

Romans

by Jamieson, Fausset, Brown

**THE EPISTLE OF PAUL THE APOSTLE TO THE
ROMANS**

Commentary by David Brown

INTRODUCTION

The Genuineness of the Epistle to the Romans has never been questioned. It has the unbroken testimony of all antiquity, up to Clement of Rome, the apostle's "fellow laborer in the Gospel, whose name was in the Book of Life" ([Php 4:3](#)), and who quotes from it in his undoubted Epistle to the Corinthians, written before the close of the first century. The most searching investigations of modern criticism have left it untouched.

When and Where this Epistle was written we have the means of determining with great precision, from the Epistle itself compared with the Acts of the Apostles. Up to the date of it the apostle had never been at Rome ([Ro 1:11, 13, 15](#)). He was then on the eve of visiting Jerusalem with a pecuniary contribution for its Christian poor from the churches of Macedonia and Achaia, after which his purpose was to pay a visit to Rome on his way to Spain ([Ro 15:23-28](#)). Now this contribution we know that he carried with him from Corinth, at the close of his third visit to that city, which lasted three months ([Ac 20:2, 3; 24:17](#)). On this occasion there accompanied him from Corinth certain persons whose names are given by the historian of the Acts ([Ac 20:4](#)), and four of these are expressly mentioned in our Epistle as being with the apostle when he wrote it—Timotheus, Sosipater, Gaius, and Erastus ([Ro 16:21, 23](#)). Of these four, the third, Gaius, was an inhabitant of Corinth ([1Co 1:14](#)), and the fourth, Erastus, was "chamberlain of *the city*" ([Ro 16:23](#)), which can hardly be supposed to be other than Corinth. Finally, Phœbebe, the bearer, as appears, of this Epistle, was a deaconess of the Church at Cenchrea, the eastern port of Corinth ([Ro 16:1](#)). Putting these facts together, it is impossible to resist the conviction, in which all critics agree, that Corinth was the place from which the Epistle was written, and that it was despatched about the close of the visit above mentioned, probably in the early spring of the year 58.

The Founder of this celebrated church is unknown. That it owed its origin to the apostle Peter, and that he was its first bishop, though an ancient tradition and taught in the Church of Rome as a fact not to be doubted, is refuted by the clearest evidence, and is given up even by candid Romanists. On that supposition, how are we to account for so important a circumstance being passed by in silence by the historian of the Acts, not only in the narrative of Peter's labors, but in that of Paul's approach to the metropolis, of the deputations of Roman "brethren" that came as far as Appii Forum and the Three Taverns to meet him, and of his two years' labors there ([Ac 28:15, 30](#))? And how, consistently with his declared principle—not to build on another man's foundation ([Ro 15:20](#))—could he express his anxious desire to come to them that he might have some fruit among them also, even as among other Gentiles ([Ro 1:13](#)), if all the while he knew that they had the apostle of the circumcision for their spiritual father? And how, if so, is there no salutation to Peter among the many in this Epistle? or, if it may be thought that he was known to be elsewhere at that particular time, how does there occur in all the Epistles which our apostle afterwards wrote from Rome not one allusion to such an origin of the church at Rome? The same considerations would seem

to prove that this church owed its origin to no prominent Christian laborer; and this brings us to the much-litigated question.

For What Class of Christians was this Epistle principally designed—Jewish or Gentile? That a large number of Jews and Jewish proselytes resided at this time at Rome is known to all who are familiar with the classical and Jewish writers of that and the immediately subsequent periods; and that those of them who were at Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost ([Ac 2:10](#)), and formed probably part of the three thousand converts of that day, would on their return to Rome carry the glad tidings with them, there can be no doubt. Nor are indications wanting that some of those embraced in the salutations of this Epistle were Christians already of long standing, if not among the earliest converts to the Christian faith. Others of them who had made the apostle's acquaintance elsewhere, and who, if not indebted to him for their first knowledge of Christ, probably owed much to his ministrations, seemed to have charged themselves with the duty of cherishing and consolidating the work of the Lord in the capital. And thus it is not improbable that up to the time of the apostle's arrival the Christian community at Rome had been dependent upon subordinate agency for the increase of its numbers, aided by occasional visits of stated preachers from the provinces; and perhaps it may be gathered from the salutations of the last chapter that it was up to that time in a less organized, though far from less flourishing state, than some other churches to whom the apostle had already addressed Epistles. Certain it is, that the apostle writes to them expressly as a Gentile Church ([Ro 1:13, 15; 15:15, 16](#)); and though it is plain that there were Jewish Christians among them, and the whole argument presupposes an intimate acquaintance on the part of his readers with the leading principles of the Old Testament, this will be sufficiently explained by supposing that the bulk of them, having before they knew the Lord been Gentile proselytes to the Jewish faith, had entered the pale of the Christian Church through the gate of the ancient economy.

It remains only to speak briefly of the Plan and Character Of this Epistle. Of all the undoubted Epistles of our apostle, this is the most elaborate, and at the same time the most glowing. It has just as much in common with a theological treatise as is consistent with the freedom and warmth of a real letter. Referring to the headings which we have prefixed to its successive sections, as best exhibiting the progress of the argument and the connection of its points, we here merely note that its first great topic is what may be termed *the legal relation of man to God* as a violator of His holy law, whether as merely written on the heart, as in the case of the heathen, or, as in the case of the Chosen People, as further known by external revelation; that it next treats of that legal relation as wholly *reversed* through believing connection with the Lord Jesus Christ; and that its third and last great topic is *the new life* which accompanies this change of relation, embracing at once a blessedness and a consecration to God which, rudimentally complete already, will open, in the future world, into the bliss of immediate and stainless fellowship with God. The bearing of these wonderful truths

upon the condition and destiny of the Chosen People, to which the apostle next comes, though it seem but the practical application of them to his kinsmen according to the flesh, is in some respects the deepest and most difficult part of the whole Epistle, carrying us directly to the eternal springs of Grace to the guilty in the sovereign love and inscrutable purposes of God; after which, however, we are brought back to the historical platform of the visible Church, in the calling of the Gentiles, the preservation of a faithful Israelitish remnant amidst the general unbelief and fall of the nation, and the ultimate recovery of all Israel to constitute, with the Gentiles in the latter day, one catholic Church of God upon earth. The remainder of the Epistle is devoted to sundry practical topics, winding up with salutations and outpourings of heart delightfully suggestive.

CHAPTER 1

Ro 1:1-17. Introduction.

1. Paul—(See on [Ac 13:9](#)).

a servant of Jesus Christ—The word here rendered "servant" means "bond-servant," or one subject to the will and wholly at the disposal of another. In this sense it is applied to the disciples of Christ at large ([1Co 7:21-23](#)), as in the Old Testament to all the people of God ([Isa 66:14](#)). But as, in addition to this, the prophets and kings of Israel were *officially* "the servants of the Lord" ([Jos 1:1](#); [Ps 18:1](#), title), the apostles call themselves, in the same official sense, "the servants of Christ" (as here, and [Php 1:1](#); [Jas 1:1](#); [2Pe 1:1](#); [Jude 1](#)), expressing such absolute subjection and devotion to the Lord Jesus as they would never have yielded to a mere creature. (See on [Ro 1:7](#); [Joh 5:22, 23](#)).

called to be an apostle—when first he "saw the Lord"; the indispensable qualification for apostleship. (See on [Ac 9:5](#); [Ac 22:14](#); [1Co 9:1](#)).

separated unto the—preaching of the

gospel—neither so late as when "the Holy Ghost said, *Separate* me Barnabas and Saul" ([Ac 13:2](#)), nor so early as when "*separated* from his mother's womb" (see on [Ga 1:15](#)). He was called at one and the same time to the faith and the apostleship of Christ ([Ac 26:16-18](#)).

of God—that is, the Gospel of which God is the glorious Author. (So [Ro 15:16](#); [1Th 2:2, 8, 9](#); [1Pe 4:17](#)).

2. Which he had promised afore ... in the holy scriptures—Though the Roman Church was Gentile by nation (see on [Ro 1:13](#)), yet as it consisted mostly of proselytes to the Jewish faith (see on *Introduction* to this Epistle), they are here reminded that in embracing Christ they had not cast off, but only the more profoundly yielded themselves to, Moses and the prophets ([Ac 13:32, 33](#)).

3, 4. Concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord—the grand burden of this "Gospel of God."

made of the seed of David—as, according to "the holy scriptures," He behooved to be. (See on [Mt 1:1](#)).

according to the flesh—that is, in His *human* nature (compare [Ro 9:5](#); [Joh 1:14](#)); implying, of course, that He had *another* nature, of which the apostle immediately proceeds to speak.

4. And declared—literally, "marked off," "defined," "determined," that is, "shown," or "proved."

to be the Son of God—Observe how studiously the language changes here. He "*was* MADE [says the apostle] of the seed of David, according to the flesh" ([Ro 1:3](#)); but He was *not* made, He was only "*declared* [or proved] *to* BE the Son of God." So [Joh 1:1, 14](#), "In the beginning WAS the Word ... and the Word *was* MADE flesh"; and [Isa 9:6](#), "Unto us a *Child* is BORN, unto us a *Son* is GIVEN." Thus the Sonship of Christ is in no proper sense a *born*

relationship to the Father, as some, otherwise sound divines, conceive of it. By His birth in the flesh, that Sonship, which was essential and uncreated, merely effloresced into palpable manifestation. (See on [Lu 1:35](#); [Ac 13:32, 33](#)).

with power—This may either be connected with "declared," and then the meaning will be "powerfully declared" [Luther, Beza, Bengel, Fritzsche, Alford, &c.]; or (as in our version, and as we think rightly) with "the Son of God," and then the sense is, "declared to be the Son of God" in possession of that "power" which belonged to Him as the only-begotten of the Father, no longer shrouded as in the days of His flesh, but "by His resurrection from the dead" gloriously displayed and henceforth to be for ever exerted in this nature of ours [*Vulgate*, Calvin, Hodge, Philippi, Mehring, &c.].

according to the spirit of holiness—If "according to the flesh" means here, "in His human nature," this uncommon expression must mean "in His *other* nature," which we have seen to be that "of the Son of God"—an eternal, uncreated nature. This is here styled the "*spirit*," as an impalpable and immaterial nature ([Joh 4:24](#)), and "the spirit of *holiness*," probably in absolute contrast with that "likeness, of sinful flesh" which He assumed. One is apt to wonder that if this be the meaning, it was not expressed more simply. But if the apostle had said "He was declared to be the Son of God according to *the Holy Spirit*," the reader would have thought he meant "*the Holy Ghost*"; and it seems to have been just to avoid this misapprehension that he used the rare expression, "the spirit of holiness."

5. By whom—as the ordained channel.

we have received grace—the whole "grace that bringeth salvation" ([Tit 2:11](#)).

and apostleship—for the publication of that "grace," and the organization of as many as receive it into churches of visible discipleship. (We prefer thus taking them as two distinct things, and not, with some good interpreters, as one—"the grace of apostleship").

for obedience to the faith—rather, "for the obedience of faith"—that is, in order to men's yielding themselves to the belief of God's saving message, which is the highest of all obedience.

for his name—that He might be glorified.

6. Among whom are ye also—that is, along with others; for the apostle ascribes nothing special to the Church of Rome (compare [1Co 14:36](#)) [Bengel].

the called—(See on [Ro 8:30](#)).

of Christ Jesus—that is, either called "by Him" ([Joh 5:25](#)), or the called "*belonging to Him*"; "Christ's called ones." Perhaps this latter sense is best supported, but one hardly knows which to prefer.

7. beloved of God—(Compare [De 33:12](#); [Col 3:12](#)).

Grace, &c.—(See on [Joh 1:14](#)).

and peace—the peace which Christ made through the blood of His cross ([Col 1:20](#)), and which reflects into the believing bosom "the peace of God which passeth all understanding" ([Php 4:7](#)).

from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ—"Nothing speaks more decisively for the divinity of Christ than these juxtapositions of Christ with the eternal God, which run through the whole language of Scripture, and the derivation of purely divine influences from Him also. The name of no man can be placed by the side of the Almighty. He only, in whom the Word of the Father who is Himself God became flesh, may be named beside Him; for men are commanded to honor Him even as they honor the Father ([Joh 5:23](#))" [Olshausen].

8. your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world—This was quite practicable through the frequent visits paid to the capital from all the provinces; and the apostle, having an eye to the influence they would exercise upon others, as well as their own blessedness, given thanks for such faith to "his God through Jesus Christ," as being the source, according to his theology of faith, as of all grace in men.

9. For God ... whom I serve—the word denotes religious service.

with my spirit—from my inmost soul.

in the gospel of his Son—to which Paul's whole religious life and official activity were consecrated.

is my witness, that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers—so for the Ephesians ([Eph 1:15, 16](#)); so for the Philippians ([Php 1:3, 4](#)); so for the Colossians ([Col 1:3, 4](#)); so for the Thessalonians ([1Th 1:2, 3](#)). What catholic love, what all-absorbing spirituality, what impassioned devotion to the glory of Christ among men!

10. Making request, if by any means now at length I may have a prosperous journey by the will of God, to come to you—Though long anxious to visit the capital, he met with a number of providential hindrances ([Ro 1:13](#); [Ro 15:22](#); and see on [Ac 19:21](#); [Ac 23:11](#); [Ac 28:15](#)); insomuch that *nearly a quarter of a century* elapsed, after his conversion, ere his desire was accomplished, and that only as "a prisoner of Jesus Christ." Thus taught that his whole future was in the hands of God, he makes it his continual prayer that at length the obstacles to a happy and prosperous meeting might be removed.

11, 12. For I long to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift—not any supernatural gift, as the next clause shows, and compare [1Co 1:7](#).

to the end that ye may be established.

12. That is, that I may be comforted together with you by the mutual faith both of you and me—"Not wishing to "lord it over their faith," but rather to be a "helper of their joy," the apostle corrects his former expressions: my desire is to instruct you and do you good, that is, for us to instruct and do one another good: in giving I shall also receive" [Jowett]. "Nor is he insincere in so speaking, for there is none so poor in the Church of Christ who may not impart to us something of value: it is only our malignity and pride that

hinder us from gathering such fruit from every quarter" [Calvin]. How "widely different is the apostolic style from that of the court of Papal Rome!" [Bengel].

