 1:17) he asserted. Even though he did baptise a few, it should be quite evident from the clear command of the Lord that ritual baptism was not essential to the ministry entrusted to him and therefore it is an intruder in Ephesians 4:5 and Colossians 2 as well as being quite foreign to the context. Each member of the Body is “filled full (complete) in Christ” (Col. 2:10). What can “shadows” add to this glorious fulness? And is it not lack of appreciation of this fulness that causes many to cling to these “shadows”?

We would sum up by saying that the real Spirit baptism identifies and unites a believer with Christ eternally. There are three great unities in Scripture:

- (1) The unity between the members of the Godhead (John 17).
- (2) The unity between Christ and the believer (Rom. 6).
- (3) The unity between believers themselves (Eph. 4).

No wonder we are not exhorted to *make a unity*, but to *guard carefully one already made by God*.

The baptism of the Holy Spirit does not depend upon or wait for the action of man, that is one man baptising another in water, it is wholly the “operation or working of God” (Col. 2:12) and occurs at the moment of salvation. In just the same way being “planted together in the likeness of His death” (Rom. 6:5) does not depend upon ritual but solely upon the action of the Holy Spirit, thus effecting complete *identification of the believer with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection*.

“For if by means of the image of His death we have been joined with His death, then we shall also be joined with His resurrection” (Rom. 6:5 C.K. Barrett).

The thought here is akin to grafting. *Sumphutos* “planting together” (Authorised Version) literally means “grown together with” and explains how complete this wondrous identification is. The work of God does not leave the believer in death; it puts him on resurrection ground, a new outlook, a new life, here and now, although the literal resurrection representing our hope is yet future. Note carefully how Paul puts this hope into the future “We *shall be* also in the likeness of His resurrection” (verse 5) and “we believe that we *shall also live* with Him” (verse 8).

Verse six continues:

“For we know that our old self was crucified with Him so that the body of sin might be rendered powerless, that we should no longer be slaves to sin – because anyone who has died has been freed from sin” (N.I.V.).

It is important to note that the aorist tense is used here “was crucified” not “is crucified” of the Authorised Version. It is looking backward to the time when it occurred and this must be the same moment when the believer died with Christ. This again cannot be water baptism for the context goes back to the crucifixion of Christ. Those who are united by faith to Christ are reckoned as *having been crucified with Him when He was crucified*. The Apostle describes this in his own experience in Galatians 2:20:

“I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God Who loved me and gave Himself for me” (N.I.V.).

Paul knew that this was all the work of God, going back to the crucifixion of the Lord and certainly not commencing with his being baptised in water. The “dying with” and “being crucified with”, must refer to the same event and the same time, that is the crucifixion and this rules out any work of man.

In Romans 6:6 the Authorised Version renders *katargeo* “destroyed”. This is too strong; it is neither true to fact nor experience. The N.I.V. “rendered powerless” or “put out of action” is nearer the mark. The believer carries the sinful old nature to the grave or the moment that his hope is realised in translation or resurrection, but this “crucifixion” by God delivers him from its *domination* here and now. He need never be a slave to it if he does what this context commands, and reckons what God has done for him in identification

with Christ to be absolutely true. In this position the believer is “dead” to sin and a dead man is no longer answerable for it, “He that is dead is freed from sin” (verse 7).

“Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over Him. For in that He died. He died unto sin once; but in that He liveth, He liveth unto God” (verses 9 and 10).

“Once” here is *ephapax*, “once for all”, a word that is used repeatedly in the epistle to the Hebrews to express the finality and completeness of the sacrifice of Christ. But death is only one side of the story. It leads to resurrection life and the practical conclusion is:

“In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus” (verse 11 N.I.V.).

The word “count” is the same as is translated “reckon” and “impute” in connection with Abraham in chapter 4. The way that gives deliverance from the power of sin in the believer is for him to count on what God has said about his unity with Christ’s death and resurrection *as being true of himself here and now*. This is God’s way of holiness and the only one that really works. Holiness conferences may bring all sorts of ideas and resolutions before the believer in Christ but none can improve on God’s remedy for the deliverance from the bondage of sin and self.

When the believer “reckons” as 6:11 enjoins, that he himself is dead to sin yet alive to God, the practical result is expressed in the next verse:

“Therefore, do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires” (verse 12 N.I.V.).

Without this reckoning, the exhortation would be impossible to carry out. Identification with Christ in His death and burial means the end of slavery to sin. A “newness of life” (verse 4) follows because of identification with His resurrection life and this means glorious freedom. In fact slavery and freedom sum up the section before us. Let us note this:

“Being then *made free from sin*, ye became the servants of righteousness” (6:18).

“For when ye were the servants (slaves) of sin, ye were *free* from righteousness” (6:20).

“But now being made *free from sin*, and become servants (slaves) to God” (6:22).

“If her husband be dead, she is *free from* that law” (7:3).

“For the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me *free from* the law of sin and death” (8:2).

“Because the creature itself also *shall be delivered from* the bondage of corruption into *the glorious liberty* of the children of God” (8:21).

And now the references to slavery and bondage; the reader should note that in the Authorised Version this is veiled by being translated “serve” or “servants”:

“That henceforth we should *not be slaves to* (serve) sin” (6:6).

“*Slaves* (servants) to obey, his *slaves* (servants) ye are” (6:16).

“Ye were the *slaves* (servants) of sin” (6:17).

“Ye became *slaves* (servants) of righteousness” (6:18).

“*Slaves* (servants) to uncleanness . . . *slaves* (servants) to righteousness unto holiness” (6:19).

“When ye were the *slaves* of sin” (6:20).

“Now . . . having become *slaves* (servants) to God” (6:22).

“Ye have not received the spirit of *bondage*” (8:15).

“Shall be delivered from the *bondage* of corruption” (8:21).

The two conditions are absolute opposites. One speaks of slavery, darkness and misery; the other of glorious freedom, peace, joy and contentment – freedom now to serve the Lord faithfully and carry out His will. It may be summed up in a threefold way. The believer in Christ is in:

- (1) *A new sphere* – “newness of life”.
- (2) *A condition* – union, crucified with, dead with, buried with, raised with Christ.
- (3) *A state* – freedom to serve Him faithfully.

Keeping these facts in mind we can now look at the Apostle's argument more closely and we quote from The New International Version:

“Do not offer the parts of your body to sin, as instruments of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God, as those who have been brought from death to life, and offer the parts of your body to Him as instruments of righteousness. For sin shall not be your master, because you are not under law, but under grace” (6:13-14 N.I.V.).

Because God has broken the domination of sin, the believer can now hand over himself to Him rather than yield to slavery. He is not like a “dead man brought to life” as C.K. Barrett expresses it. A master has no further authority over a dead slave: he is freed by death. In the same way the believer is freed from the mastery of sin because he has died (in Christ) to it and now has “newness of life” in which to live with all its blessedness. He is now “under grace” (verse 14) and it is the grace of God which strengthens him and so enables him, now a free man, to become a faithful and fruitful servant of God.

Paul now comes back to the antinomian argument of verse 1:

“What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? By no means! Don't you know that when you offer yourselves to someone to obey him as slaves, you are slaves to the one whom you obey – whether you are slaves to sin, which leads to death, or to obedience, which leads to righteousness? But thanks be to God that, though you used to be slaves to sin, you wholeheartedly obeyed the form of teaching to which you were entrusted. You have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness” (Rom. 6:15-18 N.I.V.).

From what we have seen, the argument of the Apostle is surely clear to the objector who thinks that a practice of sin and a state of grace can be combined. As F. F. Bruce comments, “to make being ‘under grace’ an excuse for sinning is a sign that one is not really ‘under grace’ at all”. Those who are “in Christ” and united to Him, will be concerned to render glad obedience to His will and this will characterise their lives. They now will wholeheartedly obey Him Who is not only their Saviour but their Lord (verse 17).

The illustration that Paul has given concerning slavery is a human one, he informs us, in order to help the Roman Christians to understand the vital doctrine of identification with the risen Christ and its

practical outcome (verse 19). Again he contrasts their lives as unsaved pagans with the new one in Christ:

“The point of the matter is this: just as in the past you offered your members to uncleanness and iniquity as their slaves (with the result of producing iniquity), so now offer your members to righteousness as their slaves (the result of this will be sanctification). These are mutually exclusive attitudes; for when you were slaves of sin you were free men in respect of righteousness (and what fruit did you reap of that? – things of which you are now ashamed, for their end is death). But now you have been freed from sin, and have become slaves to God. Accordingly your fruit proves to be sanctification, and the ultimate result will be eternal life. For the wages paid by sin is death: but the gift freely given by God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord” (verses 19-23 C.K. Barrett).

It is noteworthy that the stress on slavery does not cease when the new life in Christ begins. Paul talks about being a “slave to righteousness” and a “slave of God”. Strictly speaking the believer does not change his condition as a slave – *he changes his master* – once a slave to Satan, sin, and self, now a slave of Christ, “whose service is perfect freedom”. What an exchange! What a transformation! And Paul is the one who stresses freedom more than any other New Testament writer, specially when he says:

“It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery” (Gal. 5:1 N.I.V.).

Yet he delighted constantly to describe himself as the “slave of Christ”! (translated servant in the A.V.). This is a seeming paradox, and yet not so to the one who rejoices in the truth of the section now before us, namely 6:1-23 with its mighty deliverance brought about by the God-made union with Christ in His death and resurrection.

CHAPTER 7

Chapter seven begins another section still dealing with this great doctrine of identification with Christ. In 6:14 Paul had stated that the believer was not under the reign of law, but under the reign of grace. The Apostle is now going to amplify this:

“Do you not know, brothers – for I am speaking to men who know the law – that the law has authority over a man only as long as he lives? For example, by law a married woman is bound to her husband as long as he is alive, but if her husband dies, she is released from the law of marriage. So then, if she marries another man while her husband is still alive, she is called an adulteress. But if her husband dies, she is released from that law and is not an adulteress, even though she marries another man” (Rom. 7:1-3 N.I.V.).

The Apostle is concerned to show that legal obligation is discharged only by death. Sometimes Paul uses the definite article with “law”, and sometimes omits it. Generally speaking, law with the article refers to the law of Moses, without it, law in general, that is Roman law as well as Jewish. Here at the beginning of chapter seven, Paul asserts that death breaks man’s relation to the law and to illustrate this he brings forward an analogy from marriage. It is important to bear in mind that the Apostle in no way belittles the law. It was “holy, just and good” (7:12), but as a means of acquiring merit before God, law-keeping was impossible and therefore, completely deceptive. Death is the answer to the dominion of sin (chapter six) and likewise it is the answer to the dominion of law (chapter seven). Applying the analogy to the believer, Paul reminds him again of his identification with Christ in His physical death, “So, my brothers, you also died to the law through the body of Christ, that you might belong to Another, to Him Who was raised from the dead, in order that we might bear fruit to God” (verse 4 N.I.V.). This “fruit” is the life that is dominated by the risen Christ and brings glory to Him. It is the “fruit of the spirit”, the new nature, described in Galatians 5:22,23.

However, looking back to the days of unregeneracy, sinful passions aroused by the law produced the very opposite “fruit unto death” (verse 5). God’s mighty deliverance through the union with Christ means that the believer is released from the slavery of law so that now he can become the slave of God and serve Him freely “in the new way of the Spirit and not the old way of the written code”. In

place of legalism that seeks to enforce statutes, there is the spirit of willing service through dedication and love.

Paul now comes to his third question and asks, “is the law sin?” (verse 7). If the believer has been delivered from the law as a task master, is there something wrong with it? The answer is “certainly not”. The wrong is in the sinner, not in the law of God. And yet there is a connection between law and sin in at least two ways:

- (1) Sin would never be seen in its true colours unless there was a perfect standard by which all conduct could be measured.
- (2) The law stirs up the latent rebellion that lies dormant in every heart. We all know our reaction when someone tries to force us to act in a particular way.

As regards (1) the Apostle says:

“Indeed, I would not have known what sin was except through the law. For I would not have known what coveting really was if the law had not said, Do not covet” (verse 7 N.I.V.).

The word ‘covet’ means desire. God’s law goes deeper than the external act. Paul as a Pharisee had been concerned largely with the external conformity to the law, but when it dawned upon him that the law also had to do with “desires” before they had become manifest as “deeds” the shock was intense. He might be able to control his actions, but what about his thoughts? The command at last “came”, as never before and the Apostle says: “sin revived, or sprang to life, and I died” (verse 9). All his boasted righteousness vanished. The commandment which, if obeyed, would have led to life, he now found to be too searching and deep – it led to death. Sin had deceived him, as it had done Adam and Eve and like them, it “slew him”.

Covetousness is a state of mind – it is idolatry (Col. 3:5). It may be desire for right or wrong but if such self-regarding is of such intensity, it can usurp the place God ought to have, that is place No. 1.

From this point onwards Paul personifies sin as a powerful enemy ready to pounce upon him and lead him to do the very things that he abhorred:

“For sin, seizing the opportunity afforded by the commandment, deceived me, and through the commandment put me to death” (verse 11 N.I.V.).

Yet, in spite of all this he declares that the law is “holy, righteous and good” (verse 12). The fault is not in God’s law, but in the sinner. It was weak only “because of the flesh” (8:3), the inability of sinful human nature to rise to its standards. This leads the Apostle to his fourth question:

“Did that which is good, then, become death to me? By no means! but in order that sin might be recognised as sin, it produced death in me through what was good, so that through the commandment sin might become utterly sinful” (verse 13 N.I.V.).

The answer again is “no”, his real enemy was not the law but SIN which forced him against his better judgment, to do things the law had shown him to be wrong. In the section that follows Paul continues to speak of himself. He leaves the past tense and uses the present. There is no doubt that he is giving his own experience. It is a self-portrait, an autobiography, yet this passage is one of the most controversial in the New Testament. Volumes have been written on it. One may ask, is it the experience of the believer? Is it the experience of the unsaved wrestling with their consciences? Is it limited to the Jew under the law of Moses? We do not hesitate to say it refers to the believer for four reasons:

- (1) The person here described “hates sin” (verse 15). This is not a characteristic of the unsaved.
- (2) He “delights” in the law of God (verse 22). This is a characteristic of the children of God as Psalm 1:2 clearly testifies.
- (3) He looks for deliverance to Christ alone through grace (verses 24 and 25).
- (4) There is a passage in Galatians that covers the experience of Romans 7 and 8, and the persons addressed are believers, not unbelievers:

“So I say, live by the spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature. For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the spirit, and the spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict

with each other, so that you do not do what you want” (Gal. 5:16-17 N.I.V.).

C. H. Welch’s comments are to the point here:

“While therefore Paul’s experience may primarily set forth the vain endeavour of a Jew to perform the law which has ‘enlightened his eyes, and converted his soul’ (Psa. 19:7-9), and so show to all mankind that the law can neither save, justify, nor sanctify, the passage also sets forth in clear characters the warfare that must ever go on between flesh and spirit, until the day of complete deliverance and the redemption of the body” (*Just and the Justifier* p. 191).

Not only this, but the truth of the passage now before us has been the experience of countless Christians all down this age. It is significant that where the Apostle describes his life before his conversion there is no trace of spiritual conflict or of a divided self. Galatians 1 and Philippians 3 depict a Jew who is practising his religious beliefs more successfully than his contemporaries and blameless in his observance of the law of Moses.

After salvation the situation has completely altered. Why? Because God has introduced something that is entirely opposite to the human mind which has come under the influence of sin. It is nothing less than a portion of His own divine and sinless nature. Peter, in his second epistle, describes this:

“His (God’s) divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of Him Who called us by His own glory and goodness. Through these He has given us His very great and precious promises, *so that through them you may participate in the divine nature* and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires” (2 Peter 1:3, 4 N.I.V.).

The Holy Spirit effects this divine implantation in the sinner at the moment of believing in Christ. Consequently it can be expressed as ‘spirit’ with a small ‘s’ and placed in opposition to the ‘flesh’. While the words ‘flesh’ and ‘spirit’ are used in more than one sense in the New Testament and by Paul himself, when they occur in the same context they generally represent this divine nature in absolute contrast to the sinful nature inherited from fallen Adam. As the Apostle writes in Galatians:

“For the flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh;

and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would” (Gal. 5:17).

The word “spirit” in the Authorised Version could have been spelled with a small ‘s’ and then the conflict between these two natures, the new and the old, is clearly set out. It is this conflict in himself that Paul is describing in Romans 7:14-25:

“We know that the law is spiritual; but I am unspiritual, sold as a slave to sin. I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do. And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the law is good. As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me. I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do – this I keep on doing. Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it. So I find this law at work: when I want to do good, evil is right there with me. For in my inner being I delight in God’s law; but I see another law at work in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within my members. What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? Thanks be to God – through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then I myself in my mind am a slave to God’s law, but in my sinful nature a slave to the law of sin” (Rom. 7: 14-25 N.I.V.).