13. oftentimes I purposed to come unto you, but was let—hindered.

hitherto—chiefly by his desire to go first to places where Christ was not known (Ro 15:20-24).

that I might have some fruit—of my ministry

among you also, even as among other Gentiles—The Gentile origin of the Church at Rome is here so explicitly stated, that those who conclude, merely from the Jewish strain of the argument, that they must have been mostly Israelites, decide in opposition to the apostle himself. (But see on *Introduction* to this Epistle.)

14, 15. I am debtor both to the Greeks—cultivated
and to the Barbarians—rude.

15. So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also—He feels himself under an all-subduing obligation to carry the gospel to all classes of mankind, as adapted to and ordained equally for all (1Co 9:16).

16. For I am not ashamed of the gospel—(The words, "of Christ," which follow here, are not found in the oldest and best manuscripts). This language implies that it required some courage to bring to "the mistress of the world" what "to the Jews was a stumbling-block and to the Greeks foolishness" (1Co 1:23). But its inherent glory, as God's life-giving message to a dying world, so filled his soul, that, like his blessed Master, he "despised the shame."

for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth—Here and in Ro 1:17 the apostle announces the great theme of his ensuing argument; Salvation, the one overwhelming necessity of perishing men; this revealed IN THE GOSPEL MESSAGE; and that message so *owned and honored of God as to carry*, in the proclamation of it, God's own power to save every soul that embraces it, Greek and Barbarian, wise and unwise alike.

17. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed—that is (as the whole argument of the Epistle shows), God's justifying righteousness.

from faith to faith—a difficult clause. Most interpreters (judging from the sense of such phrases elsewhere) take it to mean, "from one degree of faith to another." But this agrees ill with the apostle's design, which has nothing to do with the progressive stages of faith, but solely with faith itself as the appointed way of receiving God's "righteousness." We prefer, therefore, to understand it thus: "The righteousness of God is in the gospel message, revealed (to be) from (or 'by') faith to (or 'for') faith," that is, "in order to be by faith received." (So substantially, Melville, Meyer, Stuart, Bloomfield, &c.).

as it is written—(Hab 2:4).

The just shall live by faith—This golden maxim of the Old Testament is thrice quoted in the New Testament—here; Ga 3:11; Heb 10:38—showing that the gospel way of "LIFE BY FAITH," so far from disturbing, only continued and developed the ancient method.

On the foregoing verses, *Note* (1) What manner of persons ought the ministers of Christ to be, according to the pattern here set up: absolutely subject and officially dedicated to the Lord Jesus; separated unto the gospel of God, which contemplates the subjugation of all nations to the faith of Christ: debtors to all classes, the refined and the rude, to bring the gospel to them all alike, all shame in the presence of the one, as well as pride before the other, sinking before the glory which they feel to be in their message; yearning over all faithful churches, not lording it over them, but rejoicing in their prosperity, and finding refreshment and strength in their fellowship! (2) The peculiar features of the gospel here brought prominently forward should be the devout study of all who preach it, and guide the views and the taste of all who are privileged stately to hear it: that it is "the gospel of God," as a message from heaven, yet not absolutely new, but on the contrary, only the fulfilment of Old Testament promise, that not only is Christ the great theme of it, but Christ in the very nature of God as His own Son, and in the nature of men as partaker of their flesh—the Son of God now in resurrection—power and invested with authority to dispense all grace to men, and all gifts for the establishment and edification of the Church, Christ the righteousness provided of God for the justification of all that believe in His name; and that in this glorious Gospel, when preached as such, there resides the very power of God to save Jew and Gentile alike who embrace it. (3) While Christ is to be regarded as the ordained *Channel* of all grace from God to men (Ro 1:8), let none imagine that His proper divinity is in any respect compromised by this arrangement, since He is here expressly associated with "God the Father," in prayer for "grace and peace" (including all spiritual blessings) to rest upon this Church (Ro 1:7). (4) While this Epistle teaches, in conformity with the teaching of our Lord Himself, that all salvation is suspended upon *faith*, this is but half a truth, and will certainly minister to self-righteousness, if dissociated from another feature of the same truth, here explicitly taught, that this faith in *God's own gift*—for which accordingly in the case of the Roman believers, he "thanks his God through Jesus Christ" (Ro 1:8). (5) Christian fellowship, as indeed all real fellowship, is a mutual benefit; and as it is not possible for the most eminent saints and servants of Christ to impart any refreshment and profit to the meanest of their brethren without experiencing a rich return into their bosoms, so just in proportion to their humility and love will they feel their need of it and rejoice in it.

Ro 1:18. Why This Divinely Provided Righteousness Is Needed by All Men.

18. For the wrath of God—His holy displeasure and righteous vengeance against sin. **is revealed from heaven**—in the consciences of men, and attested by innumerable outward evidences of a moral government.

against all ungodliness—that is, their whole *irreligiousness*, or their living without any conscious reference to God, and proper feelings towards Him.

and unrighteousness of men—that is, all their *deviations from moral rectitude* in heart, speech, and behavior. (So these terms must be distinguished when used together, though, when standing alone, either of them includes the other).

Ro 1:18-32. This Wrath of God, Revealed against All Iniquity, Overhangs the Whole Heathen World.

18. who hold—rather, "hold down," "hinder," or "keep back."

the truth in unrighteousness—The apostle, though he began this verse with a comprehensive proposition regarding men in general, takes up in the end of it only one of the two great divisions of mankind, to whom he meant to apply it; thus gently sliding into his argument. But before enumerating their actual iniquities, he goes back to the origin of them all, their stifling the light which still remained to them. As darkness overspreads the mind, so impotence takes possession of the heart, when the "still small voice" of conscience is first disregarded, next thwarted, and then systematically deadened. Thus "the truth" which God left with and in men, instead of having free scope and developing itself, as it otherwise would, was obstructed (compare [Mt 6:22, 23](#); [Eph 4:17, 18](#)).

19. Because that which may be—rather, "which is."

known of God is manifest in them; for God hath showed it unto them—The sense of this pregnant statement the apostle proceeds to unfold in [Ro 1:20](#).

20. For the invisible things of him from—or "since"

the creation of the world are clearly seen—the mind brightly beholding what the eye cannot discern.

being understood by the things that are made—Thus, the outward creation is not the *parent* but the *interpreter* of our faith in God. That faith has its primary sources within our own breast ([Ro 1:19](#)); but it becomes *an intelligible and articulate conviction* only through what we observe around us ("by the things which are made," [Ro 1:20](#)). And thus are the inner and the outer revelation of God the complement of each other, making up between them one universal and immovable conviction *that God is*. (With this striking apostolic statement agree the latest conclusions of the most profound speculative students of Theism).

even his eternal power and Godhead—both that there *is* an Eternal Power, and that this is not a mere blind force, or pantheistic "spirit of nature," but the power of a living *Godhead*.

so that they are without excuse—all their degeneracy being a voluntary departure from truth thus brightly revealed to the unsophisticated spirit.

21. Because that, when they knew God—that is, while still retaining some real knowledge of Him, and ere they sank down into the state next to be described.

they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful—neither yielded the *adoration* due to Himself, nor rendered the *gratitude* which His beneficence demanded.

but became vain—(compare [Jer 2:5](#)).

in their imaginations—thoughts, notions, speculations, regarding God; compare [Mt 15:19](#); [Lu 2:35](#); [1Co 3:20](#), *Greek*.

and their foolish—"senseless," "stupid."

heart—that is, their whole inner man.

was darkened—How instructively is the downward progress of the human soul here traced!

22, 23. Professing themselves—"boasting," or "pretending to be"

wise, they became fools—"It is the invariable property of error in morals and religion, that men take credit to themselves for it and extol it as wisdom. So the heathen" ([1Co 1:21](#)) [Tholuck].

23. And changed—or "exchanged."

the glory of the uncorruptible God into—or "for"

an image ... like to corruptible man—The allusion here is doubtless to the *Greek* worship, and the apostle may have had in his mind those exquisite chisellings of the human form which lay so profusely beneath and around him as he stood on Mars' Hill; and "beheld their devotions." (See on [Ac 17:29](#)). But as if that had not been a deep enough degradation of the living God, there was found "a lower deep" still.

and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and to creeping things—referring now to the *Egyptian* and *Oriental* worship. In the face of these plain declarations of the *descent* of man's religious belief from loftier to ever lower and more debasing conceptions of the Supreme Being, there are expositors of this very Epistle (as Reiche and Jowett), who, believing neither in any fall from primeval innocence, nor in the noble traces of that innocence which lingered even after the fall and were only by degrees obliterated by wilful violence to the dictates of conscience, maintain that man's religious history has been all along a struggle to *rise*, from the lowest forms of nature worship, suited to the childhood of our race, into that which is more rational and spiritual.

24. Wherefore God also—in righteous retribution.

gave them up—This divine abandonment of men is here strikingly traced in three successive stages, at each of which the same word is used ([Ro 1:24, 26](#); and [Ro 1:28](#), where the word is rendered "gave over"). "As they deserted God, God in turn deserted them; not giving them divine (that is, supernatural) laws, and suffering them to corrupt those which were human; not sending them prophets, and allowing the philosophers to run into absurdities. He let them do what they pleased, even what was in the last degree vile, that those who had not honored God, might dishonor themselves" [Grotius].

25. Who changed the truth of God into a lie—that is, the truth concerning God into idol falsehood.

and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator—Professing merely to worship the Creator *by means* of the creature, they soon came to lose sight of the Creator

in the creature. How aggravated is the guilt of the Church of Rome, which, under the same flimsy pretext, does shamelessly what the heathen are here condemned for doing, and with light which the heathen never had!

who is blessed for ever! Amen—By this doxology the apostle instinctively relieves the horror which the penning of such things excited within his breast; an example to such as are called to expose like dishonor done to the blessed God.

26, 27. For this cause God gave them up—(See on [Ro 1:24](#)).

for even their women—that sex whose priceless jewel and fairest ornament is modesty, and which, when that is once lost, not only becomes more shameless than the other sex, but lives henceforth only to drag the other sex down to its level.

did change, &c.—The practices here referred to, though too abundantly attested by classic authors, cannot be further illustrated, without trenching on things which "ought not to be named among us as become the saints." But observe how vice is here seen consuming and exhausting itself. When the passions, scourged by violent and continued indulgence in *natural* vices, became impotent to yield the craved enjoyment, resort was had to artificial stimulants by the practice of *unnatural* and monstrous vices. How early these were in full career, in the history of the world, the case of Sodom affectingly shows; and because of such abominations, centuries after that, the land of Canaan "spued out" its old inhabitants. Long before this chapter was penned, the Lesbians and others throughout refined Greece had been luxuriating in such debasements; and as for the Romans, Tacitus, speaking of the emperor Tiberius, tells us that new words had then to be coined to express the newly invented stimulants to jaded passion. No wonder that, thus sick and dying as was this poor humanity of ours under the highest earthly culture, its many-voiced cry for the balm in Gilead, and the Physician there, "Come over and help us," pierced the hearts of the missionaries of the Cross, and made them "not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ!"

27. and receiving in themselves that recompense of their error which was meet—alluding to the many physical and moral ways in which, under the righteous government of God, vice was made self-avenging.

28-31. gave them over—or "up" (see on [Ro 1:24](#)).

to do those things which are not convenient—in the old sense of that word, that is, "not becoming," "indecorous," "shameful."

30. haters of God—The word usually signifies "God-hated," which some here prefer, in the sense of "abhorred of the Lord"; expressing the detestableness of their character in His sight (compare [Pr 22:14](#); [Ps 73:20](#)). But the active sense of the word, adopted in our version and by the majority of expositors, though rarer, agrees perhaps better with the context.

32. Who knowing—from the voice of conscience, [Ro 2:14, 15](#)

the judgment of God—the stern law of divine procedure.

that they which commit such things are worthy of death—here used in its widest known sense, as the uttermost of divine vengeance against sin: see [Ac 28:4](#).

not only do the same—which they might do under the pressure of temptation and in the heat of passion.

but have pleasure in them that do them—deliberately set their seal to such actions by encouraging and applauding the doing of them in others. This is the climax of our apostle's charges against the heathen; and certainly, if the things are in themselves as black as possible, this settled and unblushing satisfaction at the practice of them, apart from all the blinding effects of present passion, must be regarded as the darkest feature of human depravity.