These words graphically describe the conflict between the two natures. Sin is personified as a mighty enemy that resides in human nature and tyrannically controls the person. As long as he struggles against it in his own strength he is constantly defeated. It is not until he realises that the Lord alone has the answer, that he wins the victory. Who can rescue me from this terrible dilemma he cries? but then he turns to the Lord Jesus Christ, realising what He had done in becoming the Victor over the consequences of sin and death and in the glorious fact that he is now united to Him in death and resurrection. Then, and not till then, the chains drop off and he is free – a slave no longer, except to Him Who has bought him with a price!

As we have stated before, all sorts of remedies are offered by the Christian world – for deliverance from indwelling sin. All are of no avail, unless they conform to the teaching of this section of the Roman epistle concerning identification with the Lord Jesus in His death and resurrection and the believer reckoning this to be true in his own experience (Rom. 6:6-11). This is God’s way and His way is always the best and cannot be improved.

Dr. E. W. Bullinger sums it up in his *Church Epistles* pp. 64-66:

“Thus does the Holy Spirit lay bare to our view His own explanation of the origin and nature of the experience possessed by every soul which is the subject of the grace of God, and which has the gift of the new nature as the result and sign of God’s justifying . . . Those who fail to learn this lesson as to the conflict of the law, first with the old nature (7:7-12), and afterwards (21-25) with the new nature, will not only be in constant perplexity themselves, but will fall into that error of doctrine which is corrected in the epistle to the Galatians, chapter 3:3. Having begun with the truth as to the new nature (called ‘spirit’) they will, if they depart from it, seek to improve the old nature. This is the error which Galatians 3:3 corrects. ‘Are ye so senseless? having begun in the spirit (in the new nature) are ye now being perfected in flesh?’ (i.e. in the old nature). This is what thousands are doing everywhere around us. They are seeking to perfect, or, at least improve, the old nature. Not seeing the truth or reality of the two natures, they are seeking to improve the only one which they are acquainted with. This is ever the work of all who are ignorant of what the Spirit is saying to the churches. Be they Buddhists, Romanists, Perfectionists, they are all alike endeavouring to convert the ‘flesh’ into ‘spirit’, to subdue the ‘flesh’ and by all kinds of arts, and artifices, and rules and regulations, pledges, and badges, to improve the old nature. All alike formulate ‘rules for holy living’, ignorant of the fact which lies before us in this Scripture that the old nature knows no rules, and that the new nature needs no rules. Instead of reckoning the old nature to have died with Christ, they are ever seeking *to put it to death!* Instead of reckoning that it was crucified with Christ upon the cross, they are exhorting us to crucify it for ourselves. When God crucified it with Christ, He did it once and for all. But those who know nothing of this, tell us to crucify it. They do not tell us how we are to do it; but knowing how futile is the effort, they tell us we must do it every day. But, no! once would be enough if it could be done at all. And, thank God, it has been done. HE has done it Himself on Calvary; and now, we, in spite of all our conflict, in spite of the flesh (the old nature) lusting against the spirit (the new nature) and spirit against the flesh; in spite of the fact that these are contrary the one to the other, so that we do the evil which the flesh would have us do, and we cannot do the good that the spirit would have us do; in spite of this conflict, we find ‘peace with God’ and rest in the truth – that the child of God has his old nature, which can produce no good thing – and he has a new nature, which ‘doth not commit sin’ (1 John 3:9), ‘sinneth not’ (1 John 5:18). And, further, that God reckons the old nature as having died with Christ, and as having therefore no dominion over us, though the conflict in actual experience is ever present with us. Those who learn this lesson have learned that the old nature is so bad that nothing can ever improve it, and that the new nature *is so perfect* that it needs no improvement. It is ‘spirit’, and its life cannot be ‘deepened’. It is ‘newness of life’, and cannot be made ‘higher’ ” (Dr. E.W. Bullinger *Church Epistles*).

We make no apology for this lengthy quotation from the witness of that doughty warrior, Dr. Bullinger, and only wish that there were more today to testify to the reality of the two natures in the child of God.

CHAPTER 8

When we come to chapter eight it is like coming out of a dark tunnel into the sunlight for we pass from the slavery of sin into the glorious liberty of the children of God. We should remember that Romans 8:1 really follows the teaching of Romans 5:16-18 with its statement as to how condemnation came, namely through the sin of one man, Adam, condemnation came upon all men. In Romans 8:1 we have the great reversal through the redemptive work of Christ:

“Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus” (N.I.V.).

The reader will note that the concluding words of the verse “who walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit” are omitted for they do not occur in the principal Greek texts, but are evidently an interpolation from verse 4 which is their rightful place. Those who insist on their retention fail to realise that they are making freedom from condemnation a result of the believers’ walk and not the all-sufficient work of Christ and this completely nullifies the basic teaching of this great epistle. Being free from condemnation *does not depend on the works or walk of the believer. It is entirely conditional upon the work of the Son of God. It is justification that is set over against condemnation in Romans 5:16-18 and 8:1-14, not sanctification.* We must keep truth in its Scriptural place, otherwise we shall not be “unashamed workman” (2 Tim. 2:15).

The glorious teaching of the previous chapters is that a person who is declared to be righteous or just by God is one who is innocent of wrong doing. God’s verdict is “not guilty” and as such he cannot come under condemnation. This has been made absolutely clear in chapter three where it is asserted that God’s righteousness comes upon all who believe *by faith of Jesus Christ* and not through any works of merit of the believer. Thus it is through abounding grace on God’s part. Grace and works never blend together as Romans 11:6 testifies. It is only in this way that He can be just and at the same time be the Justifier of him who believes in Jesus (Rom. 3:26). He is then the God Who justifies the ungodly.

The Lord in His earthly ministry dealt with the question of condemnation. He said:

“He that believeth is not condemned; but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God” (John 3:18).

Of course there are those who say that this teaching is dangerous and will result in laxness of walk. In fact much of Paul’s teaching was considered dangerous in his day and has been many times since, but there is no need for us to put out the hand to stay the ark of God. The all wise God and Father knows how to deal with His children in discipline if they walk after the flesh, but He will never deny Himself or His truth in doing this.

The glorious fact of “no condemnation” does not await the day of glory, it is true of the believer here and now – “there is therefore *now* no condemnation” are the words of Romans 8:1 and this results from the work of the “Spirit of life”:

“For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death” (verse 2).

In 2 Corinthians 3:17 we are reminded that “where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty” and we have been called to liberty (Gal. 5:13). This freedom is from the domination of “the law of sin” which is in our members (Rom. 7:23). It is good to realise what we have *NOW* through the redemptive work of Christ, “*Now* the righteousness of God without the law is manifested” (Rom. 3:21). “Being *now* justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath” (Rom. 5:9). “By Whom we have *now* received the reconciliation” (Rom. 5:11). “But *now* being made free from sin . . . ye have your fruit unto holiness” (Rom. 6:22). These present assurances are for the believer to enjoy *now* through faith. We are acquitted *now*; we are free from condemnation *now*. Nothing we can do of ourselves can ever set us free from condemnation. It has all been done by our Saviour and Lord and because we are for ever united with Him, condemnation has gone for ever. This does not mean we are free to please ourselves, but rather we are free to please and serve Him faithfully. In other words it leads to experimental sanctification. But let us not confuse sanctification and justification. It is our acquittal (justification) which ensures our freedom from condemnation and Romans 8:3 goes on to teach us that this is wholly dependent upon the work of Christ and not on the walk of the believer.

“For what the law was powerless to do in that it was weakened by the sinful nature, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful man to be a sin offering” (N.I.V.).

This epistle has made it abundantly clear that sinful man cannot rise to the standard of God’s law and that law was therefore powerless to produce a life of holiness. However what the law could not do, has been done by God in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ Who came in the “*likeness* of sinful flesh”, giving His life as a sin-offering on behalf of His people. The words are carefully chosen here. Christ did not come in sinful flesh for had He done so He would have had the taint of sin, and so would have needed a Saviour Himself; He could never have been the Saviour of others. The apostle Paul and the New Testament generally, absolutely insist on the sinlessness of Christ, the One Who “knew no sin” (2 Cor. 5:21).

“He was made to be sin (or a sin-offering) for us Who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him” (2 Cor. 5:21).

“No condemnation” is true of believers, because “condemnation” was true of Him. The righteous sentence of the law has been fulfilled in the redeemed in the Person of their Saviour. The sphere of emancipation is the “spirit”, and unites us with Christ, risen and ascended. We can now “walk in newness of life” and serve the Lord in “newness of spirit”.

The section now before us is verses 5-16 which revolve around “flesh” and “spirit”. These words are used in various ways in the New Testament and need care in interpretation:

FLESH

- (1) This word is used in the sense of *bodily flesh* (cp. Gen. 17:11).
- (2) It is used of *human descent*. Christ is a descendant of David as concerning the flesh (Rom. 9:5).
- (3) *Human nature*. Christ came “in the flesh” (1 John 4:2) and was “manifest in the flesh” (1 Tim. 3:16).
- (4) *Mankind*. “By the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified” (Rom. 3:20).

- (5) *The sinful old nature* in the believer. This is inherited from fallen Adam and extends to all mankind. It is the sense frequently used by the apostle Paul.

We must be careful not to look on the human body as sinful in itself. It is rather the sphere in which the principle of sin operates, hence the “body of sin” (Rom. 6:6) and the law of sin in my members (Rom. 7:23). The physical body can be presented to God as a “living sacrifice” (Rom. 12:1) so that His will may be done and the body can be indwelt by the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 6:19; Rom. 8:11). The New Testament has no place for the contempt of the body shown by the Greek philosophers or their regard for it as a prison house of the soul. For the believer it awaits to be redeemed (Rom. 8:23) and to be conformed to the Lord’s resurrection body of glory (Phil. 3:20, 21).

SPIRIT

This important word is used in various ways in the Scriptures:

- (1) God. (John 4:24; 1 Cor. 3:16).
- (2) Christ. (1 Cor. 6:17; 15:45; 2 Cor. 3:17, 18).
- (3) The Holy Spirit. This is generally with the article but not necessarily so.
- (4) The operations of the Holy Spirit – spiritual gifts (1 Cor. 14:32).
- (5) The new nature in the believer. This is specially the Pauline usage; spirit as opposed to the sinful old nature.
- (6) Man (psychologically). Spirit as imparted to man, making him “a living soul” (Gen. 2:7).
- (7) Character. This as being in itself invisible and manifested only in one’s actions (2 Tim. 1:7; Rom. 8:15).
- (8) Other invisible characteristics such as *feelings* and *desires* (Matt. 26:41).

- (9) The whole person, the part being put for the whole (Luke 1:47).
- (10) Angels, or spirit-beings (Heb. 1:7,14).
- (11) Demons, or evil spirit beings (Mark 1:23).
- (12) The Resurrection body (1 Cor. 15:45).

It will be seen that this word has a wide range of meaning; but in Romans it is in antithesis to the “flesh”, denoting the sinful old nature inherited from fallen Adam. Thus we have the doctrine of the two natures in the believer which are for ever opposed. They are “contrary the one to the other” (Gal. 5:17), and the Scriptural doctrine relating to these natures is a subject of immense importance to the believer. Wrong conceptions of holiness and spiritual progress arise from not understanding what the Scripture teaches in relation to the two natures in the child of God.

One great difficulty in deciding whether to translate the word “spirit” with a capital or small ‘s’ is seen when different translations are compared. If translated with a capital ‘S’ it refers to the Holy Spirit; if a small ‘s’ the new nature which He imparts to the believer. Comparing different translations one can quickly see that the translators had varying ideas on this point. But one thing should be made clear: if spirit is rendered with a small ‘s’, referring to the gift of the divine nature, the Holy Spirit is not eliminated for one cannot have a divine gift without a divine Giver. In fact both these meanings may be true of the context and then there is no question of it being “either or”.

For ourselves, we feel that in the context of Romans that we are studying, there is no direct reference to the Holy Spirit by Himself until we reach 8:16. “For the Spirit Himself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are children of God”. Until then it is the activities of the two natures that are being dealt with. These two opposing principles are set out by the Apostle in verses 5-7:

“Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires; but those who live in accordance with the spirit, have their minds set on what the spirit desires. The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the spirit is life and peace; the sinful

mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God" (N.I.V.).

We render this quotation as "spirit", with a small 's' making it refer to the new nature, but behind it is of course God Himself, the Holy Spirit. The context is not so much contrasting the Holy Spirit with the flesh but rather His gift, the perfect divine nature, over against the old sinful one inherited from fallen Adam. Redemption means that the believer's mind is now free and can be allied either with the flesh or the spirit and it is made perfectly clear what happens in both cases. One expresses "enmity against God" and leads finally to death; the other to "life and peace". Galatians 5 takes this further and reveals plainly the two entirely opposite "fruits" resulting from flesh and spirit:

"The acts of the sinful nature (flesh) are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like . . . but the fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control . . ." (Gal. 5:19-23 N.I.V.).

There could not be a greater contrast, and the believer must decide whether his mind is going to be directed by the one or the other. He can be free from the slavery of the flesh by realising his unity with Christ in death and resurrection and counting on this as Romans 8:11 commands him to do. Or he can allow the old nature to put the chains of bondage on him again and thus he ceases to "please God". "So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God" (Rom. 8:8).

"You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the spirit, if the spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ. But if Christ is in you, your body is dead because of sin, yet your spirit is alive because of righteousness. And if the spirit of Him Who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, He Who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His spirit, Who lives in you" (verses 9-11 N.I.V.).

Again a small 's' could have been used in these verses in the A.V. It may be best to read it both ways and interpret the statements both of the Holy Spirit and His divine nature as a gift. It is important to note that the saved, although still having an old nature called "flesh" are not considered as being "*in* the flesh" but rather "*in* the spirit",

for the spirit (God the Spirit and His gift) indwells him.

The thought of indwelling is emphasised in Romans 7 and 8. Sin indwells in 7:17,18,20 – “sin dwelleth in me” and the spirit of God and of Christ in 8:9,11. The believer has two “indwellers”, but he has been completely freed from the bondage of the one in order to come under the control of the other. What does the Apostle mean by “the body is dead because of sin”? The N.E.B. rendering is helpful here:

“But if Christ is dwelling within you, then although the body is a dead thing because you sinned, yet the spirit is life itself because you have been justified” (verse 10).

“The body is dead” in the sense that it is subject to death resulting from sin. The believer now has the spirit of the risen Christ indwelling in him and this is itself a foretaste of the sure and certain hope that will be realised when in actual resurrection he will have a body “fashioned like the body of His glory” (Phil. 3:20,21) when he will be clothed with the permanent “house from heaven” (2 Cor. 5:1-4). *Then* he will experience the “redemption of the body” of Romans 8:23.

The Apostle concludes his argument concerning the two natures in the child of God by saying:

“Therefore, brothers, we have an obligation – but it is not to the sinful nature, to live according to it. For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live, because those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God” (Rom. 8:12-14 N.I.V.).

“Mortify” or “put to death” is the equivalent of Romans 6:11 where the believer is urged to reckon as “dead” . . . and as “alive to God” and Colossians 3:5 is teaching the same thing. He is not asked to work his crucifixion out in his own strength, but to count on what God has already done to the old nature. When this is obeyed he can have the joy of divine leading in his daily life, because “those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God”.

What constitutes divine leading? Volumes have been written on this, some of which are unscriptural and therefore misleading. Many

think that it has to do with a special feeling or emotion. They say “I *felt* led to do this or that”; but the leading of God does not depend on anything so frail as our impressions or feelings.

If we look back to the typical people, Israel, we shall see that God’s leading was a part of their redemption, “He led them forth by the right way” (Psalm 107:7). In fact, divine leading was Israel’s experience right through the forty years in the wilderness (Deut. 29:5). The Old Testament has a good deal to say about divine leading as a concordance will quickly show, and the sincere Bible student is recommended to study this carefully. The pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night gave God’s earthly people sure and certain guidance (Exod. 13:21,22). All they had to do was to watch them and not alter their position until these began to move. In this way they were infallibly guided by God Himself.

But it may be objected that in the New Testament we have nothing like this. This is true, but we may ask whether the apostle Paul gives us any clue on this most important matter? When we read the divine account of his journeyings, his witness and service during the period covered by the Acts of the Apostles we find that the Lord guided him by *shut doors* and *open doors*. God is sovereign in this. He is the One Who says that He “openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth” (Rev. 3:7). In 1 Corinthians 16:9 Paul says “a great door and effectual is opened unto me” and in 2 Corinthians 2:12, “a door was opened unto me of the Lord”, and he asks for prayer in Colossians 4:3 that “God would open unto us a door of utterance”. The opposite is seen in Acts 16:7, “When they (Paul and his companions) came to the border of Mysia, they tried to enter Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus would not allow them to” (N.I.V.). In other words God closed the door to Bithynia, thus guiding them infallibly to Europe. God still guides His children, for this is not reserved for special Christians. What is absolutely essential is an open mind that is ready to accept an open or shut door according to the Lord’s will. Too often we come to the Lord with our minds already made up on a line of action and then we pray “Lord, guide me”. Needless to say this is not the way to know the Lord’s will or His leading. We can with certainty ask Him for shut doors or open doors according to His wisdom and purpose and this is much safer than depending on our feelings. We have seen tragedies result from the latter. But some may

still object and say that in times of urgency we may need instantaneous guidance. If this is really true, we can still depend on the Lord, for with Him “all things are possible”.