On this section, *Note* (1) "The wrath of God" against sin has all the dread reality of a "revelation from heaven" sounding in the consciences of men, in the self-inflicted miseries of the wicked, and in the vengeance which God's moral government, sooner or later, takes upon all who outrage it; so this "wrath of God" is not confined to high-handed crimes, or the grosser manifestations of human depravity, but is "revealed" against all violations of divine law of whatever nature—"against all ungodliness" as well as "unrighteousness of men," against all disregard of God in the conduct of life as well as against all deviations from moral rectitude; and therefore, since no child of Adam can plead guiltless either of "ungodliness" or of "unrighteousness," to a greater or less extent, it follows that every human being is involved in the awful sweep of "the wrath of God" ([Ro 1:18](#)). The apostle places this terrible truth in the forefront of his argument on justification by faith, that upon the basis of *universal condemnation* he might rear the edifice of a free, world-wide salvation; nor can the Gospel be scripturally preached or embraced, save as the good news of salvation to those that are all equally "lost." (2) We must not magnify the supernatural revelation which God has been pleased to make of Himself, through Abraham's family to the human race, at the expense of that older, and, in itself, lustrous revelation which He has made to the whole family of man through the medium of their own nature and the creation around them. Without the latter, the former would have been impossible, and those who have not been favored with the former will be without excuse, if they are deaf to the voice and blind to the glory of the latter ([Ro 1:19, 20](#)). (3) Wilful resistance of light has a retributive tendency to blunt the moral perceptions and weaken the capacity to apprehend and approve of truth and goodness; and thus is the soul prepared to surrender itself, to an indefinite extent, to error and sin ([Ro 1:21](#), &c.). (4) Pride of wisdom, as it is a convincing evidence of the want of it, so it makes the attainment of it impossible ([Ro 1:22](#); and compare [Mt 11:25](#); [1Co 3:18-20](#)). (5) As idolatry, even in its most plausible forms, is the fruit of unworthy views of the Godhead, so its natural effect is to vitiate and debase still further the religious conceptions; nor is there any depth of degradation too low and too revolting for men's ideas of the Godhead to sink to, if only their natural temperament and the circumstances they are placed in be favorable to their unrestrained development ([Ro 1:23, 25](#)). The apostle had Greece and Egypt in his eye when

he penned this description. But all the paganisms of the East at this day attest its accuracy, from the more elaborate idolatry of India and the simpler and more stupid idolatry of China down to the childish rudiments of nature worship prevalent among the savage tribes. Alas! Christendom itself furnishes a melancholy illustration of this truth; the constant use of material images in the Church of Rome and the materialistic and sensuous character of its entire service (to say nothing of the less offensive but more stupid service of the Greek Church,) debasing the religious ideas of millions of nominal Christians, and lowering the whole character and tone of Christianity as represented within their immense pale. (6) Moral corruption invariably follows religious debasement. The grossness of pagan idolatry is only equalled by the revolting character and frightful extent of the immoralities which it fostered and consecrated (Ro 1:24, 26, 27). And so strikingly is this to be seen in all its essential features in the East at this day, that (as Hodge says) the missionaries have frequently been accused by the natives of having forged the whole of the latter part of this chapter, as they could not believe that so accurate a description of themselves could have been written eighteen centuries ago. The kingdoms of Israel and Judah furnish a striking illustration of the inseparable connection between religion and morals. Israel corrupted and debased the worship of Jehovah, and the sins with which they were charged were mostly of the grosser kind—intemperance and sensuality: the people of Judah, remaining faithful to the pure worship, were for a long time charged mostly with formality and hypocrisy; and only as they fell into the idolatries of the heathen around them, did they sink into their vices. And may not a like distinction be observed between the two great divisions of Christendom, the Popish and the Protestant? To test this, we must not look to Popery, surrounded with, and more or less influenced by, the presence and power of Protestantism; nor to Protestantism under every sort of disadvantage, internal and external. But look at Romanism where it has unrestrained liberty to develop its true character, and see whether impurity does not there taint society to its core, pervading alike the highest and the lowest classes; and then look at Protestantism where it enjoys the same advantages, and see whether it be not marked by a comparatively high standard of social virtue. (7) To take pleasure in what is sinful and vicious for its own sake, and knowing it to be such, is the last and lowest stage of human recklessness (Ro 1:32). But (8) this knowledge can never be wholly extinguished in the breast of men. So long as reason remains to them, there is still a small voice in the worst of men, protesting, in the name of the Power that implanted it, "that they which do such things are worthy of death" (Ro 1:32).

CHAPTER 2

[Ro 2:1-29](#). The Jew under Like Condemnation with the Gentile.

From those *without*, the apostle now turns to those *within* the pale of revealed religion, the self-righteous Jews, who looked down upon the uncovenanted heathen as beyond the pale of God's mercies, within which they deemed themselves secure, however inconsistent their life may be. Alas! what multitudes wrap themselves up in like fatal confidence, who occupy the corresponding position in the Christian Church!

4. the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance—that is, is designed and adapted to do so.

5. treasurest up unto thyself wrath against—rather "in."

the day of wrath—that is wrath to come on thee in the day of wrath. What an awful idea is here expressed—that the sinner himself is amassing, like hoarded treasure, an ever accumulating stock of divine wrath, to burst upon him in "the day of the revelation of the righteous judgment of God!" And this is said not of the reckless, but of those who boasted of their purity of faith and life.

7-10. To them who, &c.—The substance of these verses is that the final judgment will turn upon *character* alone.

by patient continuance in well-doing, &c.—Compare [Lu 8:15](#): "That on the good ground are they, which in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit *with patience*"; denoting the *enduring* and *progressive* character of the new life.

8. But unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, &c.—referring to such keen and determined resistance to the Gospel as he himself had too painfully witnessed on the part of his own countrymen. (See [Ac 13:44-46](#); [17:5, 13](#); [18:6, 12](#); and compare [1Th 2:15, 16](#)).

indignation and wrath—in the bosom of a sin-avenging God.

9. Tribulation and anguish—the *effect* of these in the sinner himself.

10. to the Jew first—first in perdition if unfaithful; but if obedient to the truth, first in salvation ([Ro 2:10](#)).

12. For as many as have sinned—not "as many as have sinned *at all*," but, "as many as are *found in sin*" at the judgment of the great day (as the whole context shows).

without law—that is, without the advantage of a positive Revelation.

shall also perish without law—exempt from the charge of rejecting or disregarding it.

and as many as have sinned in the law—within the pale of a positive, written Revelation.

shall be judged by the law—tried and condemned by the higher standard of that written Revelation.

13-15. For not the hearers, &c.—As touching the Jews, in whose ears the written law is continually resounding, the condemnation of as many of them as are found sinners at the

last involves no difficulty; but even as respects the heathen, who are strangers to the law in its positive and written form—since they show how deeply it is engraven on their moral nature, which witnesses within them for righteousness and against iniquity, accusing or condemning them according as they violate or obey its stern dictates—their condemnation also for all the sin in which they live and die will carry its dreadful echo in their own breasts.

15. *their thoughts the meanwhile accusing or else excusing*—that is, perhaps by turns doing both.

16. *In the day, &c.*—Here the unfinished statement of [Ro 2:12](#) is resumed and closed.

shall judge the secrets of men—here specially referring to the unfathomed depths of hypocrisy in the self-righteous whom the apostle had to deal with. (See [Ec 12:14](#); [1Co 4:5](#)).

according to my gospel—to my teaching as a preacher of the Gospel.

17-24. Behold—"But if" is, beyond doubt, the true reading here. (It differs but in a single letter from the received reading, and the sense is the same).

18. *aprovest the things that are excellent*—"triest the things that differ" (*Margin*). Both senses are good, and indeed the former is but the result of the latter action. (See on [Php 1:10](#)).

20. *hast the form of knowledge and of the truth in the law*—not being left, as the heathen are, to vague conjecture on divine things, but favored with definite and precise information from heaven.

22. *thou that abhorrest idols*—as the Jews did ever after their captivity, though bent on them before.

dost thou commit sacrilege?—not, as some excellent interpreters, "dost thou rob idol temples?" but more generally, as we take it, "dost thou profane holy things?" (as in [Mt 21:12, 13](#), and in other ways).

24. *as it is written*—(See [Isa 52:5](#), *Marginal reference*).

25-29. For circumcision—that is, One's being within the covenant of which circumcision was the outward sign and seal.

verily profiteth, if thou keep the law—if the inward reality correspond to the outward sign.

but if, &c.—that is, "Otherwise, thou art no better than the uncircumcised heathen."

26. Therefore if the uncircumcision keep the ... law, &c.—Two mistaken interpretations, we think, are given of these words: *First*, that the case here supposed is an impossible one, and put merely for illustration [Haldane, Chalmers, Hodge]; *second* that it is the case of the heathen who may and do please God when they act, as has been and is done, up to the light of nature [Grotius, Olshausen, &c.]. The first interpretation is, in our judgment, unnatural; the second, opposed to the apostle's own teaching. But the case here put is, we think, such as that of Cornelius ([Ac 10:1-48](#)), who, though outside the *external* pale of God's covenant, yet having come to the knowledge of the truths contained in it, do manifest the

grace of the covenant without the seal of it, and exemplify the character and walk of Abraham's children, though not called by the name of Abraham. Thus, this is but another way of announcing that God was about to show the insufficiency of the mere badge of the Abrahamic covenant, by calling from among the Gentiles a seed of Abraham that had never received the seal of circumcision (see on [Ga 5:6](#)); and this interpretation is confirmed by all that follows.

28. he is not a Jew which is one outwardly, &c.—In other words, the name of "Jew" and the rite of "circumcision" were designed but as outward symbols of a separation from the irreligious and ungodly world unto holy devotedness in heart and life to the God of salvation. Where this is realized, the signs are full of significance; but where it is not, they are worse than useless.

Note, (1) It is a sad mark of depravity when all that is designed and fitted to melt only hardens the heart ([Ro 2:4](#), and compare [2Pe 3:9](#); [Ec 8:11](#)). (2) Amidst all the inequalities of religious opportunity measured out to men, and the mysterious bearing of this upon their character and destiny for eternity, the same great principles of judgment, in a form suited to their respective discipline, will be applied to all, and perfect equity will be seen to reign throughout every stage of the divine administration ([Ro 2:11-16](#)). (3) "The law written on the heart" ([Ro 2:14, 15](#))—or the Ethics of Natural Theology—may be said to be the one deep foundation on which all revealed religion reposes; and see on [Ro 1:19, 20](#), where we have what we may call its other foundation—the Physics and Metaphysics of Natural Theology. The testimony of these two passages is to the theologian invaluable, while in the breast of every teachable Christian it wakens such deep echoes as are inexpressibly solemn and precious. (4) High religious professions are a fearful aggravation of the inconsistencies of such as make them ([Ro 2:17-24](#)). See [2Sa 12:14](#). (5) As no external privileges, or badge of discipleship, will shield the unholy from the wrath of God, so neither will the want of them shut out from the kingdom of heaven such as have experienced without them that change of heart which the seals of God's covenant were designed to mark. In the sight of the great Searcher of hearts, the Judge of quick and dead, the renovation of the character in heart and life is all in all. In view of this, have not all baptized, sacramented disciples of the Lord Jesus, who "profess that they know God, but in works deny Him," need to tremble—who, under the guise of friends, are "the enemies of the cross of Christ?"

CHAPTER 3

Ro 3:1-8. Jewish Objections Answered.

1, 2. What advantage then hath the Jew?—that is, "If the final judgment will turn solely on the state of the heart, and this may be as good in the Gentile *without*, as in the Jew *within*, the sacred enclosure of God's covenant, what better are we Jews for all our advantages?"

Answer:

2. Much every way; chiefly, because—rather, "first, that."

unto them were committed the oracles of God—This remarkable expression, denoting "divine communications" in general, is transferred to the Scriptures to express their *oracular*, divine, authoritative character.

3, 4. For what if some did not believe?—It is the unbelief of the great body of the nation which the apostle points at; but as it sufficed for his argument to put the supposition thus gently, he uses this word "some" to soften prejudice.

shall their unbelief make the faith of God—or, "faithfulness of God."

of none effect?—"nullify," "invalidate" it.

4. God forbid—literally, "*Let it not be*," that is, "Away with such a thought"—a favorite expression of our apostle, when he would not only repudiate a supposed consequence of his doctrine, but express his abhorrence of it. "The Scriptures do not authorize such a use of God's name as must have been common among the English translators of the Bible" [Hodge].

yea, let God be—held

true, and every man a liar—that is, even though it should follow from this that every man is a liar.

when thou art judged—so in Ps 51:4, according to the *Septuagint*; but in the *Hebrew* and in our version, "when thou judgest." The general sentiment, however, is the same in both—that we are to vindicate the righteousness of God, at whatever expense to ourselves.

5, 6. But if, &c.—Another objection: "It would appear, then, that the more faithless we are, so much the more illustrious will the fidelity of God appear; and in that case, for Him to take vengeance on us for our unfaithfulness would be (to speak as men profanely do) unrighteousness in God."

Answer:

6. God forbid; for then how shall God judge the world?—that is, "Far from us be such a thought; for that would strike down all future judgment."

7, 8. For if the truth of God, &c.—A further illustration of the same sentiment: that is, "Such reasoning amounts to this—which indeed we who preach salvation by free grace are slanderously accused of teaching—that the more evil we do, the more glory will redound to God; a damnable principle." (Thus the apostle, instead of refuting this principle, thinks it enough to hold it up to execration, as one that shocks the moral sense).

On this brief section, *Note* (1) Mark the place here assigned to the Scriptures. In answer to the question, "What advantage hath the Jew?" or, "What profit is there of circumcision?" (Ro 3:1) those holding Romish views would undoubtedly have laid the stress upon the *priesthood*, as the glory of the Jewish economy. But in the apostle's esteem, "the oracles of God" were the jewel of the ancient Church (Ro 3:1, 2). (2) God's eternal purposes and man's free agency, as also the doctrine of salvation by grace and the unchanging obligations of God's law, have ever been subjected to the charge of inconsistency by those who will bow to no truth which their own reason cannot fathom. But amidst all the clouds and darkness which in this present state envelop the divine administration and many of the truths of the Bible, such broad and deep principles as are here laid down, and which shine in their own luster, will be found the sheet-anchor of our faith. "Let God be true, and every man a liar" (Ro 3:4); and as many advocates of salvation by grace as say, "Let us do evil that good may come," "their damnation is just" (Ro 3:8).

Ro 3:9-20. That the Jew Is Shut Up under Like Condemnation with the Gentile Is Proved by His Own Scripture.

9. are we better than they?—"do we excel them?"

No, in no wise—Better off the Jews certainly were, for having the oracles of God to *teach* them better; but as they *were* no better, that only aggravated their guilt.

10-12. As it is written, &c.—(Ps 14:1-3; 53:1-3). These statements of the Psalmist were indeed suggested by particular manifestations of human depravity occurring under his own eye; but as this only showed what man, when unrestrained, is in his present condition, they were quite pertinent to the apostle's purpose.

13-18. Their, &c.—From generals, the apostle here comes to particulars, culling from different parts of Scripture passages which speak of depravity as it affects *the different members of the body*; as if to show more affectingly how "from the sole of the foot even to the head there is no soundness" in us.

throat is an open sepulchre—(Ps 5:9); that is, "What proceeds out of their heart, and finds vent in speech and action through the throat, is like the pestilential breath of an open grave."

with their tongues they have used deceit—(Ps 5:9); that is, "That tongue which is man's glory (Ps 16:9; 57:8) is prostituted to the purposes of deception."

the poison of asps is under their lips—(Ps 140:3); that is, "Those lips which should 'drop as an honeycomb,' and 'feed many,' and 'give thanks unto His name' (So 4:11; Pr 10:21; Heb 13:15), are employed to secrete and to dart deadly poison."

14. Whose mouth, &c.—(Ps 10:7): that is, "That mouth which should be 'most sweet' (So 5:16), being 'set on fire of hell' (Jas 3:6), is filled with burning wrath against those whom it should only bless."

15. Their feet *are* swift to shed blood—(Pr 1:16; Isa 59:7): that is, "Those feet, which should 'run the way of God's commandments' (Ps 119:32), are employed to conduct men to deeds of darkest crime."

16, 17. Destruction and misery *are* in their ways; and the way of peace have they not known—This is a supplementary statement about men's *ways*, suggested by what had been said about the "feet," and expresses the mischief and misery which men scatter in their path, instead of that peace which, as strangers to it themselves, they cannot diffuse.