Paul goes on to say “for you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship” (Rom. 8:15 N.I.V.). “God hath not given us the spirit of fear, but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind” (2 Tim. 1:7). Adoption (A.V.) *huiiothesia* means our placing as sons. We must not read our Western ideas of adoption into the New Testament. Adoption was a legal term at that time, appointing the inheritance which could be to a person outside the family if the parent chose. Sir William Ramsay writes as follows:

“Adoption was a kind of embryo will; the adopted son became the owner of the property and the property could pass to a person that was outside the family only through his being adopted . . . this ancient form of will was *irrevocable* and *public*. The terms ‘son’ and heir are interchangeable . . . it is remarkable that the adopted son should have a stronger position than the son by birth, yet it is so” (*A Historical Commentary on St Paul’s Epistle to the Galatians*).*

It is essential to understand this, specially when dealing with Galatians 4:1-7 and 3:15. With our Western ideas an adopted child can never be in such a close relationship as a child by birth; not so in century one. We should therefore realise that believers are not outsiders who cannot have a claim on God as Father, but they are really “sons of God” (1 John 3:1,2) by redemption and as such have a glorious inheritance in view. “If children, then heirs . . .” (Rom. 8:17). The idea of the universal fatherhood of God is a popular misconception. God is not the Father of every human being but has a relationship as Creator. Only those who receive Christ by faith are brought into God’s family:

“Yet to all who received Him (Christ) . . . He gave the right to become children of God – children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband’s will, but born of God” (John 1:12,13 N.I.V.).

*Those who wish to go into more detail should consult *Just and the Justifier* by C.H. Welch, pages 208-213.

Only such, according to Romans 8:15, can come to God and call Him Father (*Abba*). This word is Aramaic and was the familiar term that children used to address their father. Such is the warm, close relationship that redemption confers on the believer. It was used by the Lord Jesus in Mark 14:36 and it occurs in Galatians 4:6. All the wealth of meaning that is covered by the word “father” is inherent in the Lord and in this, as in all other respects, He can never fail His children. In the passage we are considering the Apostle uses *huioi*, sons, and *tekna*, children interchangeably and we must be careful not to make too sharp a distinction between them. As Bishop Westcott says, the two words are complementary, one expressing the privilege of inheritance and the other tender relationship. In Galatians 3:23-4:7 a contrast is made between infancy (under the law) and the status as sons (*huioi*) but here the word *nepioi* (infants) is used not *tekna* (children). We are “heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with Him” (Rom 8:17). Many take these two statements as being identical in meaning, but one is conditional and the other is not. Scripture distinguishes between Hope and Prize. One is a gift by grace, the other depends upon faithfulness and service which may involve suffering.

Did not the Lord Jesus make a distinction between coming *to* Him and coming *after* Him (Matt. 16)? The latter involves the denying of self and taking up the cross (suffering) and it would be quite wrong to say that this is automatically true of all those who believe in Christ.

Suffering can largely be avoided by our hiding our light under a bushel. It was “to him that *overcometh*” (and this included suffering) that the promise was made that “he should sit with Me in My throne” (Rev. 3:21). If we died with Christ we shall *live* with Him, but if we suffer (endure) we shall *reign* with Him (2 Tim. 2:11,12). The latter is conditional and we have no right to ignore the condition laid down by God. “Joint-heirs with Christ” is parallel to being on the throne (reigning) with Him in glory, but faithfulness and suffering are the necessary prelude. There is future glory that will be true of all the redeemed and this the Apostle now proceeds to expound; but there is also the added glory of the overcomer for “one star differeth from another in glory” (1 Cor. 15:41).

He goes on to say:

“I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us” (verse 18 N.I.V.).

A few years previously Paul had written to the Corinthian church “our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory” (2 Cor. 4:17). The suffering and the future glory are beyond comparison, but in our experience this is only true “while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal” (2 Cor. 4:18). If we look at the trials and suffering we may well be overwhelmed, but if we “look unto Jesus” (Heb. 12:2) the present with all its testing fades away into insignificance; it is not worthy to be compared with the future glory in resurrection.

Not only does this glorious hope affect the believer; it extends to the whole creation:

“The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed. For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the One Who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God” (verses 19-21 N.I.V.).

The whole universe has become affected by sin and failing. First of all with the fall of Satan and the angels that fell with him; then with Adam’s failure and its effect upon the whole of mankind. Not only this but the earth itself was cursed for man’s sake and still bears evidences of that curse as everyone knows who works with the soil. No wonder the Preacher declared that all was subjected to vanity (Eccles. 1:2), and the book of Ecclesiastes is a divine commentary on this. Emptiness, frustration, bondage now reign over the earth. But the glorious redemptive work of the last Adam, reaches out to the whole universe and will at last break and banish this bondage so that it may realise the goal for which it was brought into being.

Now it groans and travails, yet with eager expectation looking for its release which will take place when the sons of God are manifested and this manifestation is bound up with the return of the Lord Jesus Christ in power and great glory. Then the “desert shall blossom as the rose” and the beauty of the primal creation be restored, finding

its culmination in the new heavens and earth. Its longing is bound up with the believer's longing and hope.

"Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what he already has? But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently" (verses 23-25 N.I.V.).

The "firstfruits of the Spirit" can mean the indwelling of the Holy Spirit or His gift of the new nature. This is a present experience for the believer and is, as it were, a pledge or the first instalment of the coming glory in resurrection. *Now* is the groaning and travail. 2 Corinthians 5:2 concurs with Romans, "for in this (tabernacle i.e. body) we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven" (i.e. the resurrection body); *then* will be the glorious release.

In order to sustain us at the present time we have the help and strengthening of the Holy Spirit specially in regard to our prayers:

"We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express. And He Who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God's will" (verses 26,27 N.I.V.).

What Christian has not felt the inadequacy of his prayer life? And what a comfort to know that our deepest longings which often we cannot express in words, the indwelling Holy Spirit interprets and intercedes for us to the Father. After all it is our attitude of mind which is of first importance and this is what God is continually looking at "for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart" (1 Sam. 16:7).

After dealing with the strengthening of the interceding Holy Spirit, the apostle Paul continues:

"And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him, who have been called according to His purpose" (Rom. 8:28 N.I.V.).

We should realise that “all things” include the dark and difficult experiences of life which God can overrule and turn to our good and this should encourage us when we go through such experiences. All is under His control and nothing can happen to us that is outside of His will. Even when we suffer through our own foolishness there are lessons that can be learned to our profit. What is certain is that nothing happens to the believer by chance. Behind everything is a plan and purpose of God and this is where election and predestination come in. There are links in the divine chain embodying this plan and these the Apostle now enumerates:

“For those God foreknew He also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those he predestined, He also called; those He called, He also justified; those He justified, He also glorified” (verses 29, 30 N.I.V.).

Many regard the Bible merely as a book for devotional exercise but it is much more than this. It is a record of the plan God had in mind when He created the heaven and earth. We are too limited to have a full understanding of this, but the divine outline is clear for those who are willing and keen enough to search the Word of God.* In order that this plan can never miscarry we have God working along the lines of foreknowledge, predestination, calling, justification and glorification. We may be sure that any plan left to created beings to carry out would finally founder and God cannot and will not allow this, for then all His plan would be in vain. The first link is foreknowledge and we should note that it is put before predestination. We find that similarly foreknowledge is put before election in 1 Peter 1:2. It is absolutely essential that this order be kept otherwise we shall land ourselves in all sorts of difficulties. If only Bible students had kept to God’s order and gone no further than what is revealed in Scripture much profitless argument and dissension would have been avoided. God knows everything, past, present and future; He is omniscient:

“ . . . I am God, and there is none else; I am God and there is none like Me, *declaring the end from the beginning* and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, *My counsel shall stand, and I will do all My pleasure*” (Isa. 46:9,10).

*Such may be interested in the author’s “*The Kingdom of God in heaven and on earth*” where this subject is dealt with. Obtainable from The Berean Publishing Trust.

God's purpose (counsel) will stand and be fulfilled because *He knows the end from the beginning* and can prepare in advance. If this was not so *there could be no certainty of fulfilment*. Something could happen in the future concerning which God had no knowledge and thus could overthrow His purpose. Those who do not accept the omniscience of God are throwing away the ground for complete assurance.

It is important that we do not read into foreknowledge what is not there. The word means just to know beforehand without exercising any control over future events. This is inherent in other words as we shall see, but God in past eternity was able to devise a wonderful plan because He has all-knowledge of the future, and therefore cannot be taken by surprise and He has all power and so can carry it out in every detail. Charles H. Welch writes:

“We shall be wise, therefore, to leave the word foreknowledge to mean just what it says and no more. The infinite knowledge of God makes it impossible that He shall not know who will preach and who will teach; whether they will go, and when they will go; who shall hear, who reject, who accept, and who be left without a word of the gospel. The one great demand upon all who hear the gospel is that they believe the testimony of God concerning His Son. Whoever so believes passes into all the blessings purchased by the blood of Christ. Whoever does not believe makes God a liar (1 John 5:10). If there was any idea of preordination in this, refusal to believe would be as much a part of God's predeterminate decree as is election to glory, and it would not be possible to make God a liar by so refusing His testimony . . . We therefore understand the passages before us to declare that God, Who is not under the limitations of time and space as we are, and needs no external evidence to attain to this knowledge, knows all things, past, present and future; knows them perfectly and completely and can, therefore, act with complete certainty where, to us, all would appear in a contingent light” (*Just and Justifier* pp. 234, 235).

Some imagine foreknowledge to be equivalent to predestination, in which case Paul has written “Whom he did predestinate, he also did predestinate”, which makes nonsense. *Proorizo* means literally to mark off beforehand for some specific purpose. Surely the Creator has a right to do this. If a man invents something, has he not the right to use this for the purpose he had in mind? What we have here in Romans is not a hard determinist philosophy, but the loving plan of One Who purposes to bless human beings beyond their dreams or comprehension.

These foreknown ones are to be “conformed to the likeness of His Son” (verse 29). He Himself is the image of God Who as Spirit is invisible (Col. 1:15), and these are conformed to that image, so in one sense they are replicas of God. But one very important fact is stressed here. The Lord Jesus is *first* among them all, for this is the meaning of the Greek word rendered “firstborn.” It is fatal to base doctrine on the English word. Colossians 1:15,16 insists that Christ is the firstborn of all creation, not because He was the first creature born but because “by Him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth” (Col. 1:16). In other words as Creator He is and must be first with the object stated in verse 18, “*that in all things He might have the first place*” (pre-eminence). Professor F.F. Bruce and Dr. W.J. Martin state:

“The word firstborn had long since ceased to be used exclusively in its literal sense, just as prime (from the Latin *primus* – first) with us. The Prime Minister is not the first minister we have had; he is the most pre-eminent. A man in the ‘prime’ of his life has long since left the first part of his life behind. Similarly, firstborn came to denote not priority in time but pre-eminence in rank” (*The Deity of Christ*).

In the chain of God’s purpose, predestination is followed by “calling” and to this calling those concerned respond by faith in Christ and this leads to justification or acquittal as Romans makes perfectly clear. Eternal life and future glory are impossible apart from the righteousness conferred by justification for God plans a universe where sin, death and all its consequences are entirely absent and therefore no sinner as such can have a part in it.

The final link in the chain of God’s plan is glorification, “those He justified He also glorified” (verse 30) and here is the wonderful climax. So great is Paul’s confidence in the Lord that he can describe a future event in a past tense as though it had already happened, and thus the great purpose comes to completion. Dr. C.K. Barrett’s comments here are worth repeating:

“Predestination is the most comfortable of all Christian doctrines, if men will accept it in its Biblical form, and not attempt to pry into it with questions which it does not set out to answer. It is not a “quantitative limitation of God’s action, but its qualitative definition,” the final statement of the truth that justification, and in the end, salvation also, are by grace alone and through faith alone” (*The Epistle to the Romans* pp.170, 171).

Here then we have the purpose of God's predestinating grace – the creation of a new race displaying the Creator's glory. The apostle Paul now concludes this portion of the epistle and deals with the final triumph of the believer:

“What, then, shall we say in response to this? If God is for us, who can be against us? He Who did not spare His own Son, but gave Him up for us all – how will He not also . . . graciously give us all things? Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God Who justifies. Who is he that condemns? Christ Jesus, Who died – more than that, Who was raised to life – is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? As it is written “For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered”. “No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him Who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (verses 31-39 N.I.V.).

In verse 31 the point to note is not are we on God's side, but is He on ours and assuredly He is, and so the only conclusion is if God is on our side who, or what, can be against us? The answer is nothing. The cost to God for our justification, salvation and final glorification is beyond our comprehension – “He that spared not His own Son”. There is surely here an allusion to Genesis 22:12 where Abraham does not spare the promised son, Isaac, and it is significant that the LXX here uses Paul's word “spared” in verse 12. There now follows rhetorical questions. The answer to each can either be a statement of fact or a question as the RSV text and margin show. Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? Will God (the Judge of all) Who justifies us? Who can condemn us? Will Christ Who died for us and is now risen and at the right hand of God? Will the One Who suffered for us, bore our sins and endured the shameful death of the cross, will He condemn us? The answer is decidedly “NO” or all He has done is in vain. He too is interceding for us as the Holy Spirit is (verses 27 and 34). What a strong position we are in then! These two Persons of the Godhead constantly praying for us!

The Apostle now lists those who are our enemies and asks “Can these separate us from Christ?” The answer again is “Certainly not.” He refers to persecution and possibly this had already fallen on the Roman church. It was already dangerous to profess Christianity and

he quotes Psa. 44:22 “We are counted as sheep for the slaughter”. Paul’s reference to “principalities and powers” are evidently the evil spirit forces under the control of Satan mentioned in Ephesians 6 with which our warfare is now concerned. Height and depth were technical terms in astrology and later appeared in Gnosticism. These spirit forces were believed to control the movements of the planets and the destinies of men. “In all these things we are more than conquerors” (literally super-conquerors). The Apostle concludes by saying that nothing in the realm of the whole universe can sever the children of God from Him.

The chapter starts with “no condemnation” and ends with “no separation”. What a triumph for the believer! And all because of the great plan of God and redeeming grace! If only we could constantly remember these glorious truths even when pain and problems are pressing down upon us, how much easier would be the pathway that leads to eternal glory!

CHAPTER 9

The closing words of Romans 8 end the inner section of this epistle, which dealt with man in general, whether Jew or Gentile, in relation to Adam. Abraham and Israel as a nation were passed by. But that does not mean that the position of Israel with its close covenant ties with God had ceased to count. This favoured nation had been in the forefront of God's purposes for His Kingdom on earth since the time of Abraham and that relationship had not yet been altered. The Apostle's answer to the question as to whether Israel had been cast off by God is perfectly clear. "God hath *not* cast away His people which He foreknew," (Rom. 11:2) and any system of theology that demands that He had done so at this point must be completely wrong.

Not only this, but Paul's love for his brethren and his longing that they should be saved is evident from this new section of the epistle.

"I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were cursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, those of my own race, the people of Israel." (9:2-4 N.I.V.).
"Brothers, my heart's desire and prayer to God for the Israelites is that they may be saved." (10:1 N.I.V.).

Israel's attitude to the gospel, their place in God's scheme, God's elective purpose and the position of the believing remnant must be considered. The key thought of justification is not forgotten for the word righteousness occurs 12 times in chapters 9 to 11. One might think that with the glorious conclusion to chapter 8, the theme of the epistle had been brought to an end. In fact there are some expositions of Romans that end with chapter 8! But not so; the problem of Israel's unbelief and their attitude to the gospel is now dealt with. This new section of Romans is a divine commentary on what was happening in the period covered by the Acts of the Apostles. Those who do not seriously consider its testimony and receive it as truth, are bound to be defective in their knowledge of God's purposes.

Chapter 9 begins with sorrow, but the section ending with chapter 11 ends with song, (11:33-36). The Apostle was racked with pain as he considered Israel's unbelief and rejection of the gospel and was willing to sacrifice himself for their good, as Moses of old was – "Yet, now if Thou wilt forgive their sin – and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out

of Thy book which Thou hast written” (Exod. 32:32).

“I speak the truth in Christ – I am not lying, my conscience confirms it in the Holy Spirit – I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were cursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, those of my own race, the people of Israel. Theirs is the adoption as sons; theirs the divine glory, the covenants, the receiving of the law, the temple worship and the promises. Theirs are the patriarchs, and from them is traced the human ancestry of Christ, Who is God over all, for ever praised! Amen.” (Romans 9:1-5 N.I.V.).

Paul’s sorrow is expressed first of all, not in their fall, but in their heights of privilege bestowed on them by God and this made that fall all the more terrible. There were many nations before Israel existed, but the Lord passed them by and chose Israel as His firstborn and this, as we have seen, was linked with an inheritance and this was secured by eternal promises relating to the *seed* and to the *land*. “Israel is My Son, even My firstborn,” (Exod. 4:22) and as such was “above all the nations that are upon the earth” (Deut.14:2). To them therefore pertained the promises first made by God to the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

To Israel pertained the external evidence of God’s presence among them, the shekinah glory in the Tabernacle (Exod. 40:34) and in the Temple (1 Kings 8:10-11). Not only these but all the covenants of Scripture with one exception belonged to Israel, the exception being the covenant with Noah and mankind. There is evidence for the singular here, the covenant referring to the law of Moses, but the plural is to be preferred for Ephesians 2:12 uses the plural in defining Israel’s covenant privileges.

The Law with God’s standard of righteousness eclipsing any other human code of conduct was their possession and not only this but the service and worship of God and the divine ceremonial that prophetically looked forward to the Person and the work of Christ were expressed in their Temple at Jerusalem.

Theirs also were the promises, specially the Messianic promises, “the sure mercies of David” (Isa. 55:3; Acts 13:23,32-34) and the climax is reached in the Apostle’s last statement “of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came” (verse 5).

In Ephesians 2 Paul again summarises the divine privileges of

Israel by noting in contrast the position of the unsaved Gentile “that at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world” (Eph. 2:12).

With this wealth of blessing and privilege no wonder the Psalmist wrote concerning Israel:

“He (God) hath not dealt so with any nation: and as for His judgments, they (the nations) have not known them. Praise ye the Lord” (Psa. 147:20).

Something must be said about the words following the statement “as concerning the flesh Christ came”. The A.V. concludes the statement by saying “Christ . . . Who is over all, God blessed for ever,” or the N.I.V. “Who is God over all, for ever praised! Amen”. However, some versions put a full stop after God and then finish with a doxology, “As concerning the flesh Christ came. God be blessed for ever!” Erasmus was one of the first to suggest this. What has to be decided is (1) is this latter translation possible from the Greek and (2) does it fit the context? If this second rendering is admitted then the verse does not directly affirm the deity of Christ.

Charles Hodge states here:

“(1) The relative ‘who’ must agree with the nearest antecedent. There is no other subject in the context sufficiently prominent to make a departure from this ordinary rule, in this case, even plausible. “Of whom Christ came Who is,” etc. Who is? Certainly Christ, for He alone is spoken of.

(2) The context requires this interpretation because, as Paul was speaking of Christ, it would be very unnatural thus suddenly to change the subject, and break out into a doxology to God . . . it was the very object of the Apostle to set forth the great honour to the Jews of having Christ born among them and this of course would lead to his presenting the dignity of the Redeemer in the strongest light . . . The uniform expression (for a doxology) is “blessed be God” and never “God be blessed”. The word “blessed” always stands first and the word “God” after it with the article. Often as such cases occur in the Greek and Hebrew Scriptures, there is, it is believed, no case of contrary arrangement” (*Romans* pp. 300,301).

Professor F. F. Bruce writes:

“The former construction (i.e. of the A.V. and N.I.V.) is more in keeping with the general structure of the sentence (cp. 1:25) where the words “Who is blessed for ever, Amen” are not an independent ascription of praise, but form the integral peroration of the sentence. It is further supported by the consideration that something is required to balance the phrase “as concerning the flesh”. The Messiah, “as concerning the flesh,” that is with regard to His human descent – came of a long line of Israelite ancestors but as regards His eternal being, He is God over all, blessed for ever.” A formal parallel to this antithesis appears in 1:3 where Christ is said to have been born a descendant of David “according to the flesh,” but installed as the Son of God with power by the dispensation of the Spirit”.

Professor Bruce goes on to say that while Paul is not in the habit of calling Christ God in this direct way, yet for him Christ is the One *in Whom, through Whom* and *unto Whom* all things were created (Col. 1:16); in Whom dwells all the fulness of the Godhead bodily (Col. 2:9). The title Lord is given to Christ by Paul as the equivalent of the Hebrew Yahweh (Jehovah); the way in which he applies Isaiah 45:23 in Philippians 2:10 indicates that, to him, the confession “Jesus Christ is Lord” means “Jesus Christ is Jehovah”.

Moreover Paul does not hesitate to describe Christ as “our great God and our Saviour” in Titus 2:13 and he was well aware that the writer of Hebrews in quoting Psalm 45 applies the words “Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever” to Christ (Heb. 1:8)*

Coming back to Romans 9:5 there can be no doubt that these lines are not a doxology to God for that does not fit the train of thought. Rather they show how exalted Christ is, which fits the train of thought perfectly. Those who wish to take this further should consult *The Epistle to the Romans* by Sanday and Headlam pp. 232-238.

Paul now proceeds to deal with the failure of Israel and he brings in the truth of election, not to decide who would be saved or who would be lost, but to show which individuals and nations God has chosen to work out His purpose for a kingdom on this earth. And

* Readers are referred to the author’s booklet *The Lord Jesus Christ, God or only Man?* obtainable from The Berean Publishing Trust.

who is there that can criticise or judge Him for so doing? The marvel is that He uses sinful and failing human beings at all. Only a God of infinite grace would do this.

First of all the word "Israel" must be correctly understood. Who constitute Israel? Some may answer "The physical descendants of Abraham," but they would be wrong.

"It is not as though God's Word had failed. For not all who are descended from Israel are Israel. Nor because they are his descendants are they all Abraham's children. On the contrary "It is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned." In other words, it is not the natural children who are God's children, but it is the children of the promise who are regarded as Abraham's offspring" (verses 6-8 N.I.V.).

Abraham had eight sons by Hagar, Keturah and Sarah. If physical descent constituted a claim then seven other nations might have disputed Israel's rights, but the deciding factor was decided by the Sovereignty of God. Even sons born to Isaac do not share equal privileges. Esau and Jacob were both children of the same mother yet Esau is rejected and Jacob chosen.

"For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, *that the purpose of God according to election might stand*, not of works but of Him that calleth; it was said unto her, 'The elder shall serve the younger'" (Rom. 9:11,12).

Not only this but from time to time outsiders have joined the Jews and accepted Judaism. In 800 A.D. the ruler and many of the ruling classes of the Khazars, a people living near the Caspian Sea, joined Judaism. Even in Romans itself we have the distinction between the natural and spiritual seed brought forward:

"For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh; But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God" (Rom. 2:28,29).

The condition of the Jewish nation today is like the parable of the tares and true wheat. They are so similar that only an innerrant God can separate them without making any mistake. He surely will do this before His earthly kingdom becomes a reality. This means that while it is true that the false seed are among Israel, the true seed are there too, all known to the Lord and this makes anti-semitism a

dangerous thing, remembering what God said to Abraham “I will bless them that bless thee and curse him that curseth thee” (Gen. 12:3), for it is through the true seed coming through Isaac that constitutes the real Israel in God’s sight and it is through this channel, finally redeemed and saved, that His elective purpose works to bring in His earthly kingdom; election and the power of God guarantee that this finally will not fail.

Election then dominates the context of Romans we are considering and again we stress that it is brought in here to guarantee the fulfillment of the great plan of God. The Lord conceives the plan and chooses what human agents He will use for carrying it out to completion. No one is in a position to say this is unreasonable or unjust. It is in this context that the example of Pharaoh is brought in. The hardening of Pharaoh’s heart has always been a problem, but so many try to judge God without considering all the facts given in the Old Testament, and thus they make their own problems and denigrate God.

God Himself states the purpose of His dealings with Pharaoh, “For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, I raised you up for this very purpose, that I might display My power in you and that My Name might be proclaimed in all the earth” (Rom. 9:17). See Exodus 15:14; Joshua 2:10, 9:9; and 1 Samuel 4:8 for the effect on the nations of the plagues and the Exodus. That power was displayed in rescuing the people of God from the iron grip and cruel bondage of a vicious tyrant. But some will say, it was not just for God to punish Pharaoh seeing that He hardened Pharaoh’s heart. How could Pharaoh respond and be obedient if God dealt with him in this way? But let us take account of the facts. Three words are used for “hardening”.

Chazaq to brace up (13 occurrences)

Qashah make hard (2 occurrences)

Kabed become heavy (6 occurrences)

Three times the Lord threatened to do this: (Exod. 4:21; 7:3; 14:4), but held back till Pharaoh’s actions made his attitude of rebellion quite clear. Four times Pharaoh hardened his own heart before the Lord’s hardening (Exod. 8:15,19,32; 9:34,35). The consequence was that the Lord in His sovereignty did not alter Pharaoh’s resolve to oppose Him. He allowed the hardness to continue (10:1; 11:10; 14:8). Even the plagues had an element of mercy behind them, for every one was sent by God to shake and change this man’s obstinacy

and contempt (5:2). Man of himself *deserves* nothing. If God deals with him it must be on the lines of mercy and grace and he is in no position to put God into the dock and judge Him for His actions.

“One of you will say to me, ‘Then why does God still blame us? For who resists His will?’ But who are you, O man, to talk back to God? Shall what is formed say to Him who formed it, ‘Why did you make me like this?’ Does not the potter have the right to make out of the same lump of clay some pottery for noble purposes and some for common use? What if God, choosing to show His wrath and make His power known, bore with great patience the objects of His wrath – prepared for destruction?” (Rom. 9:19-22 N.I.V.).

The Apostle will not allow any questioning of God’s right to do what He wills with His own. Who fits any to destruction? Not God; they fitted themselves by their rebellious attitude of mind and actions that follow. It is absolutely wrong to imagine or teach that God “endured with much longsuffering” vessels that in His own sovereign will He had Himself “fitted to destruction”. What God has done is with the object of showing His mercy towards those whom He calls whether Jews or Gentiles. The fact that, at the end of the Acts period God laid aside Israel in unbelief, was no more against His promises than the rejection of the ten tribes who were carried away into captivity by the Assyrians; for, although thousands were deported, yet a remnant returned to perpetuate the race, and it is this doctrine of the remnant that is so important to understand. If any reproached God for the smallness of the remnant, Paul says that such should be glad to think that a remnant had been spared at all, for, as Isaiah had said, the people had become like Sodom and Gomorrah and the Lord, but for His mercy, might have left them all to perish (verse 29).

The conclusion of this section of Romans is clear. No one is in a position to criticise God or His actions, denying the fact that He has a right to do what He wills with His own, for the whole world has been brought guilty before God (3:19) and so has no claim upon a holy God Who is Judge of all the earth. He is a God of mercy and grace and no sinner can be entitled to this.

Paul goes on to sum up:

“What then shall we say? That the Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, have obtained it, a righteousness that is by faith; but Israel,

who pursued a law of righteousness, has not attained it. Why not? Because they pursued it not by faith, but as it were by works. They stumbled over the 'stumbling stone'. As it is written, See, I lay in Zion a stone that causes men to stumble and a rock that makes them fall, and the one who trusts in Him will never be put to shame" (Rom. 9:30-33 N.I.V.).

The attitude to righteousness of these two classes, Gentiles and Jews, is made clear. The former accepted God's verdict on them as being guilty sinners and then accepted His gracious provision of righteousness through Christ's sacrificial work. The Jews on the other hand imagined that they could keep the law of Moses by their own efforts and attain to a standard of righteousness that God would accept. This might have been regarded as being blameless in the sight of men, but not before God. Even Paul could regard his pre-Christian life as being blameless (Phil. 3:6), but he soon learned that his own righteousness was worthless.

The Apostle quotes from Isaiah and combines two verses. Isaiah 8:14 and 28:16 whose common term is a stone laid by God. Isaiah foretells that the future Assyrian invasion will sweep over the land of Israel like the waters of a flood. The only safe place will be God Himself likened to a rock upon which they can stand safely. But those who do not trust the Lord will be swept by the flood against this rock and come to disaster. To them it will become "a stone of stumbling" and a "rock of offence". Peter quotes the same references in 1 Peter 2:8 and also combines another, Psalm 118:22. These two opposite effects have always followed the preaching concerning Christ and His redemptive work. Some believe and build on Him as a secure foundation for eternity; others reject, to them He is a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence, as 1 Corinthians 1:18,23,24 declares. Just as the sun both melts wax and hardens clay, so this twofold effect goes on wherever Christ and the gospel are faithfully preached. It was true in the Acts period and explains Israel's tragic failure, because they sought to justify themselves by their own efforts and not by the way of faith in Christ. It seems unbelievable that a people chosen by the Lord and instructed by Him through the Old Testament centuries by type and shadow, pointing forward to their Messiah, King and Saviour, should result in this way. They thus brought spiritual blindness, deafness and hardness of heart upon themselves from which they as a nation are still suffering today. How wonderful to know that this is not the end of the story, for this very section of Romans looks to the future when at last they will believe

and be saved and thus become the channel of God's blessing to the whole earth. But this will be by the way of faith, not works, which they refused when the preaching of the gospel of grace was carried out in the Acts period.

CHAPTER 10

Chapter 10 opens with the apostle Paul's concern for his nation which he has expressed before:

“Brothers, my heart's desire and prayer to God for the Israelites is that they may be saved. For I can testify about them that they are zealous for God, but their zeal is not based on knowledge.

Since they did not know the righteousness that comes from God and sought to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness. Christ is the end of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes” (Rom. 10:1-4 N.I.V.).

Many people today are like Israel described here, keen and active, but this is not the same as being ruled by the truth of God. How often we hear about a certain Christian, “but he is so zealous and sincere”, forgetting that it is possible to be zealous in the wrong thing.

“There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death” (Prov. 14:12).

Neither zeal nor sincerity is enough in God's sight. This is where Israel stumbled and fell so badly. They had never learned the lesson that Paul the Pharisee had, namely, that Christ put an end to the law as a means of acquiring favour with God. “Christ is the *end* of the law” (verse 4). *Telos*, ‘end’ can mean either goal or termination. The Lord Jesus provides the very righteousness which God demands, making all human attempts to produce it superfluous and useless. The two ways of law and faith are illustrated by two quotations from the Pentateuch. The first one is from Leviticus 18:5 “Ye shall therefore keep My statutes and My judgments; which if a man do, he shall live in them”. But it must be said straight away that these words do not teach that a man could obtain eternal life by his efforts to keep the law. The blessing on those who kept God's commandments resulted in a prolonged life and enjoyment in the land of promise. They would live long in the land “which the Lord thy God giveth thee” (Exod. 20:12).

The way of faith is illustrated by a quotation from Moses' farewell to Israel recorded in Deuteronomy 30:11-14:

“For this commandment which I command thee this day, it is not hidden from thee, neither is it far off. It is not in heaven, that thou shouldest

say, Who shall go up for us to heaven, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it, and do it? Neither is it beyond the sea, that thou shouldst say. Who shall go over the sea for us and bring it unto us, that we may hear it and do it? But the word is very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart, that thou mayest do it”.

So the apostle Paul quotes these two references thus:

“Moses describes in this way the righteousness that is by the law: ‘The man who does these things will live by them’. But the righteousness that is by faith says: Do not say in your heart ‘Who will ascend into heaven?’ (that is, to bring Christ down), or ‘Who will descend into the deep?’ (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead). But what does it say? The word is near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart, that is, the word of faith we are proclaiming. That if you confess with your mouth, ‘Jesus is Lord’, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved. As the Scripture says, ‘He that believes in Him will not be disappointed’ ” (Rom. 10:5-11 N.I.V.).

There is no need for Israel or any one else to reach heaven and bring Christ down. The Incarnation had already accomplished that. Nor was there any need to bring Christ from the dead, for His resurrection and ascension was an accomplished fact. The word of faith was so near that it was in their minds. They had only to exercise it and believe God’s testimony concerning Christ, confessing, proclaiming Him to be the One Lord, then this would result in their salvation. Note how the resurrection is an essential part of the gospel of grace (1 Cor. 15:3,4). Too often it is forgotten by preachers who limit their gospel to Calvary. “If Christ be not risen . . . your faith is also vain” (1 Cor. 15:14). We do not proclaim a dead Christ but a risen Saviour. Who is the One Lord of the Bible, Old Testament and New, that is, Jehovah, the great almighty God. The Lord Jesus is assuredly “our great God and Saviour” (Titus 2:13 R.S.V.), and all who put their trust in Him will never be confounded, that is, disappointed or “let down”.

The apostle Paul goes on to state that there is no distinction between Jew and Gentile:

“For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile – the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on Him, for, ‘everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved’ ”(Rom. 10:12-13 N.I.V.).