18. There is no fear of God before their eyes—(Ps 36:1): that is, "Did the eyes but 'see Him who is invisible' (Heb 11:27), a reverential awe of Him with whom we have to do would chasten every joy and lift the soul out of its deepest depressions; but to all this the natural man is a stranger." How graphic is this picture of human depravity, finding its way through each several organ of the body into the life (Ro 3:13-17): but how small a part of the "desperate wickedness" that is *within* (Jer 17:9) "proceedeth *out* of the heart of man!" (Mr 7:21-23; Ps 19:12).

19. Now we know that what ... the law—that is, the Scriptures, considered as a law of duty.

saith, it saith to them that are under the law—of course, therefore, to the Jews.

that every mouth—opened in self-justification.

may be stopped, and all the world may become—that is, be seen to be, and own itself.

guilty—and so condemned

before God.

20. Therefore by the deeds of—obedience to

the law there shall no flesh be justified—that is, be held and treated as righteous; as is plain from the whole scope and strain of the argument.

in his sight—at His bar (Ps 143:2).

for by the law is the knowledge of sin—(See on Ro 4:15; Ro 7:7; and 1Jo 3:4).

Note, How broad and deep does the apostle in this section lay the foundations of his great doctrine of Justification by free grace—in the disorder of man's whole nature, the consequent universality of human guilt, the condemnation, by reason of the breach of divine law, of the whole world, and the impossibility of justification before God by obedience to that violated law! Only when these humiliating conclusions are accepted and felt, are we in a condition to appreciate and embrace the grace of the Gospel, next to be opened up.

Ro 3:21-26. God's Justifying Righteousness through Faith in Jesus Christ, Alike Adapted to Our Necessities and Worthy of Himself.

21-23. But now the righteousness of God—(See on Ro 1:17).

without the law—that is, a righteousness to which our obedience to the law contributes nothing whatever (Ro 3:28; Ga 2:16).

is manifested, being witnessed—attested.

by the law and the prophets—the Old Testament Scriptures. Thus this justifying righteousness, though *new*, as only now fully disclosed, is an *old* righteousness, predicted and foreshadowed in the Old Testament.

22. by faith of—that is, "in"

Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe—that is, perhaps, brought nigh "unto all" men the Gospel, and actually "upon all" believing men, as theirs in possession [Luther and others]; but most interpreters understand both statements" of believers as only a more emphatic way of saying that all believers, without distinction or exception, are put in possession of this gratuitous justification, purely by faith in Christ Jesus.

for there is no difference.

23. for all have sinned—Though men differ greatly in the *nature* and *extent* of their sinfulness, there is absolutely no difference between the best and the worst of men, in the *fact* that "all have sinned," and so underlie the wrath of God.

and come short of the glory—or "praise"

of God—that is, "have failed to earn His approbation" (compare [Joh 12:43](#), *Greek*). So the best interpreters.

24. justified freely—without anything done on our part to deserve.

by his grace—His free love.

through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus—a most important clause; teaching us that though justification is quite gratuitous, it is not a mere *fiat* of the divine will, but based on a "Redemption," that is, "the payment of a Ransom," in Christ's death. That this is the sense of the word "redemption," when applied to Christ's death, will appear clear to any impartial student of the passages where it occurs.

25, 26. Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation—or "propitiatory sacrifice."

through faith in his blood—Some of the best interpreters, observing that "faith *upon*" is the usual phrase in *Greek*, not "faith *in*" Christ, would place a "comma" after "faith," and understand the words as if written thus: "to be a propitiation, in His blood, through faith." But "faith *in* Christ" is used in [Ga 3:26](#) and [Eph 1:15](#); and "faith in His blood" is the natural and appropriate meaning here.

to declare his righteousness for the remission—rather, "pretermission" or "passing by."

of sins—"the sins."

that are past—not the sins committed by the believer before he embraces Christ, but the sins committed under the old economy, before Christ came to "put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself."

through the forbearance of God—God not *remitting* but only *forbearing* to punish them, or passing them by, until an adequate atonement for them should be made. In thus not imputing them, God *was* righteous, but He was not *seen* to be so; there was no "mani-

festation of His righteousness" in doing so under the ancient economy. But now that God can "set forth" Christ as a "propitiation for sin through faith in His blood," the righteousness of His procedure in passing by the sins of believers before, and in now remitting them, is "manifested," declared, brought fully out to the view of the whole world. (Our translators have unfortunately missed this glorious truth, taking "the sins that are past" to mean the past sins of believers—committed before faith—and rendering, by the word "remission," what means only a "passing by"; thus making it appear that "remission of sins" is "through the forbearance of God," which it certainly is not).

26. To declare ... at this time—now for the first time, under the Gospel.

his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus—Glorious paradox! "Just in punishing," and "merciful in pardoning," men can understand; but "just in justifying the guilty," startles them. But the propitiation through faith in Christ's blood resolves the paradox and harmonizes the discordant elements. For in that "God hath made Him to be sin for us who knew no sin," *justice* has full satisfaction; and in that "we are made the righteousness of God in Him," *mercy* has her heart's delight!

Note, (1) One way of a sinner's justification is taught in the Old Testament and in the New alike: only more dimly during the twilight of Revelation; in unclouded light under "its perfect day" (Ro 3:21). (2) As there is no difference in the *need*, so is there none in the *liberty to appropriate* the provided salvation. The best need to be saved by faith in Jesus Christ; and the worst only need that. On this common ground all saved sinners meet here, and will stand for ever (Ro 3:22-24). (3) It is on the atoning blood of Christ, as the one propitiatory sacrifice which God hath set forth to the eye of the guilty, that the faith of the convinced and trembling sinner fastens for deliverance from wrath. Though he knows that he is "justified freely, by God's grace," it is only because it is "through the *redemption* that is in Christ Jesus" that he is able to find peace and rest even in this (Ro 3:25). (4) The strictly accurate view of believers under the Old Testament is not that of a company of *pardoned* men, but of men whose sins, put up with and passed by in the meantime, awaited a *future expiation* in the fulness of time (Ro 3:25, 26; see on Lu 9:31; Heb 9:15; Heb 11:39, 40).

Ro 3:27-31. Inferences from the Foregoing Doctrines and an Objection Answered.

Inference first: *Boasting is excluded by this, and no other way of justification.*

27, 28. Where is boasting then? ... excluded. By what law?—on what principle or scheme?.

of works? Nay; but by the law of faith.

28. Therefore we conclude, &c.—It is the unavoidable tendency of dependence upon our own works, less or more, for acceptance with God, to beget a spirit of "boasting." But that God should encourage such a spirit in sinners, by any procedure of His, is incredible. This therefore stamps falsehood upon every form of "justification by works," whereas the doctrine that.

Our faith *receives* a righteousness
That makes the sinner just,

manifestly and entirely excludes "boasting"; and this is the best evidence of its truth.

Inference second: *This and no other way of salvation is adapted alike to Jew and Gentile.*

29. Is he the God of the Jews only? &c.—The way of salvation must be one equally suited to the whole family of fallen man: but the doctrine of justification by faith is the only one that lays the basis of a Universal Religion; this therefore is another mark of its truth.

30. it is one God who shall justify—"has unchangeably fixed that He shall justify."

the circumcision by—"of"

faith, and the uncircumcision through faith—probably this is but a varied statement of the same truth for greater emphasis (see [Ro 3:22](#)); though Bengel thinks that the justification of the Jews, as the born heirs of the promise, may be here purposely said to be "of faith," while that of the Gentiles, previously "strangers to the covenants of promise," may be said to be "through faith," as thus admitted into a new family.

Objection:

31. Do we then make void the law through faith?—"Does this doctrine of justification by faith, then, dissolve the obligation of the law? If so, it cannot be of God. But away with such a thought, for it does just the reverse."

God forbid: yea, we establish the law—It will be observed here, that, important as was this objection, and opening up as it did so noble a field for the illustration of the peculiar glory of the Gospel, the apostle does no more here than indignantly repel it, intending at a subsequent stage of his argument ([Ro 6:1-23](#)) to resume and discuss it at length.

Note, (1) It is a fundamental requisite of all true religion that it tend to humble the sinner and exalt God; and every system which breeds self-righteousness, or cherishes boasting, bears falsehood on its face ([Ro 3:27, 28](#)). (2) The fitness of the Gospel to be a universal religion, beneath which the guilty of every name and degree are invited and warranted to take shelter and repose, is a glorious evidence of its truth ([Ro 3:29, 30](#)). (3) The glory of God's law, in its eternal and immutable obligations, is then only fully apprehended by the sinner, and then only is it enthroned in the depths of his soul, when, believing that "He was made sin for him who knew no sin," he sees himself "made the righteousness of God in Him" ([2Co 5:21](#)). Thus do we not make void the law through faith: yea, we establish the law. (4) This chapter, and particularly the latter part of it, "is the proper seat of the Pauline doctrine of Justification, and the grand proof-passage of the Protestant doctrine of the Imputation of Christ's righteousness and of Justification not on account of, but through faith alone" [Philippi]. To make good this doctrine, and reseal it in the faith and affection of the Church, was worth all the bloody struggles that it cost our fathers, and it will be the wisdom and safety, the life and vigor of the churches, to "stand fast in this liberty wherewith Christ hath

made them free, and not be again entangled"—in the very least degree—"with the yoke of bondage" ([Ga 5:1](#)).

CHAPTER 4

Ro 4:1-25. The Foregoing Doctrine of Justification by Faith Illustrated from the Old Testament.

First: *Abraham was justified by faith.*

1-3. What shall we say then that Abraham, our father as pertaining to the flesh, hath found?—that is, (as the order in the original shows), "hath found, as pertaining to ('according to,' or 'through') the flesh"; meaning, "by all his natural efforts or legal obedience."

2. For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory; but not before God—"If works were the ground of Abraham's justification, he would have matter for boasting; but as it is perfectly certain that he hath none in the sight of God, it follows that Abraham could not have been justified by works." And to this agree the words of Scripture.

3. For what saith the, Scripture? Abraham believed God, and it—his faith.

was counted to him for righteousness—(**Ge 15:6**). Romish expositors and Arminian Protestants make this to mean that God accepted Abraham's act of believing as a substitute for complete obedience. But this is at variance with the whole spirit and letter of the apostle's teaching. Throughout this whole argument, *faith* is set in direct opposition to *works*, in the matter of justification—and even in **Ro 4:4, 5**. The meaning, therefore, cannot possibly be that the mere act of believing—which is as much a work as any other piece of commanded duty (**Joh 6:29; 1Jo 3:23**)—was counted to Abraham for all obedience. The meaning plainly is that Abraham believed in the promises which embraced Christ (**Ge 12:3; 15:5, &c.**), as we believe in Christ Himself; and in both cases, faith is merely the instrument that puts us in possession of the blessing gratuitously bestowed.

4, 5. Now to him that worketh—as a servant for wages.

is the reward not reckoned of grace—as a matter of favor.

but of debt—as a matter of right.

5. But to him that worketh not—who, despairing of acceptance with God by "working" for it the work of obedience, does not attempt it.

but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly—casts himself upon the mercy of Him that justifieth those who deserve only condemnation.

his faith, &c.—(See on **Ro 4:3**).

Second: *David sings of the same justification.*

6-8. David also describeth—"speaketh," "pronounceth."

the blessedness of the man unto whom the Lord imputeth righteousness without works—whom, though void of all good works, He, nevertheless, regards and treats as righteous.

7, 8. Saying, Blessed, &c.—(**Ps 32:1, 2**). David here sings in express terms only of "transgression forgiven, sin covered, iniquity not imputed"; but as the negative blessing necessarily includes the positive, the passage is strictly in point.

9-12. Cometh this blessedness then, &c.—that is, "Say not, All this is spoken of the *circumcised*, and is therefore no evidence of God's *general* way of justifying men; for Abraham's justification took place long before he was circumcised, and so could have no dependence upon that rite: nay, 'the sign of circumcision' was given to Abraham as 'a seal' (or token) of the (justifying) righteousness which he had *before* he was circumcised; in order that he might stand forth to every age as *the parent believer*—the model man of justification by faith—after whose type, as the first public example of it, all were to be moulded, whether Jew or Gentile, who should thereafter believe to life everlasting."

13-15. For the promise, &c.—This is merely an enlargement of the foregoing reasoning, applying to the *law* what had just been said of *circumcision*.

that he should be the heir of the world—or, that "all the families of the earth should be blessed in him."

was not to Abraham or to his seed through the law—in virtue of obedience to the law.

but through the righteousness of faith—in virtue of his simple faith in the divine promises.

14. For if they which are of the law be heirs—If the blessing is to be earned by obedience to the law.

faith is made void—the whole divine method is subverted.

15. Because the law worketh wrath—has nothing to give to those who break it but condemnation and vengeance.

for where there is no law, there is no transgression—It is just the law that makes transgression, in the case of those who break it; nor can the one exist without the other.

16, 17. Therefore, &c.—A general summary: "Thus justification is by *faith*, in order that its purely *gracious* character may be seen, and that all who follow in the steps of Abraham's faith—whether of his natural seed or no—may be assured of the like justification with the parent believer."

17. As it is written, &c.—(Ge 17:5). This is quoted to justify his calling Abraham the "father of us all," and is to be viewed as a parenthesis.

before—that is, "in the reckoning of."

him whom he believed—that is, "Thus Abraham, in the reckoning of Him whom he believed, is the father of us all, in order that all may be assured, that doing as he did, they shall be treated as he was."

even God, quickeneth the dead—The nature and greatness of that faith of Abraham which we are to copy is here strikingly described. What he was required to believe being above nature, his faith had to fasten upon God's power to surmount physical incapacity, and call into being what did not then exist. But God having made the promise, Abraham believed Him in spite of those obstacles. This is still further illustrated in what follows.

18-22. Who against hope—when no ground for hope appeared.

believed in hope—that is, cherished the believing expectation.

that he might become the father of many nations, according to that which was spoken, So shall thy seed be—that is, Such "as the stars of heaven," [Ge 15:5](#).

19. he considered not, &c.—paid no attention to those physical obstacles, both in himself and in Sarah, which might seem to render the fulfilment hopeless.

20. He staggered—hesitated

not ... but was strong in faith, giving glory to God—as able to make good His own word in spite of all obstacles.