All without distinction have sinned and all without distinction have the same Lord who will hear their call and pour out His rich blessing on them. The Apostle quotes exactly the LXX version of Joel 2:32 and then, by constructing a chain of connecting links, shows why Israel failed to do this very thing. At the same time he emphasises the limits of human responsibility. A righteous God does not expect the impossible.

“How then can they call on the One they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the One of Whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written, ‘How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!’ ” (verses 14-15 .I.V.).

These queries are really self-evident. Men will only call for salvation upon one whom they believe or trust. And to do this, someone must make Christ known to them and these come not of their own choice or authority, but because they have been sent by the Lord, so the whole process begins and ends with Him. Paul now shows from the Word of God that He did not fail to send out His preachers.

“It is written, how beautiful are the feet of those who bring the good news”

and here he quotes from Isaiah 52:7. How was it then that Israel did not believe, for they had the message first, before the Gentiles? This was not unforeseen for this very context deals with the small response from those who heard – “who has believed our message?” (Isa. 53:1).

To a large extent the gracious message to Israel went unheeded and the opposite of faith reigned, namely, unbelief. How does faith originate? Many have asked this question again and again. There is only one answer:

“ . . . faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ” (verse 17 .I.V.).

Many seem to imagine that faith can be produced by will-power or by holy living. *It can only come by constantly listening to the word of Him Who is the Truth* (John 14:6). Then it becomes the most reasonable thing to believe Him Who cannot lie or mislead. Christians who keep their Bibles closed are never likely to have big faith!

In Paul's day some may have imagined that the people of Israel did not all *hear* the message.

“But I ask, did they not hear? Of course they did. Their voice has gone out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world. Again I ask, did Israel not understand? First, Moses says ‘I will make you envious by those who are not a nation. I will make you angry by a nation that has no understanding’. And Isaiah boldly says, ‘I was found by those who did not seek me; I revealed Myself to those who did not ask for Me’. But concerning Israel he says, ‘All day long I have held out My hands to a disobedient and obstinate people’ ” (verses 18-21 N.I.V.).

Yes, Israel had heard. Wherever there was a company of Israelites the gospel had been preached. Here Paul quotes Psalm 19 which deals with the witness of God's creation to the world. The point here is that wherever there were Jews, there the good news had been proclaimed. Nor could it be said that Israel did not understand. Their root trouble was they would not obey. They showed envy and jealousy when the Gentiles accepted the message but they would not believe it themselves. This fulfilled the word of the prophets and here the Song of Moses is quoted (Deut. 32) where the ingratitude of Israel is described, and then God says:

“I will move them to jealousy with those which are not a people; I will provoke them to anger with a foolish nation” (Deut. 32:21).

So we see that unbelieving and disobedient Israel will be put to shame by believing Gentiles who had nothing like the privileges of Israel. All through the Acts period, the record shows that God's hands were extended in blessing and forgiveness to Israel who had just committed their climax sin in murdering their King, Saviour and Messiah. The most important statement of Peter (Acts 3:19-26) should be carefully considered here. In spite of this, Israel still refused to respond. They were indeed a disobedient and contradicting people (verse 21).

CHAPTER 11

Chapter eleven continues with God's purpose for Israel in spite of their failure and unfaithfulness. We shall see that, although this failure is written all over Israel's history, yet it was not *total failure*, for there was always a number, sometimes few, who responded to the call of God. God always saw to it that there was a faithful remnant in Israel, so that He was never without a witness in the nation.

On the surface one might think that with all Israel's unbelief and unreliability, God would cast the nation aside and find other means of carrying out His earthly kingdom purposes. But no, for chapter eleven commences:

“I ask then, did God reject His people? By no means! I am an Israelite myself, a descendant of Abraham, from the tribe of Benjamin. God did not reject His people, whom He foreknew” (Rom. 11:1,2 N.I.V.).

In fact in His foreknowledge He knew that this would happen and so He had provided for this very thing. God is never taken by surprise. He had not cast away His earthly people at this point any more than in earlier days when they failed Him. Yet there are a number who believe that Israel was cast off by God at the cross. In fact this view is very popular among evangelical expositors. How wrong they are! Such ideas cloud the mind and the purpose revealed in the Acts of the Apostles and are quite contrary to this definite statement in Romans eleven.

The apostle Paul's answer to the question is settled first of all by referring to himself. “I am”, he says, “a true Israelite”, and “God has not cast me off”, nor for that matter was this true of numbers of Jews who had responded to the Gospel after the resurrection and ascension. Later on in the chapter he is going to give the important statement concerning God and His dealings with men. In verse 29 we read “God's gifts and His call are irrevocable”. That is to say, what He gives in grace in His plan, He never withdraws or changes His mind, and upon this rock of truth there must be real future for Israel (Psa. 89:28-37), and in this context we shall be instructed how this is so.

In the days of Elijah, a time of deep national apostasy, there was a faithful remnant of 7,000 who refused to worship Baal. In the A.V. of Romans 11:2 “Wot ye not”, the word ‘wot’ is the archaic present

tense of the verb ‘to wit’:

“Don’t you know what the Scripture says in the passage about Elijah – how he appealed to God against Israel: ‘Lord, they have killed your prophets and torn down your altars; I am the only one left, and they are trying to kill me’. And what was God’s answer to him? ‘I have reserved for Myself seven thousand who have not bowed the knee to Baal’ (1 Kings 19:18). So too, at the present time there is a remnant chosen by grace. And if by grace, then it is no longer by works; if it were, grace would no longer be grace” (verses 2-6 .I.V.).

God sees to it that He always has a witness and this is an act of sheer grace on His part. As for the rest of the unbelieving nation, they came under God’s judicial penalty for their disobedience and in connection with this, three Old Testament scriptures are quoted:

“God gave them a spirit of stupor, eyes so that they could not see and ears so that they could not hear, to this very day. And David says, ‘May their table become a snare and a trap, a stumbling-block and a retribution for them. May their eyes be darkened so that they cannot see, and their backs be bent for ever’ ” (verses 8-10 N.I.V.).

The quotations are from Isaiah 29:10, Deuteronomy 29:4, and Psalm 69:22 (LXX). When Israel made it perfectly clear that they were not going to believe and obey God’s Word they then were disciplined by God and left in their darkened state. But one thing is perfectly clear. Israel did not fall so as to rise no more:

“Again I ask, did they stumble so as to fall beyond recovery? Not at all! Rather, because of their transgression, salvation has come to the Gentiles to make Israel envious. But if their transgression means riches for the world, and their loss means riches for the Gentile, how much greater riches will their fullness bring!” (verses 11 and 12 .I.V.).

These verses give the Apostle’s interpretation of the words from the Song of Moses (Deut. 32:21) already quoted in 10:19. When Israel began to see that God’s blessing was resting upon the despised Gentile and the nation’s unique position was slipping away, it might have the effect of stirring them up to belief and response. It is important to note that this is the divine reason given for the admission of the far-off Gentile for blessing. It was not to form the church revealed in Ephesians and Colossians, but to wake up slumbering Israel to realise what they were losing. Paul’s argument is that if through the failure of the chosen people of Israel great blessing has resulted for the Gentiles, how much more blessing will come when

Israel are converted and at God's disposal again! It will be like resurrection life to a dead world! The Apostle uses the word *pleroma*, translated fulness. It means "full strength" or "complement".

He continues:

"If part of the dough offered as firstfruits is holy, then the whole batch is holy: if the root is holy, so are the branches" (verse 16 N.I.V.).

Paul uses two figures here. The former is an allusion to Numbers 15:20. He regards the faithful Jewish remnant as a pledge of the final salvation of all Israel. The second is likened to a tree where the condition of the root vitally affects the branches and this leads Paul to develop his parable of the olive tree which has given such difficulty to expositors. One thing should be evident; it must be interpreted strictly with the context in view and any attempt to avoid this or go over its bounds must be resisted, otherwise we shall only be misled.

Coming therefore to the parable of the olive tree, we must remind ourselves that the Israel of chapter eleven must be the same as the Israel of chapter nine. An exegesis that makes Israel the literal nation in the ninth chapter and then changes it by spiritualising into another people when one reaches the chapter we are dealing with is not acceptable. We must also get quite clear in our minds what grafting into Israel actually means.

Is this only another way of expressing the salvation of Gentiles, or is more than this intended? Let us give Paul's words:

"If some of the branches have been broken off, and you, though a wild olive shoot, have been grafted in among the others and now share in the nourishing sap from the olive root, do not boast over those branches. If you do, consider this: you do not support the root, but the root supports you. You will say then, 'branches were broken off so that I could be grafted in'. Granted. But they were broken off because of unbelief, and you stand by faith. Do not be arrogant, but be afraid. For if God did not spare the natural branches, He will not spare you either" (verses 17-21 N.I.V.).

We may ask ourselves, why does the Apostle introduce the theme of the olive tree at this point? We may be sure of one thing, he did not do so to introduce theological argument. He has been showing the purpose of the Lord in introducing Gentile believers was to "provoke" Israel to emulation. This "provocation" is the theme of this

context and its object was to stir the nation up spiritually, to make them realise what they were losing through unbelief. This is the real reason for the figure of the olive and its grafts and to miss this is to miss the whole point of the parable. It should be obvious, after the clear teaching of chapter eight, that no Gentile could be justified or saved by being placed in the position forfeited by one of the natural branches of the olive tree. Chapter eight has stressed that no believer who is justified by faith can ever be separated from the love of God, or can ever be condemned and lose eternal life, so the threat of excision in Romans 11:22 cannot refer to this, otherwise we have absolute contradiction.

Firstly, let us get the Scriptural answer as to what the olive tree represents. The Apostle quotes Jeremiah in this chapter and it is this prophet who gives us the clue. In chapters 11 and 12 we read:

“The Lord thy God called thy name, *a green olive tree*, fair, and of goodly fruit . . . the branches of it are broken” (Jer. 11:16).

“But if they will not obey, I will utterly pluck up and destroy that nation, saith the Lord” (Jer. 12:17).

The broken branches are very much like the olive tree of Romans 11. Yet we must not misread these verses into thinking this would be the end of the nation, for the prophet makes it abundantly clear that Israel will be preserved *as a nation* for ever under the terms of the New Covenant of grace (Jer. 31:33-37). God says:

“If those ordinances (the sun by day and the moon and stars by night) depart from before Me, saith the Lord, then the seed of Israel also shall cease from being a nation before Me for ever. Thus saith the Lord; if heaven above can be measured, and the foundations of the earth searched out beneath, I will also cast off all the seed of Israel for all that they have done, saith the Lord” (Jer. 31:36,37).

Israel then represent the olive tree of Romans 11 and the branches that were broken off were the unbelieving among Israel. The remaining branches were the faithful elect remnant, and when the unbelieving Israel had been “broken off” the believing Gentile had been “grafted in”, although Paul describes this as “contrary to nature” for normally, in grafting, the choice is grafted on to the wild and not vice versa. There are critics who say that Paul’s knowledge of gardening was minimal but Paul had a contemporary, Columella, who wrote that when an olive tree ceases to bear well, a wild olive slip grafted in

gives new vigour to the tree.* So perhaps he was not so ignorant as these critics think. Sir William Ramsay states that it was customary in Palestine 60 years ago to re-invigorate an olive tree which was ceasing to bear fruit, by grafting it with a shoot of the wild olive, “so that the sap of the tree ennobles this wild shoot and the tree now again begins to bear fruit” (*Pauline and Other Studies*, p.223). But what does the apostle Paul mean by stating this was “contrary to nature”?

We must remember that it was God’s purpose that the Gentile should be blessed through Israel, and not the other way round. This is clear in the first great promise to Abraham, “in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed” (Gen. 12:3). But when we reach the period covered by the Acts of the Apostles, through Israel’s repeated failures and disobedience, this abnormal condition of things caused God to reverse the process and bless the Gentile “before the time” as it were, and so seek to stimulate the nation that was so rapidly declining into apostasy and darkness.

“The root and fatness of the olive tree” belonged to Israel and if Israel had repented there would have been no need for Gentile grafting, but the nation could have gone on to accomplish what had always been God’s will for them and take the knowledge of Himself to the ends of the earth. Gentile blessing would have *followed* the repentance of Israel and not been a human factor in its accomplishment.

What does the “root and fatness of the olive tree” represent? It cannot be just salvation or justification by faith for, as we have seen, no one is justified by his works or by being joined with another nation, and cannot be “cut off” from this; for Romans 8 stresses that such separation is impossible (Rom. 8:35-39). Paul has already described in detail what the “root and fatness of the olive tree” represents. This he gives at the opening of this section of the epistle in chapter 9:3-5, listing the tremendous national blessings that God had bestowed on Israel in His plan for the establishment of His kingdom on earth. It gave them a unique position over the nations, so much so that Psalm 147:20 asserts that God had not dealt so with any nation in bestowing on them such privileges and blessings relating to adoption (the position of the heir), the glory of God, the many

*Columella. *De re rustica*, v.9.

covenants wherein God's purpose was so clearly revealed, the giving and guidance of the law, the great privilege of service, the many vital promises relating to the will of God for them, and then the greatest Gift of all, their Messiah, Saviour and King, the Lord Jesus Christ.

These were the tremendous and unique blessings which God had showered on Israel, concerning which the Old Testament is so full. It was these great blessings into which the Gentile believer was grafted in to share, and it was *from these that he could be "cut off"* if he acted in a high-handed way like most of Israel had done. Gentile nations cannot be in view in Romans 11, for such cannot be addressed as "brethren", neither do they stand "by faith" (Rom. 11:20).

Once this is seen there is no problem about being cut off from salvation, and in order to show that this cannot be true, Paul concludes by teaching that the One Who had broken the natural branches off through their unbelief was able and willing to graft them in again, in other words, *to restore them* once more to the position He wills for them in His earthly purpose, for their blindness is only temporary "until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in" (11:25).

There were several excisions of the branches of Israel between Matthew 13 and Acts 28; what happened at Antioch and Corinth being two of them (Acts 13:45-47; 19:8,9) for the record makes perfectly clear that the opposition to Paul came continually from the Jews, not the Gentiles, who often received the gospel gladly. The "hope of Israel" dominates the Acts and obviously was related to the twelve tribes (Acts 26:6,7). What would happen to the olive tree if the grafting in of Gentile believers failed is not revealed in Romans. Now that we have the light of all Scripture, we know that unbelieving Israel were to be "plucked up" and "scattered" to the ends of the earth as the Old Testament had repeatedly warned them, yet had so clearly spoken of their ultimate restoration and gathering back to the land of promise because of God's grace and His unconditional promises to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and David. Israel's blindness or hardness was a mystery (secret, verse 25) for although the Old Testament revealed the nation's laying aside in unbelief there was no revelation of the length of time this would last. Thus it is that Paul ends his parable of the olive tree by stressing this great goal of God for the nation. The One Who has disciplined them and scattered them is the One Who will gather them (Jer. 31:10).

The Old Testament prophets give ample evidence of this (see Isa. 43:5-7; Jer. 24:6,7; Ezek. 20:41,42; 28:25,26; Amos 9:13-15; Micah 4:1-8; Zeph. 3:19,20). * The day is coming when the Redeemer shall come to Zion (Isa. 59:20; Rom. 11:26) and Israel shall be restored and enter into the fulness of God's purpose for them:

“The nation and kingdom that will not serve thee (Israel) shall perish, yea, those nations shall be utterly wasted” (Isa. 60:12).

“But ye (Israel) shall be named the Priests of the Lord: men shall call you Ministers of our God: ye shall eat the riches of the Gentiles” (Isa. 61:6).

The Redeemer's coming to Zion relates to His second coming. At no other time can the glories of these prophecies be fulfilled – certainly not by any activities of men, Christian or otherwise. The olive tree was a parable of truth that fitted the Israel of the Acts period. This is its divine setting; but to pull it out and try to make it fit the church today is to attempt the impossible if the details of holy Scripture are carefully followed.

The olive tree cannot represent the Israel of today, for since Acts 28 their blinded condition, through God's judgment, is the very negation of the New Covenant, which relates to a new heart implanted by the Lord to keep His Truth. In no sense can a believer be grafted into the hardened Israel of today. Neither can the olive tree be linked with any of the denominations of Christendom, for if this was true, it would follow that the denomination concerned would, according to Romans 11, receive back the broken-off branches of Israel, which is impossible.

It has been objected that in Romans 11 Paul says nothing about the restoration of an earthly Davidic kingdom, or about natural reinstatement in the land of Israel. But why should he? Had he done so it would have turned the Roman epistle into a lengthy treatise and strayed away from his great subject, justification by faith. The restoration of the nation of Israel has been given in great detail in the Old Testament, and no Jew needed this.

If the view of God's kingdom in the New Testament is completely different from that presented in the Old Testament, then it was

*The reader is recommended to the author's *The Kingdom of God in Heaven and on Earth*, pp.58-66, where this is discussed in detail.

incumbent on the New Testament to make this perfectly clear. But we find no such statement in the Gospels (where we would expect it) nor anywhere else. The olive tree cannot be an illustration of the church which is the Body of Christ, for this church consists of a new creation taken from both Jew and Gentile (Eph. 2:11-16) and blessed in perfect equality in the sphere of the highest heavens and seen to be enthroned there in Christ (Eph. 2:6), and its members are urged to set their minds there and not on things on the earth (Col. 3:1,2), for there is where our heavenly citizenship exists (Phil. 3:20). The olive tree, as we have seen, represents the nation of Israel and in it the Jew still has priority (Rom. 11:18) and this cannot be a fit illustration of a company where the Jew nationally does not exist and its blessing placed in an exalted sphere where Christ now reigns in the highest heavens.

The apostle Paul now ends this section with a doxology:

“O, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and the knowledge of God! How unsearchable His judgments, and His paths beyond tracing out! Who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been His counsellor? Who has ever given to God that God should repay him? For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory for ever! Amen” (verses 33-36 N.I.V.).

The matchless wisdom, knowledge and judgments of God are untraceable by man unless they are revealed, yet they all contribute to the carrying out and fulfilment of His great redemptive plan which will come to a glorious conclusion in spite of Satan and all human failure.

CHAPTER 12

Chapter 12 begins the practical section of the epistle. To the apostle Paul doctrine alone was not sufficient. God's teaching always brings responsibility. Consequently we find in Paul's epistles doctrine balanced by practice. It could be said concerning all doctrine, "If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them" (John 13:17). Everyone who rejoices in the truth of justification by faith must be concerned about his practical response, and in these last chapters of Romans we find guidance concerning our daily lives. Our concern should be that of the Psalmist when he said "What shall I render unto the Lord for all His benefits towards me?" (Psa. 116:12). It is significant that Paul not only talks about faith, but the *obedience* of faith, and it is to this that true faith always leads.

Romans 12:1 reads:

"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service".

Christian scholars have noticed the resemblance in this section with some of the statements of the Sermon on the Mount, but this should cause no surprise when we remember that sometimes the Lord is giving basic teaching that applies to all men at all times, whatever their differences in birth and upbringing.

The "mercies of God" are given here in Romans as the compelling reason as to why we should now yield ourselves back to Him, so there is a depth here which can easily be missed. Surely the Apostle uses this term to cover and sum up all the tremendous teaching of chapters 1 to 11. Because of all this, there can only be one suitable response by the believer, and that is to "yield" (same word as 6:13,19) his body to the Lord, which is equivalent to yielding himself. This is a "sacrifice", but not one of outward ritual. Modern translations render "your reasonable service" of the A.V. as "your spiritual worship". *Latreia* has already occurred in 9:4 where it is translated "service"; the verbal form occurs in Philippians 3:3 and is there rendered "worship" in the A.V. *logikos* can mean "reasonable" or "spiritual". It is perfectly true to say that the believer's service is the only reasonable response to God's infinite grace. It is equally true that it is "spiritual worship" in contrast with the externalities of

Israel's temple ritual. It is the response of the believer's inward being rather than outward rites. This widens our view of worship which is too often confined to regular attendance at a church building.

This logical service or spiritual worship leads on to the next verse:

“And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God” (verse 2).

The word “world” is *aion*, age. While this age is full of the exploits of man and his considerable attainments, yet the word of God reminds us that it is “evil” (Gal. 1:4). It is dominated by the “god of this age” who blinds the mind (2 Cor. 4:4), in consequence of which Christ is still rejected. To be conformed to this age is therefore dangerous and always to be avoided by the believer. In contrast he should be “transformed”. This word *metamorphoo* is translated “transfigure” in the Gospel records, and this transfiguration comes about through the work of the Holy Spirit. In 2 Corinthians 3:18 we have believers being “changed” into the likeness of Christ from one degree of glory to another by the work of “the Lord Who is the Spirit” (N.I.V.). The mind is far from being continually good; it must be constantly “renewed”. Without this it would be impossible to test and approve what the will of God is. It is always good and perfect coming from Him, but is it always acceptable to us? It is only so when we are prepared to submit our will to His. The renewed mind constantly needs divine instruction, hence the detailed advice and guidance in the following chapters of the epistle.

The Apostle now deals not only with diversities of personalities, but diversities of gifts, yet insists that all should co-operate for the good of the witness as a whole. He once more uses the illustration of a human body as He had already done when writing to the Corinthian church. Each member of the human body has its own particular work to perform, yet all parts work together harmoniously otherwise good health would be impossible. In the same way, an assembly of God's people should function together in love and harmony.

“For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith” (Rom. 12:3).

The Apostle gives the ground for his authority, the grace and power God had bestowed on him for the teaching and building up of the churches (cp. 2 Cor. 13:10). He starts by warning against pride and self-esteem which would lead to some imagining themselves to be superior to others. God had given each a measure of faith and this word is used in a somewhat different sense from that which it has in the rest of the epistle. Here, it refers to the spiritual power which each believer had received for the discharge of his special responsibility.

Although this responsibility is stressed, yet all must work in harmony, for they were “one body IN Christ” (verse 5). The phrase, the Body of Christ does not occur in the epistle to the Romans. The word body to describe a group of people was of common occurrence in early times.

“The metaphor of the body, used to describe a group of men who have common interests and activities, was not infrequent in antiquity. An example often quoted is the speech put by Livy (2:32) into the mouth of Menenius Agrippa on the occasion of the secession of the Roman *plebs*. Senate and people, Agrippa argued, could no more dispense with each other than stomach and limbs; they formed a unity within one body” (C.K. Barrett, *The Epistle to the Romans*, p. 236).

Professor F. F. Bruce writes:

“In 1 Corinthians and Romans the human body is used simply as an illustration of the corporate life of Christians, but the idea is carried much farther in Colossians and Ephesians. In these later epistles emphasis is laid on the relation which the church, as the Body, bears to Christ as the Head. In them there is no possibility for an ordinary member of the church being compared to the Head, or to part of the Head (as is done in 1 Cor. 12:16,21). In them, too, the Body ceases to be a mere simile, and becomes the most effective term which the Apostle can find to express the vital bond which unites the life of believers with the risen life of Christ” (*Romans*, p. 228).

It is vital that we understand this and do not try to force the later teaching concerning the great revelation of the Mystery (Secret) of Ephesians and Colossians into these earlier epistles.

The apostle Paul continues by bringing forward seven of the Pentecostal gifts:

“We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. If a man’s gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith. If it is serving, let him serve; if it is teaching, let him teach; if it is encouraging, let him encourage; if it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously; if it is leadership, let him govern diligently; if it is showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully” (verses 6-8 N.I.V.).

The N.E.B. renders the last phrase “if you are helping others in distress”, which gives the sense of the words used. The Apostle had already dealt with these confirmatory gifts in the first canonical letter to the church at Corinth. The reader is referred to the author’s *The Early & Pastoral Epistles of Paul*, chapters 12 to 14, where they are dealt with in detail, specially the gift of tongues.

At verse 9 there is a transition from faith to love, and verse 12 mentions hope. Faith, hope, and love are often seen together in Paul’s epistles. They are a trinity of graces that cover the Christian walk so admirably. In this section the injunctions are reminiscent of the Sermon on the Mount. Something more than the mutual love of Christians is required, namely practical love and forgiveness to those outside the fellowship, specially to those who persecute and injure them. It is noteworthy that whenever God wants truth carried over into another dispensation, He repeats it. It is not left to us to pull texts out of their context, because we feel they are of practical importance.

We continue with this section of the epistle as rendered in the N.I.V.

“Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honour one another above yourselves. Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervour, serving the Lord. Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. Share with God’s people who are in need. Practise hospitality. Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn. Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited. Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody. If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone” (verses 9-18).

These verses cover a wide field of Christian practice touching the order and conduct of church life and for the most part are direct and clear. We comment on each verse. Verse 9: Love must be literally

“without hypocrisy”. It must be absolutely sincere and not “put on”. Verse 10: Others must be counted as better than themselves. Here we have the spirit of Philippians 2:3, “in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves”. Verse 11: “Fervent in Spirit”. This expression is used of Apollos in Acts 18:25. It is difficult to decide whether the word “spirit” should have a capital and refer to the Holy Spirit or a small ‘s’ referring to the believer. Probably the former is correct. The Revised Standard Version renders it “be aglow with the Spirit”. Verse 12: Hope is the sure fulfilment of faith and so should surely produce lasting joy. Affliction should be patiently endured and there must be perseverance in prayer.

Romans 12:14-21

Verse 14. Here the Apostle echoes the Sermon on the Mount. Compare Luke 6:28, “Bless them that curse you, and pray for them which despitefully use you”, and also Matthew 5:44 “Love your enemies... and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you”. Verse 15. An exhortation to show true sympathy with others, so avoiding being self-centred. Verse 16. “Be of the same mind one toward another”. This is like Philippians 2:2 “to be like-minded”, which is ensured when each one has “the mind of Christ” as explained in the verses that follow. Verse 16. “Mind not high things”: this is repeated from chapter 11:20 where we read “Be not highminded”, and this is a warning against conceit and “men of low estate”, that is, “humble folk” should not be avoided. Verse 17. Again, a reference to the Sermon on the Mount. The second sentence in this verse is a quotation from Proverbs 3:4 (LXX) and is an exhortation to lead an honest life before all men. Verse 18. This, again, reflects the teaching of the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5:9). Verse 19 is a warning against taking revenge. There is only one Person Who can do this righteously and that is God. No one has a right to imagine that his own revengeful feelings will carry out the will of God. Paul is quoting here from Deuteronomy 32:35. The meaning here being that if an enemy is treated kindly, it may make him ashamed and repentant and become a friend, so “overcoming evil with good” (see verse 21).

CHAPTER 13

Chapter 13 commences a new section dealing with the relation of believers to the ruling powers. Attempts have been made to confine the meaning of “powers” to those in authority in the churches, but this is not a satisfactory exposition of the passage as a whole. The believer’s attitude to authority was one of extreme importance. The position of Jews in the Roman empire was regulated by a number of imperial edicts. They enjoyed many privileges, for their religion was registered as a lawful one, *religio licita*, and these included the sabbath law, food regulations, and the prohibition of graven images.

After the death of Christ, Roman law tended to regard Christianity as a variety of Judaism, yet it started with a great handicap in the eyes of Rome for its Founder had been convicted and executed by the sentence of a Roman magistrate. He had led a movement which apparently challenged the authority of Caesar.

This was often a trump card with the enemies of Christ (see the argument in Acts 17:6,7 against Paul). It was therefore necessary that Christians should take care with regard to their actions as they affected the governing authorities. The Lord Jesus Himself – in His wisdom – had already done so in His words “Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar’s; and unto God the things that are God’s” (Matt. 22:21). These words related to the paying of taxes while God Himself ordained human government, and Proverbs 21:1 assures us that “the king’s heart is in the hand of the Lord, as the rivers of water: He turneth it whithersoever He will”, yet we must not assume that human government constantly reflects the mind of God. The opposite is the truth and cries out for the return of Christ and the commencement of His righteous rule which will give justice to all. Yet with all its imperfections it is better than anarchy, which would arise if there was no restraint on human behaviour.

But another problem follows: what if human government is contrary to God and His laws? What if Caesar claims not only things that are his, but the things that belong to God? The New Testament provides the answer. If the decrees of authorities conflict with the commandments of God, then the Christian must refuse to comply with them. The ruling powers are then exceeding the authority delegated to them by God and trespassing on the sphere that belongs to God alone. Thus we have the answer of the apostles in Acts 5:29 “we

ought to obey God rather than men". This problem becomes acute in totalitarian countries. Yet it is significant that Peter echoes the words of Paul that the normal attitude of Christians to governments is one of obedience:

"Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every authority instituted among men; whether to the king, as the supreme authority, or to governors, who are sent by him to punish those who do wrong and to commend those who do right. For it is God's will that by doing good you should silence the ignorant talk of foolish men" (1 Pet. 2:13,14 N.I.V.).

Thus it is that Paul commences the 13th chapter of Romans by writing:

"Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God" (Rom. 13:1 N.I.V.).

Thus, in the providence of God, He has provided for everyone civil rulers as a restraint against uncontrolled sin and failure, just as He has provided them with sun and rain. The obedience of this verse is only within the limits of the purposes for which it has been divinely instituted and cannot override the obedience which is due to God alone.

The Apostle continues:

"Consequently, he who rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves. For rulers hold no terror for those who do right, but for those who do wrong. Do you want to be free from fear of the one in authority? Then do what is right and he will commend you. For he is God's servant to do you good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword for nothing. He is God's servant, an agent of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer. Therefore, it is necessary to submit to the authorities, not only because of possible punishment but also because of conscience" (verses 2-5 N.I.V.).

The teaching of these verses is perfectly clear. The person whose conscience and actions are right, has nothing to fear. The opposite is true for the wrongdoer. "Bearing the sword" can only mean capital punishment and moreover shows that the authorities must be civil powers and cannot refer to angels, which some have taught: nor is any problem felt with the Christian way of love. Those who have are confusing *the preservation* of mankind with *the salvation* of mankind

(which many do these days). The authority of human rule is to protect from evil, but in no sense is this a spiritual work, doing away with the need of salvation which has grace and love at its root.

The submission to authorities includes the paying of taxes:

“This is also why you pay taxes, for the authorities are God’s servants, who give their full time to governing. Give everyone what you owe him; if you owe taxes, pay taxes; if revenue, then revenue; if respect, then respect; if honour, then honour” (verses 6,7 N.I.V.).

No one enjoys paying taxes. Most think this is to be avoided as far as possible, yet we remember that the Son of God did not consider Himself to be free from this duty (Matt. 17:24-27). Moreover He gave the injunction, as we have seen, to “render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s” (Mark 12:14-17), and the paying of taxes once again proves that we are not dealing with angels or spiritual powers, but with human beings.

Having dealt with the relation of the believer to the State, the Apostle continues his theme of Christian practice by returning to the all-inclusive command of love:

“Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for he who loves his fellow man has fulfilled the law. The commandments, ‘do not commit adultery’ (Exod. 20:14), ‘do not murder’ (Exod. 20:13), ‘do not steal’ (Exod. 20:15), ‘do not covet’ (Exod. 20:17), and whatever other commandment there may be, are summed up in this one rule: ‘love your neighbour as yourself’. Love does no harm to its neighbour. Therefore love is the fulfilment of the law” (verses 8-10 N.I.V.).

Here Paul gets to the very heart of the law of God given through Moses. It is really perfect love in action. The first five commandments deal with our love to God, and the second five our love to our neighbour. The problem is that man, by becoming a sinner, cannot love properly in the sense that God uses the term. The word becomes besmirched with uncleanness, selfishness and sentimentality. The word “fulfilment” is the important word *pleroma*, often rendered “fulness” (see 11:12,25; 15:29).

We must not imagine that the Apostle is teaching that a believer in loving fulfils the law and therefore does not need salvation or justification. One breach alone of the law is sufficient to come under its

condemnation, as this epistle and Galatians clearly testify, and the Apostle here is certainly not contradicting himself.

Dr. C.K. Barrett writes:

“Love is not the *completion* but the *performance* of the law. Verse 9 shows that by the law Paul means the Old Testament law in its preceptual character. Love fulfils all the negative and positive commandments inclusively, from Leviticus 19:18 downwards. When Paul says this, however, he is not instituting a new, though simplified, legalism. He does not say that a man is justified by fulfilling the law through love, rather he is pointing out the ethical expression of the true meaning of the law, which, when rightly understood, itself points the way of faith which expresses itself in love (Gal. 5:6) . . . it is not a means of salvation, but the ethical channel through which the new life in Christ Jesus flows” (*The Epistle to the Romans*, p. 251).

The next practical section of the epistle is coloured by the nearness of the end of the age which culminates in the Second Advent of Christ:

“And do this, understanding the present time. The hour has come for you to wake up from your slumber, because our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed. The night is nearly over; the day is almost here. So let us put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armour of light. Let us behave decently, as in the daytime, not in orgies of drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and debauchery, not in dissension and jealousy. Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature” (verses 11-14 N.I.V.).

We must never forget that Romans is an Acts period epistle when the Second Advent of Christ was a glorious possibility according to the divine offer of forgiveness to Israel and the promise to send back the Lord Jesus Christ if only the nation would turn back to God and repent (Acts 3:19-26). It is significant that all the epistles written during this time mention the nearness of the Lord's Second Coming as the hope of the churches. For further details the reader is referred to *The Unfolding Purpose of God* by the author, pp. 42-44.