21. And being fully persuaded, &c.—that is, the glory which Abraham's faith gave to God consisted in this, that, firm in the persuasion of God's ability to fulfil his promise, no difficulties shook him.

22. And therefore it was imputed, &c.—"Let all then take notice that this was not because of anything meritorious in Abraham, but merely because he so *believed*."

23-25. Now, &c.—Here is the application of this whole argument about Abraham: These things were not recorded as mere historical facts, but as illustrations for all time of God's method of justification by faith.

24. to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe in him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead—in Him that *hath* done this, even as Abraham believed that God *would* raise up a seed in whom all nations should be blessed.

25. Who was delivered for—"on account of."

our offences—that is, in order to expiate them by His blood.

and raised again for—"on account of," that is, in order to.

our justification—As His resurrection was the divine assurance that He had "put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself," and the crowning of His whole work, our justification is fitly connected with that glorious act.

Note, (1) The doctrine of justification by works, as it generates self-exaltation, is contrary to the first principles of all true religion ([Ro 4:2](#); and see on [Ro 3:21-26](#), *Note 1*). (2) The way of a sinner's justification has been the same in all time, and the testimony of the Old Testament on this subject is one with that of the New ([Ro 4:3](#), &c., and see on [Ro 3:27-31](#), *Note 1*). (3) Faith and works, in the matter of justification, are opposite and irreconcilable, even as grace and debt ([Ro 4:4, 5](#); and see on [Ro 11:6](#)). If God "justifies the ungodly," works cannot be, in any sense or to any degree, the ground of justification. For the same reason, the first requisite, in order to justification, must be (under the conviction that we are "ungodly") to despair of it by works; and the next, to "believe in Him that justifieth the ungodly"—that hath a justifying righteousness to bestow, and is ready to bestow it upon those who deserve none, and to embrace it accordingly. (4) The sacraments of the Church were never intended, and are not adapted, to *confer* grace, or the blessings of salvation, upon men. Their proper use is to set a divine *seal* upon a *state already existing*, and so, they *presuppose*, and do not

create it (Ro 4:8-12). As circumcision merely "sealed" Abraham's already existing acceptance with God, so with the sacraments of the New Testament. (5) As Abraham is "the heir of the world," all nations being blessed in him, through his Seed Christ Jesus, and justified solely according to the pattern of his faith, so the transmission of the true religion and all the salvation which the world will ever experience shall yet be traced back with wonder, gratitude, and joy, to that morning dawn when "the God of glory appeared unto our father Abraham, when he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Charran," Ac 7:2 (Ro 4:13). (6) Nothing gives more glory to God than simple faith in His word, especially when all things seem to render the fulfilment of it hopeless (Ro 4:18-21). (7) All the Scripture examples of faith were recorded on purpose to beget and encourage the like faith in every succeeding age (Ro 4:23, 24; and compare Ro 15:4). (8) *Justification*, in this argument, cannot be taken—as Romanists and other errorists insist—to mean a change upon men's *character*; for besides that this is to confound it with *Sanctification*, which has its appropriate place in this Epistle, the whole argument of the present chapter—and nearly all its more important clauses, expressions, and words—would in that case be unsuitable, and fitted only to mislead. Beyond all doubt it means exclusively a change upon men's *state* or *relation to God*; or, in scientific language, it is an *objective*, not a *subjective* change—a change from guilt and condemnation to acquittal and acceptance. And the best evidence that this is the key to the whole argument is, that it opens all the wards of the many-chambered lock with which the apostle has enriched us in this Epistle.

CHAPTER 5

Ro 5:1-11. The Blessed Effects of Justification by Faith.

The *proof* of this doctrine being now concluded, the apostle comes here to treat of its *fruits*, reserving the full consideration of this topic to another stage of the argument (**Ro 8:1-39**).

1. Therefore being—"having been."

justified by faith, we have peace with God, &c.—If we are to be guided by manuscript authority, the true reading here, beyond doubt, is, "Let us have peace"; a reading, however, which most reject, because they think it unnatural to exhort men to *have* what it belongs to God to *give*, because the apostle is not here giving exhortations, but stating matters of fact. But as it seems hazardous to set aside the decisive testimony of manuscripts, as to what the apostle *did* write, in favor of what we merely think he *ought* to have written, let us pause and ask—If it be the privilege of the justified to "*have* peace with God," why might not the apostle begin his enumeration of the fruits of justification by calling on believers to "realize" this peace as belonged to them, or cherish the joyful consciousness of it as their own? And if this is what he has done, it would not be necessary to continue in the same style, and the other fruits of justification might be set down, simply as matters of fact. This "peace" is first a change in God's relation to us; and next, as the consequence of this, a change on our part towards Him. God, on the one hand, has "reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ" (**2Co 5:18**); and we, on the other hand, setting our seal to this, "are reconciled to God" (**2Co 5:20**). The "propitiation" is the meeting-place; there the controversy on both sides terminates in an honorable and eternal "peace."

2. By whom also we have—"have had"

access by faith into this grace—favor with God.

wherein we stand—that is "To that same faith which *first* gave us 'peace with God' we owe our introduction into that *permanent standing* in the favor of God which the justified enjoy." As it is difficult to distinguish this from the peace first mentioned, we regard it as merely an additional phase of the same [Meyer, Philippi, Mehring], rather than something new [Beza, Tholuck, Hodge].

and rejoice—"glory," "boast," "triumph"—"rejoice" is not strong enough.

in hope of the glory of God—On "hope," see on **Ro 5:4**.

3, 4. we glory in tribulation also; knowing that tribulation worketh patience—Patience is the quiet endurance of what we cannot but wish removed, whether it be the withholding of promised good (**Ro 8:25**), or the continued experience of positive ill (as here). There is indeed a patience of unrenewed nature, which has something noble in it, though in many cases the offspring of pride, if not of something lower. Men have been known to endure every form of privation, torture, and death, without a murmur and without even visible emotion, merely because they deemed it unworthy of them to sink under unavoidable ill.

But this proud, stoical hardihood has nothing in common with the *grace* of patience—which is either the meek endurance of ill because it is of God (Job 1:21, 22; 2:10), or the calm waiting for promised good till His time to dispense it come (Heb 10:36); in the full persuasion that such trials are divinely appointed, are the needed discipline of God's children, are but for a definite period, and are not sent without abundant promises of "songs in the night." If such be the "patience" which "tribulation worketh," no wonder that

4. patience worketh experience—rather, "proof," as the same word is rendered in 2Co 2:9; 13:3; Php 2:22; that is, experimental *evidence* that we have "believed through grace."

and experience—"proof."

hope—"of the glory of God," as prepared for us. Thus have we hope in two distinct ways, and at two successive stages of the Christian life: *first*, immediately on believing, along with the sense of peace and abiding access to God (Ro 5:1); *next*, after the reality of this faith has been "proved," particularly by the patient endurance of trials sent to test it. We first get it by looking *away from ourselves* to the Lamb of God; next by looking *into* or *upon ourselves* as transformed by that "looking unto Jesus." In the one case, the mind acts (as they say) *objectively*; in the other, *subjectively*. The one is (as divines say) the *assurance of faith*; the other, the *assurance of sense*.

5. And hope maketh not ashamed—putteth not to shame, as empty hopes do.

because the love of God—that is, not "our love to God," as the Romish and some Protestant expositors (following some of the Fathers) represent it; but clearly "God's love to us"—as most expositors agree.

is shed abroad—literally, "poured forth," that is, copiously diffused (compare Joh 7:38; Tit 3:6).

by the Holy Ghost which is—rather, "was."

given unto us—that is, at the great Pentecostal effusion, which is viewed as the formal donation of the Spirit to the Church of God, for all time and for each believer. (*The Holy Ghost is here first introduced in this Epistle.*) It is as if the apostle had said, "And how can this hope of glory, which as believers we cherish, put us to shame, when we feel God Himself, by His Spirit given to us, drenching our hearts in sweet, all-subduing sensations of His wondrous love to us in Christ Jesus?" This leads the apostle to expatiate on the amazing character of that love.

6-8. For when we were yet without strength—that is, powerless to deliver ourselves, and so ready to perish.

in due time—at the appointed season.

Christ died for the ungodly—Three signal properties of God's love are here given: First, "Christ died *for the ungodly*," whose character, so far from meriting any interposition in their behalf, was altogether repulsive to the eye of God; second, He did this "when they were *without strength*"—with nothing between them and perdition but that self-originating divine

compassion; third, He did this "*at the due time*," when it was most fitting that it should take place (compare [Ga 4:4](#)), The two former of these properties the apostle now proceeds to illustrate.

7. For scarcely for a righteous man—a man of simply *unexceptionable* character.

will one—"any one"

die: yet peradventure for a good man—a man who, besides being unexceptionable, is *distinguished for goodness*, a benefactor to society.

some—"some one."

would—rather, "doth."

even dare to die—"Scarce an instance occurs of self-sacrifice for one merely upright; though for one who makes himself a blessing to society there *may* be found an example of such noble surrender of life" (So Bengel, Olshausen, Tholuck, Alford, Philippi). (To make the "righteous" and the "good" man here to mean the same person, and the whole sense to be that "though rare, the case may occur, of one making a sacrifice of life for a worthy character" [as Calvin, Beza, Fritzsche, Jowett], is extremely flat.)

8. But God commendeth—"setteth off," "displayeth"—in glorious contrast with all that men will do for each other.

his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners—that is, in a state not of positive "goodness," nor even of negative "righteousness," but on the contrary, "sinners," a state which His soul hateth.

Christ died for us—Now comes the overpowering inference, emphatically redoubled.

9, 10. Much more then, being—"having been"

now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him.

10. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being now—"having now been"

reconciled, we shall be saved by his life—that is "If that part of the Saviour's work which cost Him His blood, and which had to be wrought for persons incapable of the least sympathy either with His love or His labors in their behalf—even our 'justification,' our 'reconciliation'—is already completed; how much more will He do all that remains to be done, since He has it to do, not by death agonies any more, but in untroubled 'life,' and no longer for enemies, but for friends—from whom, at every stage of it, He receives the grateful response of redeemed and adoring souls?" To be "saved from wrath through Him," denotes here the whole work of Christ towards *believers*, from the moment of justification, when the wrath of God is turned away from them, till the Judge on the great white throne shall discharge that wrath upon them that "obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ"; and that work may all be summed up in "keeping them from falling, and presenting them faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy" ([Jude 24](#)): thus are they "saved from wrath through Him."

**11. And not only so, but we also joy—rather, "glory."
in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by—"through"**

whom we have now received the atonement—rather, "the reconciliation" (*Margin*), as the same word is rendered in [Ro 5:10](#) and in [2Co 5:18, 19](#). (In fact, the earlier meaning of the English word "atonement" was "the *reconciliation* of two estranged parties") [Trench]. The foregoing effects of justification were all benefits to ourselves, calling for gratitude; this last may be termed a purely disinterested one. Our first feeling towards God, after we have found peace with Him, is that of clinging gratitude for so costly a salvation; but no sooner have we learned to cry, Abba, Father, under the sweet sense of reconciliation, than "gloriation" in Him takes the place of dread of Him, and now He appears to us "altogether lovely!"

On this section, *Note*, (1) How gloriously does the Gospel evince its divine origin by basing all acceptable obedience on "peace with God," laying the foundations of this peace in a righteous "justification" of the sinner "through our Lord Jesus Christ," and making this the entrance to a permanent standing in the divine favor, and a triumphant expectation of future glory! ([Ro 5:1, 2](#)). Other peace, worthy of the name, there is none; and as those who are strangers to it rise not to the enjoyment of such high fellowship with God, so they have neither any taste for it nor desire after it. (2) As only believers possess the true secret of patience under trials, so, although "not joyous but grievous" in themselves ([Heb 12:17](#)), when trials divinely sent afford them the opportunity of evidencing their faith by the grace of patience under them, they should "count it all joy" ([Ro 5:3, 4](#); and see [Jas 1:2, 3](#)). (3) "Hope," in the New Testament sense of the term, is not a lower degree of faith or assurance (as many now say, I *hope* for heaven, but am not *sure* of it); but invariably means "the confident expectation of future good." It presupposes faith; and what faith *assures* us will be ours, hope accordingly *expects*. In the nourishment of this hope, the soul's look *outward* to Christ for the ground of it, and *inward* upon ourselves for evidence of its reality, must act and react upon each other ([Ro 5:2](#) and [Ro 5:4](#) compared). (4) It is the proper office of the Holy Ghost to beget in the soul the full conviction and joyful consciousness of the love of God in Christ Jesus to sinners of mankind, and to ourselves in particular; and where this exists, it carries with it such an assurance of final salvation as cannot deceive ([Ro 5:5](#)). (5) The *justification* of sinful men is not in virtue of their amendment, but of "the *blood* of God's Son"; and while this is expressly affirmed in [Ro 5:9](#), our *reconciliation* to God by the "*death* of His Son," affirmed in [Ro 5:10](#), is but a variety of the same statement. In both, the blessing meant is the *restoration of the sinner to a righteous standing* in the sight of God; and in both, the meritorious ground of this, which is intended to be conveyed, is the *expiatory sacrifice* of God's Son. (6) Gratitude to God for redeeming love, if it could exist without delight in God Himself, would be a selfish and worthless feeling; but when the one rises into the other—the transporting sense of eternal "reconciliation" passing into "gloriation in God" Himself—then the

lower is sanctified and sustained by the higher, and each feeling is perfective of the other (Ro 5:11).

Ro 5:12-21. Comparison and Contrast between Adam and Christ in Their Relation to the Human Family.

(This profound and most weighty section has occasioned an immense deal of critical and theological discussion, in which every point, and almost every clause, has been contested. We can here but set down what appears to us to be the only tenable view of it as a whole and of its successive clauses, with some slight indication of the grounds of our judgment).

12. Wherefore—that is, Things being so; referring back to the whole preceding argument. **as by one man**—Adam.

sin—considered here in its guilt, criminality, penal desert.

entered into the world, and death by sin—as the penalty of sin.

and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned—rather, "all sinned," that is, in that one man's first sin. Thus death reaches every individual of the human family, as the penalty due to *himself*. (So, in substance, Bengel, Hodge, Philippi). Here we should have expected the apostle to finish his sentence, in some such way as this: "Even so, by one man righteousness has entered into the world, and life by righteousness." But, instead of this, we have a digression, extending to five verses, to illustrate the important statement of Ro 5:12; and it is only at Ro 5:18 that the comparison is resumed and finished.

13, 14. For until the law sin was in the world—that is during all the period from Adam "until the law" of Moses was given, God continued to treat men as sinners.

but sin is not imputed where there is no law—"There must therefore have been a law during that period, because sin *was* then imputed"; as is now to be shown.

14. Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression—But who are they?—a much contested question. *Infants* (say some), who being guiltless of *actual sin*, may be said not to have sinned in the way that Adam did [Augustine, Beza, Hodge]. But why should infants be specially connected with the period "from Adam to Moses," since they die alike in every period? And if the apostle meant to express here the death of infants, why has he done it so enigmatically? Besides, the death of infants is comprehended in the universal mortality on account of the first sin, so emphatically expressed in Ro 5:12; what need then to specify it here? and why, if not necessary, should we presume it to be meant here, unless the language unmistakably point to it—which it certainly does not? The meaning then must be, that "death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those that had not, like Adam, transgressed against a positive commandment, threatening death to the disobedient." (So most interpreters). In this case, the particle "even," instead of specifying one particular class of those who lived "from Adam to Moses" (as the other interpretation supposes), merely explains what it was that made the case of those who died from Adam to Moses worthy of special notice—namely,

that "though unlike Adam and all since Moses, those who lived between the two had no positive threatening of death for transgression, nevertheless, death reigned *even over them*."

who is the figure—or, "a type."

of him that was to come—Christ. "This clause is inserted on the first mention of the name "Adam," the *one man* of whom he is speaking, to recall the purpose for which he is treating of him, as *the figure of Christ*" [Alford]. The point of analogy intended here is plainly the *public character* which both sustained, neither of the two being regarded in the divine procedure towards men as mere *individual* men, but both alike as *representative* men. (Some take the proper supplement here to be "Him [that is] to come"; understanding the apostle to speak from his own time, and to refer to Christ's second coming [Fritzsche, De Wette, Alford]. But this is unnatural, since the analogy of the second Adam to the first has been in full development ever since "God exalted Him to be a Prince and a Saviour," and it will only remain to be consummated at His second coming. The simple meaning is, as nearly all interpreters agree, that Adam is a type of Him who was to come after him in the same public character, and so to be "the second Adam").

15. But—"Yet," "Howbeit."

not as the offence—"trespass."

so also is the free gift—or "the gracious gift," "the gift of grace." The two cases present points of contrast as well as resemblance.

For if, &c.—rather, "For if through the offense of the one the many died (that is, in that one man's first sin), much more did the grace of God, and the free gift by grace, even that of the one man, Jesus Christ, abound unto the many." By "the many" is meant the *mass* of mankind represented respectively by Adam and Christ, as opposed, not to *few*, but to "the one" who represented them. By "the free gift" is meant (as in [Ro 5:17](#)) the glorious gift of *justifying righteousness*; this is expressly distinguished from "the grace of God," as the *effect* from the *cause*; and both are said to "abound" towards us in Christ—in what sense will appear in [Ro 5:16, 17](#). And the "much more," of the one case than the other, does not mean that we get much more of good by Christ than of evil by Adam (for it is not a case of quantity at all); but that we have much more reason to expect, or it is much more agreeable to our ideas of God, that the many should be benefited by the merit of one, than that they should suffer for the sin of one; and if the latter has happened, *much more* may we assure ourselves of the former [Philippi, Hodge].

16. And not as it was by one that sinned, so is the gift—"Another point of contrast may be mentioned."

for the judgment—"sentence."

was by one—rather, "was of one," meaning not "one man," but, as appears from the next clause, "one offense."

to condemnation, but the free gift—"gift of grace."

is of many offences unto justification—a glorious point of contrast. "The condemnation by Adam was for *one sin*; but the justification by Christ is an absolution not only from the guilt of that first offense, mysteriously attaching to every individual of the race, but from the *countless offenses* it, to which, as a germ lodged in the bosom of every child of Adam, it unfolds itself in his life." This is the meaning of "grace *abounding* towards us in the *abundance of the gift* of righteousness." It is a grace not only rich in its *character*, but rich in *detail*; it is a "righteousness" not only rich in a *complete justification* of the guilty, condemned sinner; but rich in the *amplitude of the ground* which it covers, leaving no one sin of any of the justified uncanceled, but making him, though loaded with the guilt of myriads of offenses, "the righteousness of God in Christ."

17. For if by—"the"

one man's offence death reigned by one—"through the one."

much more shall they which receive—"the"

abundance of grace and of the gift of—justifying

righteousness ... reign in life by one Jesus Christ—"through the one." We have here the two ideas of [Ro 5:15](#) and [Ro 5:16](#) sublimely combined into one, as if the subject had grown upon the apostle as he advanced in his comparison of the two cases. Here, for the first time in this section, he speaks of that LIFE which springs out of justification, in contrast with the death which springs from sin and follows condemnation. The proper idea of it therefore is, "Right to live"—"Righteous life"—life possessed and enjoyed with the good will, and in conformity with the eternal law, of "Him that sitteth on the Throne"; life therefore in its widest sense—life in the whole man and throughout the whole duration of human existence, the life of blissful and loving relationship to God in soul and body, for ever and ever. It is worthy of note, too, that while he says death "reigned over" us through Adam, he does not say Life "reigns over us" through Christ; lest he should seem to invest this new life with the very attribute of death—that of fell and malignant tyranny, of which we were the hapless victims. Nor does he say Life reigns *in* us, which would have been a scriptural enough idea; but, which is much more pregnant, "*We shall reign in life.*" While *freedom* and *might* are implied in the figure of "reigning," "life" is represented as the glorious territory or atmosphere of that reign. And by recurring to the idea of [Ro 5:16](#), as to the "many offenses" whose complete pardon shows "the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness," the whole statement is to this effect: "If one man's one offense let loose against us the tyrant power of Death, to hold us as its victims in helpless bondage, 'much more,' when we stand forth enriched with God's 'abounding grace' and in the beauty of a complete absolution from countless offenses, shall we expiate in a life divinely owned and legally secured, 'reigning' in exultant freedom and unchallenged might, through that other matchless 'One,' Jesus Christ!" (On the import of the *future* tense in this last clause, see on [Ro 5:19](#), and [Ro 6:5](#)).

18. Therefore—now at length resuming the unfinished comparison of [Ro 5:12](#), in order to give *formally* the concluding member of it, which had been done once and again *substantially*, in the intermediate verses.

as by the offence of one judgment came—or, more simply, "it came."

upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came—rather, "it came."

upon all men to justification of life—(So Calvin, Bengel, Olshausen, Tholuck, Hodge, Philippi). But better, as we judge: "As through one offense it [came] upon all men to condemnation; even so through one righteousness [it came] upon all men to justification of life"—(So Beza, Grotius, Ferme, Meyer, De Wette, Alford, *Revised Version*). In this case, the apostle, resuming the statement of [Ro 5:12](#), expresses it in a more concentrated and vivid form—suggested no doubt by the expression in [Ro 5:16](#), "through one offense," representing Christ's whole work, considered as the ground of our justification, as "ONE RIGHTEOUSNESS." (Some would render the peculiar word here employed, "one righteous act" [Alford, &c.]; understanding by it Christ's *death* as the one redeeming act which reversed the one undoing act of Adam. But this is to limit the apostle's idea too much; for as the same word is properly rendered "righteousness" in [Ro 8:4](#), where it means "the righteousness of the law as fulfilled by us who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit," so here it denotes Christ's whole "obedience unto death," considered as the one meritorious ground of the reversal of the condemnation which came by Adam. But on this, and on the expression, "all men," see on [Ro 5:19](#). The expression "justification of life," is a vivid combination of two ideas already expatiated upon, meaning "justification entitling to and issuing in the rightful possession and enjoyment of life").

19. For, &c.—better, "For as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, even so by the obedience of the One shall the many be made righteous." On this great verse observe: *First*, By the "obedience" of Christ here is plainly not meant more than what divines call His *active* obedience, as distinguished from His sufferings and death; it is the entire work of Christ in its *obediential* character. Our Lord Himself represents even His death as His great act of obedience to the Father: "This commandment (that is, to lay down and resume His life) have I received of My Father" ([Joh 10:8](#)). *Second*, The significant word twice rendered *made*, does not signify to *work a change upon* a person or thing, but to *constitute* or *ordain*, as will be seen from all the places where it is used. Here, accordingly, it is intended to express that *judicial act* which holds men, in virtue of their connection with Adam, as sinners; and, in connection with Christ, as righteous. *Third*, The change of *tense* from the past to the future—"as through Adam we *were* made sinners, so through Christ we *shall be* made righteous"—delightfully expresses the enduring character of the act, and of the economy to which such acts belong, in contrast with the for-ever-past ruin of believers in Adam. (See on [Ro 6:5](#)). *Fourth*, The "all men" of [Ro 5:18](#) and the "many" of [Ro 5:19](#) are the same party, though

under a slightly different aspect. In the latter case, the contrast is between the *one* representative (Adam—Christ) and the *many* whom he represented; in the former case, it is between the one *head* (Adam—Christ) and the *human race*, affected for death and life respectively by the actings of that one. Only in this latter case it is the redeemed family of man that is alone in view; it is *humanity* as actually lost, but also as actually saved, as ruined and recovered. Such as refuse to fall in with the high purpose of God to constitute His Son a "second Adam," the Head of a new race, and as impenitent and unbelieving finally perish, have no place in this section of the Epistle, whose sole object is to show how God repairs in the second Adam the evil done by the first. (Thus the doctrine of *universal restoration* has no place here. Thus too the forced interpretation by which the "justification of all" is made to mean a justification merely in *possibility* and *offer* to all, and the "justification of the many" to mean the *actual* justification of as many as believe [Alford, &c.], is completely avoided. And thus the harshness of comparing a *whole* fallen family with a recovered *part* is got rid of. However true it be in *fact* that part of mankind is not saved, this is not the *aspect* in which the subject is here presented. It is *totals* that are compared and contrasted; and it is the *same total* in two successive conditions—namely, *the human race* as ruined in Adam and recovered in Christ).

20, 21. Moreover the law—"The law, however." The Jew might say, If the whole purposes of God towards men center in Adam and Christ, where does "the law" come in, and what was the use of it? *Answer:* It

entered—But the word expresses an important idea besides "entering." It signifies, "entered incidentally," or "parenthetically." (In *Ga 2:4* the same word is rendered, "came in *privily*.") The meaning is, that the promulgation of the law at Sinai was no primary or essential feature of the divine plan, but it was "added" (*Ga 3:19*) for a subordinate purpose—the more fully to reveal the evil occasioned by Adam, and the need and glory of the remedy by Christ.

that the offence might abound—or, "be multiplied." But what offense? Throughout all this section "the offense" (four times repeated besides here) has one definite meaning, namely, "the one first offense of Adam"; and this, in our judgment, is its meaning here also: "All our multitudinous breaches of the law are nothing but *that one first offense*, lodged mysteriously in the bosom of every child of Adam as an *offending principal*, and *multiplying itself* into myriads of particular offenses in the life of each." What was one *act* of disobedience in the head has been converted into a vital and virulent *principle* of disobedience in all the members of the human family, whose every act of wilful rebellion proclaims itself the child of the original transgression.

But where sin abounded—or, "was multiplied."

grace did much more abound—rather, "did exceedingly abound," or "superabound." The comparison here is between the multiplication of one offense into countless transgressions, and such an overflow of grace as more than meets that appalling case.

21. That as sin—Observe, the word "offense" is no more used, as that had been sufficiently illustrated; but—what better befitted this comprehensive summation of the whole matter—the great general term *sin*.

hath reigned unto death—rather, "in death," triumphing and (as it were) revelling in that complete destruction of its victims.

even so might grace reign—In [Ro 5:14, 17](#) we had the reign of *death* over the guilty and condemned in Adam; here it is the reign of the mighty *causes* of these—of Sin which clothes Death a Sovereign with venomous *power* ([1Co 15:56](#)) and with awful *authority* ([Ro 6:23](#)), and of Grace, the grace which originated the scheme of salvation, the grace which "sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world," the grace which "made Him to be sin for us who knew no sin," the grace which "makes us to be the righteousness of God in Him," so that "we who receive *the abundance of grace* and of the gift of righteousness do reign in life by One, Jesus Christ!"

through righteousness—not *ours* certainly ("the obedience of Christians," to use the wretched language of Grotius) nor yet exactly "justification" [Stuart, Hodge]; but rather, "the (justifying) righteousness of Christ" [Beza, Alford, and in substance, Olshausen, Meyer]; the same which in [Ro 5:19](#) is called His "obedience," meaning His whole mediatorial work in the flesh. This is here represented as the *righteous medium* through which grace reaches its objects and attains all its ends, the stable throne from which Grace as a Sovereign dispenses its saving benefits to as many as are brought under its benign sway.

unto eternal life—which is salvation in its highest form and fullest development for ever.

by Jesus Christ our Lord—Thus, on that "Name which is above every name," the echoes of this hymn to the glory of "Grace" die away, and "Jesus is left alone."