CHAPTER 14

The next section in this epistle relates to the duties of one Christian to another, bearing in mind that all had not attained to the same level of spiritual growth. There were those who were “strong” and those who were “weak” in the faith, and their attitude to food and the religious observance of certain days was not the same. The Jew would be scrupulous concerning meat, which had for him to be slaughtered according to Old Testament rules, otherwise he would abstain. The Gentile would not be so particular. Some would insist certain religious days should be observed. Others might think this was not important. Believers at this time needed some advice as to their behaviour to each other, and the Apostle gives this:

“Accept him whose faith is weak, without passing judgment on disputable matters. One man’s faith allows him to eat everything, but another man, whose faith is weak, eats only vegetables. The man who eats everything must not look down on him who does not, and the man who does not eat everything must not condemn the man who does, for God has accepted him. Who are you to judge someone else’s servant? To his own master he stands or falls. And he will stand, for the Lord is able to make him stand” (Rom. 14:1-4 N.I.V.).

It is not for one believer to judge or criticise another. Once again we are reminded of the Sermon on the Mount, the Lord’s “judge not, that ye be not judged” (Matt. 7:1,2).

The habit of criticising others is a sin that is very prevalent among Christians, who seem to act as though they had a divine right to do this. The act of one sinner criticising another sinner is absurd and unedifying, and the Apostle’s conclusion is given in verse 13, “Let us not therefore judge one another any more”. What we can do is to “judge ourselves”, which may not be so pleasant, and if we “would judge ourselves, we should not be judged” (1 Cor. 11:31).

“One man considers one day more sacred than another; another man considers every day alike. Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind. He who regards one day as special, does so to the Lord. He who eats meat, eats to the Lord, for he gives thanks to God; and he who abstains, does so to the Lord and gives thanks to God. For none of us lives to himself alone and none of us dies to himself alone. If we live, we live to the Lord; and if we die, we die to the Lord. So, whether we live or die, we

belong to the Lord.

For this very reason, Christ died and returned to life so that He might be the Lord of both the dead and the living. You, then, why do you judge your brother? Or why do you look down on your brother? For we will all stand before God's judgment seat. It is written:

'As surely as I live', says the Lord,
'Every knee will bow before Me;
every tongue will confess to God'.

So then, each of us will give an account of himself to God" (verses 5-12 N.I.V.).

In verse 7 Paul is not just teaching that our actions affect our fellowmen with whom we come into contact, but that *we live in relation to God*, and are accountable in our actions to Him *as Lord*. This makes our relationship to each other important, for finally we have to answer to Him for this, as well as all other aspects of our witness day by day. This final interview no Christian will escape. We must *all* give an account of ourselves to God (verse 12). "The Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son" (John 5:22). It is He Who is "the righteous Judge" (2 Tim. 4:8); He it is Who is the *Lord* of both the dead and the living (Rom. 14:9), and to stress the solemnity of His judgment-seat the Apostle quotes from Isaiah 45, and the One Who speaks here declares "I am the Lord, and there is none else" (Isa. 45:18); "a just God and a Saviour; there is none beside Me" (Isa. 45:21). Without hesitation Paul applies this Scripture *to Christ*. The judgment seat of Christ is the *judgment seat of God* (Rom. 14:10). In Philippians 2 the Apostle, quoting the same context from Isaiah 45, applies it to Christ, and if Christ is not God then words have no meaning at all. Yet there are those who declare that the apostle Paul did not teach the deity of Christ! Those who make such statements must be very ignorant of his witness. "Every one of us shall give account of himself to God" (verse 12), and that is the One Who has been "manifest in the flesh".

The problems concerning "food" and "days" were very real in the early days of Christianity, and the fact that the Lord Jesus had abrogated the food laws of the Old Testament by pronouncing all kinds of food to be "clean" (Mark 7:18,19) seems to have been little understood at the beginning. Peter needed a special vision from God at Joppa to realise that he was not to count as unclean what God had cleansed, so that he could conscientiously visit the Gentile Cornelius

and accept his hospitality, and it is significant that shortly afterwards, when the Council of Jerusalem agreed that Gentiles could be admitted to fellowship on the basis of faith in Christ, a regulation was made that Gentile converts should abstain from foods which were still abhorrent to Jewish brethren and conform to their Old Testament food laws (Acts 15:20,29). In other words, while the Apostle taught the freedom of Christians in Christ, yet voluntary limits should be placed on this freedom, in order to avoid strife and disunity. This was not to be regarded as bondage, but a practical expression of love and concern for someone else who may be weaker in the faith.

Consequently, in the next section of Romans, this is stressed:

“Therefore let us stop passing judgment on one another. Instead, make up your mind not to put any stumbling-block or obstacle in your brother’s way. As one who is in the Lord Jesus, I am fully convinced that no food is unclean in itself. But if anyone regards something as unclean, then for him it is unclean. If your brother is distressed because of what you eat, you are no longer acting in love. Do not by your eating destroy your brother for whom Christ died. Do not allow what you consider good to be spoken of as evil. For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit, because anyone who serves Christ in this way is pleasing to God and approved by men.

Let us therefore make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification. Do not destroy the work of God for the sake of food. All food is clean, but it is wrong for a man to eat anything that causes someone else to stumble. It is better not to eat meat or drink wine or to do anything else that will cause your brother to fall” (verses 13-21 N.I.V.).

The drift of this long section then is clear. The “strong” must not flaunt their liberty before weaker Christians and upset them. These problems were bound to arise at Rome as they had done at Corinth, where the Apostle gave guidance in 1 Corinthians relating to meat offered to idols. Those who were more mature should be prepared to restrict their liberty in the interests of others who were not so advanced. Only in this way would practical love and consideration prevail, and the unity between believers be maintained.

In this respect the Apostle had set an example himself. He said, “For though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more” (1 Cor. 9:19). He was always wil-

ling to restrict his liberty so that others might be helped and encouraged. After all, the kingdom of God is not concerned with food and drink and other subservient matters, but the really important things as “righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit” (verse 17).

To sum up, let us repeat verse 13, “let us not therefore judge one another any more: but judge this rather, that no man put a stumbling-block or an occasion to fall in his brother’s way”. Note the two senses of the word “judge” (*krino* in the original). In the former clause it means “criticize”, and in the latter “decide”. As in English, the Greek word can be used for both senses.

Paul concludes the section:

“So, whatever you believe about these things keep between yourself and God. Blessed is the man who does not condemn himself by what he approves. But the man who has doubts is condemned if he eats, because his eating is not from faith; and everything that does not come from faith is sin” (verses 22,23, N.I.V.).

Here the Apostle is saying that if a person does something which makes his conscience uneasy, he is condemned at heart. The one who does it knowing that it is permissible according to the Word of God is doing right and he does it “of faith”. Whatever is not “of faith” is sin, because the action does not arise from conviction. Thus it is that the believer has the teaching of the holy Scriptures, the revelation of God’s character to exercise the Christian spirit indicated in Romans 14.

CHAPTER 15

The apostle Paul now brings forward the example of Christ Who “pleased not Himself”.

“We who are strong ought to bear with the failings of the weak and not to please ourselves. Each of us should please his neighbour for his good, to build him up. For even Christ did not please Himself but, as it is written: ‘The insults of those who insult you have fallen on Me’. For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope” (Rom. 15:1-4 N.I.V.).

To those who follow Christ’s example in practice, there can be only one result: they will aim first to please the Lord; secondly their neighbour, with the aim to edify or build him up in the truth, and thirdly they will be ready to receive all true believers without discrimination, even though they may be weak in the faith.

“May the God Who gives endurance and encouragement give you a spirit of unity among yourselves as you follow Christ Jesus, so that with one heart and mouth you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God. For I tell you that Christ has become a servant of the Jews on behalf of God’s truth, to confirm the promises made to the patriarchs so that the Gentiles may glorify God for His mercy, as it is written:

‘Therefore I will praise you among the Gentiles;
I will sing hymns to your Name’.

Again, it says,
‘Rejoice, O Gentiles, with His people’.

And again,
‘Praise the Lord, all you Gentiles,
and sing praises to Him, all you peoples’.

And again, Isaiah says,
‘The Root of Jesse will spring up,
One Who will arise to rule over the nations;
the Gentiles will hope in Him’.

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in Him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit” (verses 5-13 N.I.V.).

In Romans 14 the apostle Paul dealt with problems concerning food and religious days that had to be faced by the early churches. For the most part these problems do not exist today, although some may have a difficulty regarding days. It seems quite certain that the regulations concerning the Jewish sabbath, the seventh day of the week, could not have existed then, otherwise Paul could not have written Romans 14:5,6 or Colossians 2:15-17. It will be helpful to quote Dean Alford here. Regarding the observance of days, he says:

“He (Paul) classes the observance or non-observance of particular days, with the eating or abstaining from particular meats. In both cases he is concerned with things which he evidently treats as of *absolute indifference in themselves*. Now the question is, supposing the divine obligation of one day in seven to have been recognized by him *in any form*, could he have thus spoken? The obvious inference from his strain of arguing is, that *he knew of no such obligation*, but believed that *all times and days to be*, to the Christian strong in faith, ALIKE. I do not see how the passage can be otherwise understood. If any one day in the week were invested with the sacred character of the Sabbath, it would have been *wholly impossible* for the Apostle to commend or uphold the man who judged all days worthy of equal honour, – who, as in verse 6, paid *no regard* to the (any) day. He must have visited him with his strongest disapprobation, as violating a command of God. *I therefore infer, that sabbatical obligation to keep any day, whether seventh or first, was not recognized in apostolic times*” (*The Greek Testament*, p.452).

We must surely distinguish the commands of God contained in the Scriptures from the institutions of Christian men, and realise that the first day of the week is always so designated in the New Testament and never called the Sabbath.

It is also essential to recognise the pre-eminence of Israel in Romans. “To the Jew first” is written all over it. While, from the standpoint of sin, there was no difference between Jew and Gentile, yet from the standpoint of the earthly phase of God’s kingdom purpose, Israel is pre-eminent as the Scriptures make abundantly clear, for it was through the posterity of Abraham that all families of the earth were to be finally blessed (Genesis 12) and Paul does not depart from this, as chapters 9-11 show, as also does the context in chapter 15.

Here the Apostle brings forward four Old Testament Scriptures to prove that Gentile blessing was in the purpose of God (Psa. 18:49; Deut. 32:43; Psa. 117:1; Isa. 11:10) but always the Gentile is seen in his relationship to Israel. The Gentile was to be blessed *in, through, and with* Israel, but never independently of Israel.

It is a pity that the A.V. in quoting Isa. 11:10 uses the word “trust” in Romans 15:12 and “hope” in the next verse; it is the same word expressed as a verb and then as a noun and should be rendered “hope” in both cases, thus linking the two together and showing that the hope of the believer at this time was related to the millennial hope of Isaiah 11, looking forward to Messiah’s reign on earth at His Second Coming.*

Here, in Romans 15, the Lord Jesus is brought forward as the “minister of the circumcision (the Jew) to confirm the promises made to the fathers” (verse 8), that is Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He Himself declared to a Gentile woman in need that He was only sent to Israel (Matt. 15:24), and moreover He restricted the ministry of the Twelve to Israel (Matt. 10:5,6). All this is incomprehensible to those who have no Scriptural insight into the earthly kingdom purposes of God in which Israel is at the centre from the human standpoint. But the message was not to Israel exclusively. It was rather that through Israel all the Gentile world would finally be blessed. As we have seen when considering chapters 9-11, Israel had not been laid aside by God and Acts 3:19-26 was still possible of fulfilment, and the hope at this time was that it would be fulfilled, that the Lord would return and set up His kingdom of righteousness and peace. Then Deuteronomy 32:43, as quoted here by Paul would become true, “Rejoice ye Gentiles (nations) with His people (Israel)”. This would be specially so when at last “all families of the earth” would be blessed through Abraham’s posterity (Gen.12).

The Apostle now contemplates the plan of God as it affected himself:

“I have written to you quite boldly on some points, as if to remind you of them again, because of the grace God gave me to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles with the priestly duty of proclaiming the

*This aspect of the kingdom of God is dealt with in the author’s *The Kingdom of God in Heaven and on Earth* (The Berean Publishing Trust).

gospel of God, so that the Gentiles might become an offering acceptable to God, sanctified by the Holy Spirit. Therefore I glory in Christ Jesus in my service to God. I will not venture to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me in leading the Gentiles to obey God by what I have said and done – by the power of signs and miracles, through the power of the Spirit. So from Jerusalem all the way around to Illyricum, I have fully proclaimed the gospel of Christ. It has always been my ambition to preach the gospel where Christ was not known, so that I would not be building on someone else's foundation. Rather as it is written:

‘Those who were not told about Him will see,
and those who have not heard will understand (Isa. 52:15 LXX)’
(Rom. 15:15-21 N.I.V.)”.

It was in his Christ-given capacity as the Apostle of the Gentiles that he had written to the believers at Rome. The other Apostles, led by Peter, had been sent by Christ to the circumcision, Israel (Gal. 2). Paul had faithfully discharged his Gentile ministry for well over 20 years. The words that he used (such as *leitourgos* and *leitourgei*) always denote religious service in the N.T. How many professing Christians realise that Christ-directed service is worship? The sphere his gospel ministry had covered began at Antioch and had taken him round the eastern end of the Mediterranean to the Adriatic sea. The Acts does not mention the Roman province of Illyricum nor any of Paul's epistles up to this time. From Macedonia the *Via Egnatia* crossed the Balkans to the coast of the Adriatic and it is possible that Paul had traversed this as far as Illyricum. At this point he could say that he had completed the preaching of the gospel of Christ (see the N.E.B.) and this was confirmed by the evidential miracles which abounded in the Acts period. He does not mean by this that every individual had heard the gospel, but that he had preached it in every province in that part of the Gentile world and so fulfilled his ministry in that region. He tells us that he avoided building on someone else's foundation, and his aim was not to avoid treading on someone's toes, but to cover as wide an area as possible for the truth of God. This he had done at the eastern end of the Mediterranean. What remained for his ministry? There was left the north coast of Africa, Gaul and Spain. Paul makes no mention of Africa, though this was doubtless in his mind. He does express his intention of visiting Spain, probably taking in Gaul on the way.

“But now that there is no more place for me to work in these regions, and since I have been longing for many years to see you, I plan to do so

when I go to Spain. I hope to visit you while passing through and to have you assist me on my journey there, after I have enjoyed your company for a while" (Rom. 15:23,24 N.I.V.).

Did the Apostle ever reach Spain? There is no further reference to Spain in the New Testament, nor certain evidence that he did so, but it was not impossible. However, he had a more immediate task. He was concerned to organise a collection from the Gentile churches for the poor saints living at Jerusalem. This not only recognised the indebtedness of the Gentile churches to the mother church, but it also helped to cement the bond between the Jerusalem believers and the churches of the Gentiles. It was a practical expression of brotherly love.

At the same time Paul realised that the stricter brethren at Jerusalem looked on his Gentile ministry with suspicion and he therefore had misgivings as to the sort of reception he would receive from them:

"Now, however, I am on my way to Jerusalem in the service of the saints there. For Macedonia and Achaia were pleased to make a contribution for the poor among the saints in Jerusalem. They were pleased to do it, and indeed they owe it to them. For if the Gentiles have shared in the Jews' spiritual blessings, they owe it to the Jews to share with them their material blessings. So after I have completed this task and have made sure that they have received this fruit, I will go to Spain and visit you on the way. I know that when I come to you, I will come in the full measure of the blessing of Christ. I urge you, brothers, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, to join me in my struggle by praying to God for me. Pray that I may be rescued from the unbelievers in Judaea and that my service in Jerusalem may be acceptable to the saints there, so that by God's will I may come to you with joy and together with you be refreshed. The God of peace be with you all. Amen" (15:25-33 N.I.V.).

This collection for Jerusalem was not an innovation on Paul's part, for eleven years previously Barnabas and he had brought a similar gift from believers at Antioch in Syria to the church at Jerusalem in a period of famine (Acts 11:30; 12:25). At that time the Jerusalem leaders could add nothing to Paul's ministry in the way of instruction, but advised him to "remember the poor", which, the Apostle tells us, he was ready to do (Gal. 2:10). The details of this collection are found in 1 Corinthians 16:1-4; 2 Corinthians 8:4; 9:1,12, and while this was the recognition of a debt, it was a moral one, not a legal one.

Paul ends this section of the epistle, and one edition of the epistle ends here. There are five doxologies, or benedictions, in the Authorised Version (15:13; 15:33; 16:20; 16:24; 16:25-27). In each of these God or Christ is besought to do something for the readers. For those who want full details we refer them to the works of Professor F.F. Bruce, Dr. C.K. Barrett and other scholars. It is only with the last doxology (16:25-27) that doctrine is affected. It is found in various places in the ancient manuscripts. The Alexandrian textual family, and the Manuscript D from the Western textual family have it at the end of chapter 16. Some manuscripts place it after 14:23. A few put it both after 14:23 and at 16:25-27. One of them (G) omits it altogether. The papyrus manuscript P46 puts it after 15:33.

There may be several reasons for this. Origen, in his commentary on Romans, declares that the heretic, Marcion, (A.D. 138-150) cut away all of the epistle from 14:23 to the end. His followers would produce copies ending at this point. It has been suggested that other Christians shortened the end of the epistle when it was circulated to other churches. Whatever the reasons, we can be thankful that we have the complete epistle today.

Chapter 16 consists mainly of personal greetings and a short section of warning and encouragement. The greetings are addressed to 26 individuals and 5 households. On the surface it seems improbable that he knew so many people in a city he had never visited. Dr. C.K. Barrett comments:

“The view has often been maintained (on grounds partly textual) that 16:1-23 was not addressed to the church at Rome. It is said (a) that Paul is unlikely to have known so many members of the Roman church, which he had never visited and (b) that some of the names mentioned point rather to Ephesus (which Paul knew well) than to Rome. Neither of these nor textual arguments are convincing; (a) In writing to a strange church Paul might very naturally include as many personal greetings as he could in order to establish as close contact as possible; (b) The possibility of movement on the part of members of the Pauline churches must be reckoned with”...as regards Prisca and Aquila, “they had been expelled from Rome, made their way to Corinth, and thence to Ephesus. There is no reason why they should not have returned to Rome, specially if Romans was written after the death of Claudius (13 October 54). That ‘all the churches’ had reason to be grateful to them confirm that they had numerous contacts over a wide area” (*The Epistle to the Romans*, pp. 281-283).

CHAPTER 16

When we consider the names of the believers which are brought forward in chapter 16, there are two things we must remember; (1) arguments based on names are worth little in view of the fact that men of all races met in Rome. All roads led to Rome, and (2) most of the names are common ones which could be borne by a number of individuals. We give the first sixteen verses as rendered in the N.I.V.:

“I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a servant of the church in Cenchrea. I ask you to receive her in the Lord in a way worthy of the saints and to give her any help she may need from you, for she has been a great help to many people, including me.

Greet Priscilla and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus. They risked their lives for me. Not only I but all the churches of the Gentiles are grateful to them.
Greet also the church that meets at their house.
Greet my dear friend Epenetus, who was the first convert to Christ in the province of Asia.
Greet Mary, who worked very hard for you.
Greet Andronicus and Junias, my relatives who have been in prison with me. They are outstanding among the apostles, and they were in Christ before I was.
Greet Ampliatus, whom I love in the Lord.
Greet Urbanus, our fellow-worker in Christ, and my dear friend Stachys.
Greet Apelles, tested and approved in Christ.
Greet those who belong to the household of Aristobulus.
Greet Herodion, my relative.
Greet those in the household of Narcissus who are in the Lord.
Greet Tryphena and Tryphosa, those women who work hard in the Lord.
Greet my dear friend Persis, another woman who has worked very hard in the Lord.
Greet Rufus, chosen in the Lord, and his mother, who has been a mother to me, too.
Greet Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermes, Patrobas, Hermas and the brothers with them.
Greet Philologus, Julia, Nereus and his sister, and Olympas and all the saints with them.
Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the churches of Christ send greetings” (Rom. 16:1-16).

The first two verses commence with Phoebe, a Christian who was travelling to Rome from Cenchrea, the eastern port of Corinth. She

is described as a “deaconess” of the church there. The word “servant” is *diakonos*, deacon. This was a form of Christian service which could be performed by men or women. In 1 Timothy 3:11 “their wives” (A.V.) is more likely to be “women” (R.V., R.S.V.), i.e. women-deacons.

Phoebe was then a trusted servant of the church, and so the Roman believers are exhorted to receive her warmly and help her in any matter in which they could render assistance.

Paul’s first greeting is sent to two outstanding Christians, Priscilla and Aquila, to whom we have already referred. Paul calls her Prisca (2 Tim. 4:19), whereas Luke uses the more familiar form Priscilla (Acts 18:2,18,26). They had gone so far as to risk their lives for the Apostle, though when this happened we do not know, but it was most likely at one of the critical phases of his ministry. So loyalty was a joy and stimulus to Paul. Their home was a glad meeting-place for believers, a privilege which many provided, as there were no recognised buildings for worship like we have today. We can therefore understand why the home of a leader had to be such as becomes one who is a believer and witness for Christ (1 Tim. 3:2-6).

Verse 5. Epenetus was a valued friend and was the first convert to Christ in Asia (not Achaia A.V.).

Verse 6. Mary, who bestowed much labour, or worked hard. She was a devoted worker who did not spare herself. Mary was a common name, and there are six mentioned in the New Testament. We have no means of knowing who she was.

Verse 7. Andronicus and Junia. Paul’s reference to them as “my kinsmen” may mean no more than that they were Jewish Christians. They had evidently shared one of the Apostle’s frequent imprisonments, but it is impossible to say which one. They were “of note among the apostles”, which probably means they were apostles themselves and outstanding ones among the others.

Verse 8. Amplias was an abbreviated form of Ampliatus. He was dear to the Apostle.

Verse 9. Urbanus and Stachys. Urbanus means “belonging to the city (*urbs*)”, a common name in Rome, whereas Stachys (literally an “ear” of grain) was uncommon.

Verse 10. Apelles had the commendation that his Christian profession had stood the test. He was a genuine and faithful believer. Aristobulus, again, is unknown to us.

Verse 11. Herodion, my kinsman, may mean he was a relative, or no more than a Jewish believer as in verse 7. The household of Narcissus – Calvin and others identify him with Tiberius Claudius. Narcissus, a wealthy freedman of the Emperor Tiberius.

Verse 12. Tryphena and Tryphosa, possibly were twin sisters. Their names are derived from the same root. They were hard workers, like Mary of verse 6. Persis (means Persian woman) possibly a freed-woman. The name appears on Greek and Latin inscriptions.

Verse 13. Rufus (meaning red, or red-haired). Again, he was an outstanding Christian. A Rufus is mentioned in Mark 15:21 as one of the sons of Simon of Cyrene. The name may be mentioned here for identification only as he has no part in Mark's Gospel. As to when the mother of Rufus "mothered" Paul we have no means of knowing, but her affectionate care of him was precious to the Apostle.

Verse 14. This verse contains names of persons also unknown to us. Hermes and Patrobas are abbreviations of longer names. Hermes was the god of good luck and this name was very common among slaves.

Verse 15. Philologus and Julia are probably man and wife. Nereus was possibly a freedman of Nero. Olympas is an abbreviated form of Olympiadorus.

Paul now exhorts them to greet one another with a holy kiss. This became a feature of Christian fellowship (see 1 Cor. 16:20; 2 Cor. 13:12; 1 Thess. 5:26; 1 Pet. 5:14) and answers to the handshake of greeting today.

One important name is absent from the list, and that is Peter. If he was leading the church at Rome at this time it would be unthinkable for Paul to miss him out.

All the churches under Paul's leadership sent their greetings. At this

point the greetings break off and four serious verses of admonition follow. Some scholars regard them as an interpolation, but this is not necessary. As Dr. C.K. Barrett states, "Such parenthetical remarks are in Paul's style. They may reflect additional information brought to him before the letter was completed" (*The Epistle to the Romans*, p.284).

"I urge you, brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and put obstacles in your way that are contrary to the teaching you have learned. Keep away from them. For such people are not serving our Lord Christ, but their own appetites. By smooth talk and flattery they deceive the minds of naive people. Everyone has heard about your obedience, so I am full of joy over you; but I want you to be wise about what is good, and innocent about what is evil" (verses 17-19 N.I.V.).

The Lord creates *unities* (Eph. 4:1-6,13,16); the devil seeks to break them and cause friction and division among the people of God. The course of church history has made this abundantly clear. These trouble-makers should be avoided, declares the Apostle. They were probably the same as the evil workers he denounces in Philippians 3:18 who were tainted with incipient gnosticism and possibly preoccupation with food laws, rather than gluttony. But Paul reiterates his confidence in the Roman Christians (verse 19) and assures them that the Lord would give them victory over Satan and his works:

"The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet" (verse 20, N.I.V.).

This is surely an allusion to Genesis 3:15 where God declares that the seed of the woman will bruise the serpent's head and the fact that it could be "soon" shows that this was linked with the imminence of the Lord's Second Coming which is stressed in all the epistles written during the Acts period, as we have seen. The Apostle is looking forward to that glorious coming which would mean victory for His people and defeat for Satan and all his hosts.

Paul then gives his usual reference to the grace of God with which he finishes all his epistles (verse 20). He now resumes the greetings that were broken off in verses 17-20 and gives the names of those believers who were with him.

"Timothy, my fellow-worker, sends his greetings to you, as do Lucius, Jason and Sosipater, my relatives" (verse 21).

The epistles make perfectly clear Paul's special relationship with his son in the faith, Timothy. Jason: This could possibly be the Jason who gave hospitality to Paul on his first visit to Thessalonica (Acts 17:6,7,9). Sosipater is probably Sopater of Berea, who, according to Acts 20:4 (R.V.) was with Paul at this time. Then comes a reference to the amanuensis who had written this letter, namely Tertius:

"I, Tertius, who wrote down this letter, greet you in the Lord" (verse 22 N.I.V.).

The Apostle regularly employed amanuenses for the writing of his letters, but Tertius is the only one whose name is given in the New Testament. He was a believer and was evidently glad to include his greeting with the others. Lucius may be the Lucius of Cyrene (Acts 13:1). On the other hand there are some expositors who think this is Luke, the writer of the Gospel and the Acts, who frequently accompanied Paul on his travels. The Apostle certainly refers to Luke in Colossians 4:14, Philemon 24, and 2 Timothy 4:11, and in these references calls him Lucas (*Loukas*), but this spelling can be an equivalent to Lucius. The matter must be left undecided.

Gaius seems to be the Titius Justus of Acts 18:7 who gave hospitality to Paul and the church members of Corinth who were expelled from the synagogue next door. Erastus was the treasurer of the city of Corinth who had evidently been touched by the truth of the gospel preached by Paul.

The doxology of verses 25-27 which follows bristles with difficulties:

"Now unto Him Who hath power to establish you, according to my glad message – even the proclamation of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of a sacred secret in age-past times kept silent, but now made manifest, and through means of prophetic scriptures, according to the command of the age-abiding God, for obedience of faith unto all the nations made known" (J.B. Rotherham).

Many translations insert the definite article before the word "mystery", or secret, but it is not in the original. The addition of the article creates a problem, for it makes the phrase parallel with Ephesians 3 and Colossians 1, and appears to be a reference to the great "mystery" revealed in those two epistles. But neither of them had been written when Romans was composed, and therefore the revelation

of the secret concerning the Body of Christ, and Christ's headship in relation to it, had not yet been made known.

Some get over the difficulty by the suggestion that this doxology was added at a later date by Paul after he had written Ephesians and Colossians. This was put forward by J.B. Lightfoot in his *Biblical Essays*. But after the Mystery had been revealed, what need was there to add this doxology to the epistle to the Romans, and that in an enigmatic way which does not reveal the details of this great Secret? Just what purpose would this serve? We should note that the time elements concerning the secret of Romans 16 do not agree with Ephesians and Colossians. In Romans the secret was hushed *in* age times, whereas in the prison epistles the secret was hidden *from* the ages and generations (Col. 1:26) and related to a period "*before* the age times" (Titus 1:2; 2 Tim 1:9). This hidden subject had "its own season" of manifestation, which manifestation was through "preaching" and "according to a commandment" (Titus 1:3). This manifestation is *now* in this present age of grace.

Paul was a steward of the mysteries (secrets) of God (1 Cor. 4:1), some of which were made known through his ministry during the Acts, like the secret of Israel's blindness (Rom. 11:25) and the instantaneous change of the believer in resurrection (1 Cor. 15:51,52), so there is no need to try to fit the later revelation of Ephesians 3 and Colossians 1 into Romans 16.

What is the meaning of "prophetic writings"? We should bear in mind that a prophet was not confined to revealing future events. He was a forth-teller as well as being a foreteller. This phrase must not be confined to such books as Daniel or the Revelation. There is a sense in which all the Scripture can be classed as prophetic writings, making known the mind and will of God (2 Pet. 1:20,21). As there were N.T. prophets as well as O.T. ones, the title "prophetic writings" could be applied to the N.T. as well as the O.T.

Let us state what the mystery of Romans 16 cannot mean. (1) It cannot refer to the gospel of grace and salvation for this was never hidden, but made known "by His prophets in the holy Scriptures" (Rom. 1:2), i.e. the O.T. (2) It cannot refer to the blessing of the Gentile with the Jew, for this likewise had been revealed in the O.T., namely that "all families of the earth" should be blessed through

Abraham's seed (Gen. 12:1-3). It must refer to truth not previously revealed.

There are those who look on the doxology of Romans 16 as superfluous to the epistle as a whole. But the structure of the epistle is defective without it (see *The Berean Expositor* , Vol.51, p.83).

The doxology balances chapter 1:

<i>Romans 1:1-17</i>	<i>Romans 16:25-27</i>
The gospel of God . . . concerning His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, promised afore by prophets in the holy Scriptures	The preaching of Jesus Christ, kept silent in age times, now made known through prophetic writings
Grace . . . from God our Father	Praise to the eternal and only wise God
To the end ye may be established	To Him Who is able to establish you
The power of God unto salvation	To Him Who is of power
Righteousness revealed . . . as it is written	Revelation of a mystery Scriptures, the prophets.

Professor F. F. Bruce says:

“there is in the doxology a recognisable echo of dominant themes of the opening salutation; in particular the mention of the scriptures of the prophets recalls “which He had promised afore by His prophets in the holy Scriptures” and made known to all nations “for the obedience of faith” is practically a repetition of “for obedience of faith among all nations” (1:5). This rounding off of the epistle on the same note as was struck at its commencement suggests the author himself” (*Epistle to the Romans*, p.282).

We come back to our original question, what is this secret, hushed since age-times commenced, but now made known through prophetic writings? The answer must be found in the Scriptures themselves and we believe the best explanation is given by Charles H. Welch in his exposition, *Just and the Justifier*. He writes:

“The mystery of Romans 16 is not said to be related to a period “before age-times”, but “silenced *in* age-times”. This theme is the secret of the

central section of Romans (chapters 5-8) and its subject is Adam, not Abraham; man, not Israel or Gentile; the law of sin, not the law of Sinai; the dominion of sin and death, not the domination of Canaanites or Babel”.

He points out that

“the period covered by the Scriptures from Genesis 12 to Matthew 1 is as long as that covered by Genesis 1:3-chapter 11. If Israel should finally fall and fail, the prophets had nothing to tell us of how God would cope with the resulting problem. It is accordingly the purpose of the central section of Romans (chapters 5-8) to reveal the relationship of man as such (i.e. neither Jew nor Gentile) to Adam and to Christ, irrespective of the promises made to the fathers, and the failure or success of the chosen people (Israel). But this is not the theme of the O.T. prophecy in general . . . much important truth latent in Genesis 1-11 was “hushed” until the time to speak had arrived . . . in that small space of eleven chapters is written all that can be known of the first 2000 years of this present creation. What is written is pregnant with truth, but it must await its appointed time, and just as the gospel itself revealed teaching hidden in the O.T. Scriptures . . . so these early chapters of Genesis hold much basic teaching, throwing light on the position of the believer who is saved and justified without reference to the law of Moses” (*Just and the Justifier*, pp.350-352).

Once again we point out the secret of Romans 16 was silenced in age-times. Part of the divine purpose which relates to the highest heavens concerns a period “*before* age-times” (Titus 1:2; 2 Tim. 1:9). This concerns the great Mystery or Secret of the prison epistles of Paul which was hidden “from the ages” and “from the generations” (of people) (Col. 1:26) and is linked to a divine purpose “*before* the foundation of the world” (Eph. 1:3,4). Romans 16 refers to a mystery (secret) not related to a period “*before* age times” but silenced “*in* age times”. This secret is the theme of the central chapters of Romans (5-8), and its subject is Adam, not Abraham; man, not Israel or Gentile; the law of sin, not the law of Sinai; the domination of sin and death, not the domination of the Canaanites, the Egyptians or Babel.

When the apostle Paul was inspired by God to write the epistle to the Romans, the prophetic writings, which for generations held their secret, began to speak. The fact that Romans 16 was for “the obedience of faith to all nations” links it with Romans 1:5 and establishes the unity of God’s purpose.

The final doxology is given in verse 27:

“To the only wise God, through Jesus Christ, to Whom be the glory for ever Amen” (R.V.).

The glory must finally be the Lord's, not that of any created being. As we come to the end of this wonderful epistle, let us constantly praise and thank the Lord for the heights and depths of truth revealed in it. Let us hold fast to its teaching, for it is absolutely fundamental to the Christian faith, and it also gives the foundation for the glorious truth of the Mystery (secret) to be revealed later in Ephesians 3 and Colossians 1.

The New Testament warns us that at the end of the age there will be a great departure from the truth of God (Matt. 24:11,12; 2 Tim. 4:1-4). This will not affect or mislead those who are grounded and constantly cling to the teaching of Romans.

To God be all the praise and glory.

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