On reviewing this golden section of our Epistle, the following additional remarks occur: (1) If this section does not teach that the whole race of Adam, standing in him as their federal head, "sinned in him and fell with him in his first transgression," we may despair of any intelligible exposition of it. The apostle, after saying that Adam's sin introduced death into the world, does not say "and so death passed upon all men for that *Adam* "sinned," but "for that *all sinned*." Thus, according to the teaching of the apostle, "the death of all is for the sin of all"; and as this cannot mean the personal sins of each individual, but some sin of which unconscious infants are guilty equally with adults, it can mean nothing but the one "first transgression" of their common head, regarded as *the sin of each* of his race, and punished, as such, with death. It is vain to start back from this imputation to all of the guilt of Adam's first sin, as wearing the appearance of *injustice*. For not only are all other theories liable to the same objection, in some other form—besides being inconsistent with the text—but the actual *facts of human nature*, which none dispute, and which cannot be explained away, involve essentially the same difficulties as the great *principle* on which the apostle here ex-

plains them. If we admit this principle, on the authority of our apostle, a flood of light is at once thrown upon certain features of the divine procedure, and certain portions of the divine oracles, which otherwise are involved in much darkness; and if the principle itself seem hard to digest, it is not harder than the *existence of evil*, which, as a fact, admits of no dispute, but, as a feature in the divine administration, admits of no explanation in the present state. (2) What is called *original sin*—or that depraved tendency to evil with which every child of Adam comes into the world—is not formally treated of in this section (and even in the seventh chapter, it is rather its nature and operation than its connection with the first sin which is handled). But indirectly, this section bears testimony to it; representing the one original offense, unlike every other, as having an *enduring vitality* in the bosom of every child of Adam, as a principle of disobedience, whose virulence has gotten it the familiar name of "original sin." (3) In what sense is the word "*death*" used throughout this section? Not certainly as mere *temporal* death, as Arminian commentators affirm. For as Christ came to undo what Adam did, which is all comprehended in the word "death," it would hence follow that Christ has merely dissolved the sentence by which soul and body are parted in death; in other words, merely procured the resurrection of the body. But the New Testament throughout teaches that the salvation of Christ is from a vastly more comprehensive "death" than that. But neither is death here used merely in the sense of *penal evil*, that is, "any evil inflicted in punishment of sin and for the support of law" [Hodge]. This is too indefinite, making death a mere figure of speech to denote "penal evil" in general—an idea foreign to the simplicity of Scripture—or at least making death, strictly so called, only one part of the thing meant by it, which ought not to be resorted to if a more simple and natural explanation can be found. By "death" then, in this section, we understand the sinner's *destruction*, in the only sense in which he is capable of it. Even temporal death is called "destruction" ([De 7:23](#); [1Sa 5:11](#), &c.), as extinguishing all that men regard as life. But a destruction extending to the *soul* as well as the body, and *into the future world*, is clearly expressed in [Mt 7:13](#); [2Th 1:9](#); [2Pe 3:16](#), &c. This is the penal "death" of our section, and in this view of it we retain its proper sense. Life—as a state of enjoyment of the favor of God, of pure fellowship with Him, and voluntary subjection to Him—is a blighted thing from the moment that sin is found in the creature's skirts; in that sense, the threatening, "In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die," was carried into immediate effect in the case of Adam when he fell; who was thenceforward "dead while he lived." Such are all his posterity from their birth. The separation of soul and body in temporal death carries the sinner's destruction a stage farther; dissolving his connection with that world out of which he extracted a pleasurable, though unblest, existence, and ushering him into the presence of his Judge—first as a disembodied spirit, but ultimately in the body too, in an enduring condition—"to be punished (and this is the final state) with *everlasting destruction* from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power." This final extinction in soul and body of all that constitutes life, but yet

eternal consciousness of a blighted existence—this, in its amplest and most awful sense, is "DEATH"! Not that Adam understood all that. It is enough that he understood "the day" of his disobedience to be the terminating period of his blissful "life." In that simple idea was wrapt up all the rest. But that he should comprehend its *details* was not necessary. Nor is it necessary to suppose all that to be intended in every passage of Scripture where the word occurs. Enough that all we have described is in the bosom of the *thing*, and will be realized in as many as are not the happy subjects of the Reign of Grace. Beyond doubt, the whole of this is intended in such sublime and comprehensive passages as this: "God ... gave His ... Son that whosoever believeth in Him *might not PERISH, but have everlasting LIFE*" ([Joh 3:16](#)). And should not the untold horrors of that "DEATH"—already "reigning over" all that are not in Christ, and hastening to its consummation—quicken our flight into "the second Adam," that having "received the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness, we may reign in LIFE by the One, Jesus Christ?"

CHAPTER 6

Ro 6:1-11. The Bearing of Justification by Grace upon a Holy Life.

1. What, &c.—The subject of this *third* division of our Epistle announces itself at once in the opening question, "Shall we (or, as the true reading is, "May we," "Are we to") continue in sin, that grace may abound?" Had the apostle's doctrine been that salvation depends *in any degree* upon our good works, no such objection to it could have been made. Against the doctrine of a purely gratuitous justification, the objection is plausible; nor has there ever been an age in which it has not been urged. That it *was* brought against the apostles, we know from **Ro 3:8**; and we gather from **Ga 5:13**; **1Pe 2:16**; **Jude 4**, that some did give occasion to the charge; but that it was a total perversion of the doctrine of Grace the apostle here proceeds to show.

2. God forbid—"That be far from us"; the instincts of the new creature revolting at the thought.

How shall we, that are dead, &c.—literally, and more forcibly, "We who died to sin (as presently to be explained), how shall we live any longer therein?"

3. Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ—compare **1Co 10:2**.

were baptized into his death?—sealed with the seal of heaven, and as it were formally entered and articulated, to all the *benefits* and all the *obligations* of Christian discipleship in general, and of His *death* in particular. And since He was "made sin" and "a curse for us" (**2Co 5:21**; **Ga 5:13**), "bearing our sins in His own body on the tree," and "rising again for our justification" (**Ro 4:25**; **1Pe 2:24**), our whole sinful case and condition, thus taken up into His Person, has been brought to an end in His death. Whoso, then, has been baptized into Christ's death has formally surrendered the whole state and life of sin, as in Christ a dead thing. He has sealed himself to be not only "the righteousness of God in Him," but "a new creature"; and as he cannot be in Christ to the one effect and not to the other, for they are one thing, he has bidden farewell, by baptism into Christ's death, to his entire connection with sin. "How," then, "can he live any longer therein?" The two things are as contradictory in the fact as they are in the terms.

4. Therefore we are—rather, "were" (it being a past act, completed at once).

buried with him, by baptism into death—(The *comma* we have placed after "him" will show what the sense is. It is not, "By baptism we are buried with Him into death," which makes no sense at all; but, "By baptism with Him into death we are buried with Him"; in other words, "By the same baptism which publicly enters us into His *death*, we are made partakers of His *burial* also"). To leave a dead body unburied is represented, alike in heathen authors as in Scripture, as the greatest indignity (**Re 11:8, 9**). It was fitting, therefore, that Christ, after "dying for our sins according to the Scriptures," should "descend into the lower parts of the earth" (**Eph 4:9**). As this was the last and lowest step of His humiliation, so it

was the honorable dissolution of His last link of connection with that life which He laid down for us; and we, in being "buried with Him by our baptism into His death," have by this public act severed our last link of connection with that whole sinful condition and life which Christ brought to an end in His death.

that like as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father—that is, by such a forth-putting of the Father's *power* as was the effulgence of His whole glory.

even so we also—as risen to a new life with Him.

should walk in newness of life—But what is that "newness?" Surely if our *old* life, now dead and buried with Christ, was wholly sinful, the *new*, to which we rise with the risen Saviour, must be altogether a holy life; so that every time we go back to "those things whereof we are now ashamed" (Ro 6:21), we belie our resurrection with Christ to newness of life, and "forget that we have been purged from our old sins" (2Pe 1:9). (Whether the mode of baptism by immersion be alluded to in this verse, as a kind of symbolical burial and resurrection, does not seem to us of much consequence. Many interpreters think it is, and it may be so. But as it is not clear that baptism in apostolic times was exclusively by immersion [see on Ac 2:41], so *sprinkling* and *washing* are indifferently used in the New Testament to express the cleansing efficacy of the blood of Jesus. And just as the woman with the issue of blood got virtue out of Christ by simply *touching* Him, so the essence of baptism seems to lie in the simple *contact* of the element with the body, symbolizing living contact with Christ crucified; the mode and extent of suffusion being indifferent and variable with climate and circumstances).

5. For if we have been planted together—literally, "have become formed together." (The word is used here only).

in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection—that is, "Since Christ's death and resurrection are inseparable in their efficacy, union with Him in the one carries with it participation in the other, for privilege and for duty alike." The *future* tense is used of participation in His resurrection, because this is but partially realized in the present state. (See on Ro 5:19).

6, 7. Knowing this, &c.—The apostle now grows more definite and vivid in expressing the sin-destroying efficacy of our union with the crucified Saviour.

that our old man—"our old selves"; that is, "*all that we were* in our old unregenerate condition, before union with Christ" (compare Col 3:9, 10; Eph 4:22-24; Ga 2:20; 5:24; 6:14).
is—rather, "was."

crucified with him—in order.

that the body of sin—not a figure for "the *mass* of sin"; nor the "*material body*," considered as the seat of sin, which it is not; but (as we judge) for "sin as it dwells in us in our present *embodied* state, under the law of the fall."

might be destroyed—(in Christ's death)—to the end.

that henceforth we should not serve sin—"be in bondage to sin."

7. For he that is dead—rather, "hath died."

is freed—"hath been set free."

from sin—literally, "justified," "acquitted," "got his discharge from sin." As death dissolves all claims, so the whole claim of sin, not only to "reign unto death," but to keep its victims in sinful bondage, has been discharged once for all, by the believer's penal death in the death of Christ; so that he is no longer a "*debtor* to the flesh to live after the flesh" (Ro 8:12).

8. Now if we be dead—"if we died."

with Christ, &c.—See on Ro 6:5.

9-11. Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him—Though Christ's death was in the most absolute sense a voluntary act (Joh 10:17, 18; Ac 2:24), that voluntary surrender gave death such rightful "dominion over *Him*" as dissolved its dominion over *us*. But this once past, "death hath," even in that sense, "dominion over Him no more."

10. For in that he died, he died unto—that is, in obedience to the claims of sin **once**—for all.

but in that he liveth, he liveth unto—in obedience to the claims of God.

God—There never, indeed, was a time when Christ did not "live unto God." But in the days of His flesh He did so under the continual burden of sin "laid on Him" (Isa 53:6; 2Co 5:21); whereas, now that He has "put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself," He "liveth unto God," the acquitted and accepted Surety, unchallenged and unclouded by the claims of sin.

11. Likewise—even as your Lord Himself.

reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed—"dead on the one hand"

unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord—(The words, "our Lord," at the close of this verse, are wanting in the best manuscripts.)

Note, (1) "Antinomianism is not only an error; it is a falsehood and a slander" [Hodge]. That "we should continue in sin that grace may abound," not only is never the deliberate sentiment of any real believer in the doctrine of Grace, but is abhorrent to every Christian mind, as a monstrous abuse of the most glorious of all truths (Ro 6:1). (2) As the death of Christ is not only the expiation of guilt, but the death of sin itself in all who are vitally united to Him; so the resurrection of Christ is the resurrection of believers, not only to acceptance with God, but to newness of life (Ro 6:2-11). (3) In the light of these two truths, let all who name the name of Christ "examine themselves whether they be in the faith."

Ro 6:12-23. What Practical Use Believers Should Make of Their Death to Sin and Life to God through Union to the Crucified Saviour.

Not content with showing that his doctrine has no tendency to relax the obligations to a holy life, the apostle here proceeds to enforce these obligations.

12. Let not sin therefore—as a Master

reign—(The reader will observe that wherever in this section the words "Sin," "Obedience," "Righteousness," "Uncleanness," "Iniquity," are figuratively used, to represent a *Master*, they are here printed in capitals, to make this manifest to the eye, and so save explanation).

in your mortal body, that ye should obey it—sin.

in the lusts thereof—"the lusts of the body," as the *Greek* makes evident. (The other reading, perhaps the true one, "that ye should obey the lusts thereof," comes to the same thing). The "body" is here viewed as the instrument by which all the sins of the heart become facts of the outward life, and as itself the seat of the lower appetites; and it is called "our *mortal* body," probably to remind us how unsuitable is this reign of sin in those who are "alive from the dead." But the reign here meant is the unchecked dominion of sin *within* us. Its outward acts are next referred to.

13. Neither yield ye your members instruments of unrighteousness unto Sin, but yield yourselves—this is the great surrender.

unto God as those that are alive from the dead, and—as the fruit of this.

your members—till now prostituted to sin.

instruments of righteousness unto God—But what if indwelling sin should prove too strong for us? The reply is: But it will not.

14. For Sin shall not have dominion over you—as the slaves of a tyrant lord.

for ye are not under the law, but under grace—The force of this glorious assurance can only be felt by observing the grounds on which it rests. To be "under the law" is, first, to be under its claim to entire obedience; and so, next under its curse for the breach of these. And as all power to obey can reach the sinner only through *Grace*, of which the law knows nothing, it follows that to be "under the law" is, finally, to be shut up under an *inability to keep it*, and consequently to be the *helpless slave of sin*. On the other hand, to be "under grace," is to be under the glorious canopy and saving effects of that "grace which reigns through righteousness unto eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (see on [Ro 5:20, 21](#)). The curse of the law has been completely lifted from off them; they are made "the righteousness of God in Him"; and they are "alive unto God through Jesus Christ." So that, as when they were "under the law," Sin *could not but* have dominion over them, so now that they are "under grace," Sin *cannot* but be subdued under them. If before, Sin resistlessly triumphed, Grace will now be more than conqueror.

15, 16. What then? ... Know ye not—it is a dictate of common sense.

16. that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey—with the view of obeying him.

his servants ye are to whom ye obey—to whom ye yield that obedience.

whether of Sin unto death—that is, "issuing in death," in the awful sense of [Ro 8:6](#), as the sinner's final condition.

or of Obedience unto righteousness—that is, obedience resulting in a righteous character, as the enduring condition of the servant of new Obedience ([1Jo 2:17](#); [Joh 8:34](#); [2Pe 2:19](#); [Mt 6:24](#)).

17. But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of Sin—that is, that this is a state of things now past and gone.

but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you—rather, "whereunto ye were delivered" (*Margin*), or cast, as in a mould. The idea is, that the teaching to which they had heartily yielded themselves had stamped its own impress upon them.

18. Being then—"And being"; it is the continuation and conclusion of the preceding sentence; not a new one.

made free from Sin, ye became the servants of—"servants to"

Righteousness—The case is one of emancipation from entire servitude to one Master to entire servitude to another, whose property we are (see on [Ro 1:1](#)). There is no middle state of personal independence; for which we were never made, and to which we have no claim. When we would not that God should reign over us, we were in righteous judgment "sold under Sin"; now being through grace "made free from Sin," it is only to become "servants to Righteousness," which is our true freedom.

19. I speak after the manner of men—descending, for illustration, to the level of common affairs.

because of the infirmity of your flesh—the weakness of your spiritual apprehension.

for as ye have yielded—"as ye yielded," the thing being viewed as now past.

your members servants to Uncleaness and to Iniquity unto—the practice of

iniquity; even so now yield your members servants to Righteousness unto holiness—rather, "unto (the attainment of) sanctification," as the same word is rendered in [2Th 2:13](#); [1Co 1:30](#); [1Pe 1:2](#):—that is, "Looking back upon the *heartiness* with which ye served Sin, and the *lengths* ye went to be stimulated now to like zeal and like exuberance in the service of a better Master."

20. For when ye were the servants—"were servants"

of Sin, ye were free from—rather, "in respect of"

Righteousness—Difficulties have been made about this clause where none exist. The import of it seems clearly to be this:—"Since no servant can serve two masters, much less where their interests come into deadly collision, and each demands the whole man, so, while ye were in the service of Sin ye were in no proper sense the servants of Righteousness, and never did it one act of real service: whatever might be your conviction of the claims of Righteousness, your real services were all and always given to Sin: Thus had ye full proof of the nature and advantages of Sin's service." The searching question with which this is followed up, shows that this is the meaning.

21. What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed? for the end of those things is death—What permanent *advantage*, and what abiding *satisfaction*, have those things yielded? The apostle answers his own question:—"Abiding satisfaction, did I ask? They have left only a sense of '*shame*.' Permanent advantage? 'The end of them is *death*.'" By saying they were "*now* ashamed," he makes it plain that he is not referring to that disgust at themselves, and remorse of conscience by which those who are the most helplessly "sold under sin" are often stung to the quick; but that ingenuous feeling of self-reproach, which pierces and weighs down the children of God, as they think of the dishonor which their past life did to His name, the ingratitude it displayed, the violence it did to their own conscience, its deadening and degrading effects, and the death—"the second death"—to which it was dragging them down, when mere Grace arrested them. (On the sense of "death" here, see on [Ro 5:12-21](#), *Note 3*, and [Ro 6:16](#): see also [Re 21:8](#)—The change proposed in the pointing of this verse: "What fruit had ye then? things whereof ye are now ashamed" [Luther, Tholuck, De Wette, Philippi, Alford, &c.], seems unnatural and uncalled for. The ordinary pointing has at least powerful support [Chrysostom, Calvin, Beza, Grotius, Bengel, Stuart, Fritzsche]).

22. But now—as if to get away from such a subject were unspeakable relief.

being made free from Sin, and become servants to God—in the absolute sense intended throughout all this passage.

ye have—not "ought to have," but "do have," in point of fact.

your fruit unto holiness—"sanctification," as in [Ro 6:19](#); meaning that *permanently holy state and character* which is built up out of the whole "fruits of righteousness," which believers successively bring forth. They "have their fruit" *unto* this, that is, all *going towards* this blessed result.

and the end everlasting life—as the final state of the justified believer; the beatific experience not only of complete exemption from the fall with all its effects, but of the perfect life of acceptance with God, and conformity to His likeness, of unveiled access to Him, and ineffable fellowship with Him through all duration.

23. For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through—"in"

Jesus Christ our Lord—This concluding verse—as pointed as it is brief—contains the marrow, the most fine gold, of the Gospel. As the laborer is worthy of his hire, and feels it to be his due—his own of right—so is death the due of sin, the wages the sinner has well wrought for, his own. But "eternal life" is in no sense or degree the wages of our righteousness; we do nothing whatever to earn or become entitled to it, and never can: it is therefore, in the most absolute sense, "THE GIFT OF God." Grace reigns in the bestowal of it in every case, and that "in Jesus Christ our Lord," as the righteous Channel of it. In view of this, who that hath tasted that the Lord is gracious can refrain from saying, "Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and His Father, to Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen!" ([Re 1:5, 6](#)).

Note, (1) As the most effectual refutation of the oft-repeated calumny, that the doctrine of Salvation by grace encourages to continue in sin, is the holy life of those who profess it, let such ever feel that the highest service they can render to that Grace which is all their hope, is to "yield themselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and their members instruments of righteousness unto God" (Ro 6:12, 13). By so doing they will "put to silence the ignorance of foolish men," secure their own peace, carry out the end of their calling, and give substantial glory to Him that loved them. (2) The fundamental principle of Gospel obedience is as original as it is divinely rational; that "we are set free from the law in order to keep it, and are brought graciously under servitude to the law in order to be free" (Ro 6:14, 15, 18). So long as we know no principle of obedience but the terrors of the law, which condemns all the breakers of it, and knows nothing whatever of grace, either to pardon the guilty or to purify the stained, we are shut up under a moral impossibility of genuine and acceptable obedience: whereas when Grace lifts us out of this state, and through union to a righteous Surety, brings us into a state of conscious reconciliation, and loving surrender of heart to a God of salvation, we immediately feel the glorious *liberty to be holy*, and the assurance that "Sin shall not have dominion over us" is as sweet to our renewed tastes and aspirations as the ground of it is felt to be firm, "because we are not under the Law, but under Grace." (3) As this most momentous of all transitions in the history of a man is wholly of God's free grace, the change should never be thought, spoken, or written of but with lively thanksgiving to Him who so loved us (Ro 6:17). (4) Christians, in the service of God, should emulate their former selves in the zeal and steadiness with which they served sin, and the length to which they went in it (Ro 6:19). (5) To stimulate this holy rivalry, let us often "look back to the rock whence we were hewn, the hole of the pit whence we were digged," in search of the enduring advantages and permanent satisfactions which the service of Sin yielded; and when we find to our "shame" only gall and wormwood, let us follow a godless life to its proper "end," until, finding ourselves in the territories of "death," we are fain to hasten back to survey the service of Righteousness, that new Master of all believers, and find Him leading us sweetly into abiding "holiness," and landing us at length in "everlasting life" (Ro 6:20-22). (6) Death and life are before all men who hear the Gospel: the one, the natural issue and proper reward of sin; the other, the absolutely free "GIFT OF God" to sinners, "in Jesus Christ our Lord." And as the one is the *conscious* sense of the hopeless loss of all blissful existence, so the other is the conscious possession and enjoyment of all that constitutes a rational creature's highest "life" for evermore (Ro 6:23). Ye that read or hear these words, "I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing, therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live!" (De 30:19).

CHAPTER 7

Ro 7:1-25. Same Subject Continued.

Relation of Believers to the Law and to Christ (Ro 7:1-6).

Recurring to the statement of Ro 6:14, that believers are "not under the law but under grace," the apostle here shows *how* this change is brought about, and what holy consequences follow from it.

1. I speak to them that know the law—of Moses to whom, though not themselves Jews (see on Ro 1:13), the Old Testament was familiar.

2, 3. if her husband be dead—"die." So Ro 7:3.

3. she be married—"joined." So Ro 7:4.

4. Wherefore ... ye also are become dead—rather, "were slain."

to the law by the body of Christ—through His slain body. The apostle here departs from his usual word "died," using the more expressive phrase "were slain," to make it clear that he meant their being "crucified with Christ" (as expressed in Ro 6:3-6, and Ga 2:20).

that ye should be married to another, even to him that is—"was."

raised from the dead—to the intent.

that we should bring forth fruit unto God—It has been thought that the apostle should here have said that "the *law* died to us," not "we to the law," but that purposely inverted the figure, to avoid the harshness to Jewish ears of *the death of the law* [Chrysostom, Calvin, Hodge, Philippi, &c.]. But this is to mistake the apostle's design in employing this figure, which was merely to illustrate the general principle that "*death dissolves legal obligation*." It was essential to his argument that *we*, not the law, should be the dying party, since it is we that are "crucified with Christ," and not the law. This death dissolves our marriage obligation to the law, leaving us at liberty to contract a new relation—to be joined to the Risen One, in order to spiritual fruitfulness, to the glory of God [Beza, Olshausen, Meyer, Alford, &c.]. The confusion, then, is in the expositors, not the text; and it has arisen from not observing that, like Jesus Himself, believers are here viewed as having a double life—the old sin-condemned life, which they lay down with Christ, and the new life of acceptance and holiness to which they rise with their Surety and Head; and all the issues of this new life, in Christian obedience, are regarded as the "fruit" of this blessed union to the Risen One. How such holy fruitfulness was impossible before our union to Christ, is next declared.

5. For when we were in the flesh—in our unregenerate state, as we came into the world. See on Joh 3:6 and Ro 8:5-9.

the motions—"passions" (*Margin*), "affections" (as in Ga 5:24), or "stirrings."

of sins—that is, "prompting to the commission of sins."

which were by the law—by occasion of the law, which fretted, irritated our inward corruption by its prohibitions. See on Ro 7:7-9.

did work in our members—the members of the body, as the instruments by which these inward stirrings find vent in action, and become facts of the life. See on [Ro 6:6](#).

to bring forth fruit unto death—death in the sense of [Ro 6:21](#). Thus hopeless is all holy fruit before union to Christ.

6. But now—On the same expression, see on [Ro 6:22](#), and compare [Jas 1:15](#).

we are delivered from the law—The word is the same which, in [Ro 6:6](#) and elsewhere, is rendered "destroyed," and is but another way of saying (as in [Ro 7:4](#)) that "we were *slain* to the law by the body of Christ"; language which, though harsh to the ear, is designed and fitted to impress upon the reader the *violence* of that death of the Cross, by which, as by a deadly wrench, we are "delivered from the law."

that being dead wherein we were held—It is now universally agreed that the true reading here is, "being dead to that wherein we were held." The received reading has no authority whatever, and is inconsistent with the strain of the argument; for the death spoken of, as we have seen, is not the *law's*, but ours, through union with the crucified Saviour.

that we should—"so as to" or "so that we."

serve in newness of spirit—"in the newness of the spirit."

and not in the oldness of the letter—not in our old way of literal, mechanical obedience to the divine law, as a set of external rules of conduct, and without any reference to the state of our hearts; but in that new way of spiritual obedience which, through union to the risen Saviour, we have learned to render (compare [Ro 2:29](#); [2Co 3:6](#)).

False Inferences regarding the Law Repelled ([Ro 7:7-25](#)).

And first, [Ro 7:7-13](#), in the case of the UNREGENERATE.

7, 8. What ... then? Is the law sin? God forbid!—"I have said that when we were in the flesh the law stirred our inward corruption, and was thus the occasion of deadly fruit: Is then the law *to blame* for this? Far from us be such a thought."

Nay—"On the contrary" (as in [Ro 8:37](#); [1Co 12:22](#); *Greek*).

I had not known sin but by the law—It is important to fix what is meant by "sin" here. It certainly is not "the general nature of sin" [Alford, &c.], though it be true that this is learned from the law; for such a sense will not suit what is said of it in the following verses, where the meaning is the same as here. The only meaning which suits all that is said of it in this place is "the *principle* of sin in the heart of fallen man." The sense, then, is this: "It was by means of the law that I came to know what a virulence and strength of sinful propensity I had within me." The *existence* of this it did not need the law to reveal to him; for even the heathens recognized and wrote of it. But the dreadful nature and desperate power of it the law alone discovered—in the way now to be described.

for I had not known lust, except, &c.—Here the same *Greek* word is unfortunately rendered by three different English ones—"lust"; "covet"; "concupiscence" ([Ro 7:8](#))—which obscures the meaning. By using the word "lust" only, in the wide sense of all "irregular desire,"

or every outgoing of the heart towards anything forbidden, the sense will best be brought out; thus, "For I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not lust; But sin, taking ('having taken') occasion by the commandment (that one which forbids it), wrought in me all manner of lusting." This gives a deeper view of the tenth commandment than the mere words suggest. The apostle saw in it the prohibition not only of desire after *certain things there specified*, \ but of "desire after *everything divinely forbidden*"; in other words, all "lusting" or "irregular desire." It was this which "he had not known but by the law." The law forbidding all such desire so stirred his corruption that it wrought in him "all manner of lusting"—desire of every sort after what was forbidden.

8. For without the law—that is, before its extensive demands and prohibitions come to operate upon our corrupt nature.

sin was—rather, "is"

dead—that is, the sinful principle of our nature lies so dormant, so torpid, that its virulence and power are unknown, and to our feeling it is as good as "dead."

9. For I was alive without the law once—"In the days of my ignorance, when, in this sense, a stranger to the law, I deemed myself a righteous man, and, as such, entitled to life at the hand of God."

but when the commandment came—forbidding all irregular desire; for the apostle sees in this the spirit of the whole law.

sin revived—"came to life"; in its malignity and strength it unexpectedly revealed itself, as if sprung from the dead.

and I died—"saw myself, in the eye of a law never kept and not to be kept, a dead man."

10, 11. And—thus.

the commandment, which was, &c.—designed

to—give

life—through the keeping of it.

I found to be unto death—through breaking it.

For sin—my sinful nature.

taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me—or "seduced me"—drew me aside into the very thing which the commandment forbade.

and by it slew me—"discovered me to myself to be a condemned and gone man" (compare [Ro 7:9](#), "I died").

12, 13. Wherefore—"So that."

the law is—"is indeed"

good, and the commandment—that one so often referred to, which forbids all lusting, holy, and just, and good.

13. Was then that which is good made—"Hath then that which is good become"

death unto me? God forbid—that is, "Does the *blame* of my death lie with the good law? Away with such a thought."

But sin—became death unto me, to the end.

that it might appear sin—that it might be seen in its true light.

working death in—rather, "to"

me by that which is good, that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful—"that its enormous turpitude might stand out to view, through its turning God's holy, just, and good law into a provocative to the very things which it forbids." So much for *the law in relation to the unregenerate*, of whom the apostle takes himself as the example; first, in his ignorant, self-satisfied condition; next, under humbling discoveries of his inability to keep the law, through inward contrariety to it; finally, as self-condemned, and already, in law, a dead man. Some inquire to what period of his recorded history these circumstances relate. But there is no reason to think they were wrought into such conscious and explicit discovery at any period of his history before he "met the Lord in the way"; and though, "amidst the multitude of his thoughts within him" during his memorable three day's blindness immediately after that, such views of the law and of himself would doubtless be tossed up and down till they *took shape* much as they are here described (see on [Ac 9:9](#)) we regard this whole description of his inward struggles and progress rather as the *finished result* of all his past recollections and subsequent reflections on his unregenerate state, which he throws into historical form only for greater vividness. But now the apostle proceeds to repel false inferences *regarding the law*, secondly: [Ro 7:14-25](#), in the case of the REGENERATE; taking himself here also as the example.

14. For we know that the law is spiritual—in its demands.

but I am carnal—fleshly (see on [Ro 7:5](#)), and as such, incapable of yielding spiritual obedience.

sold under sin—enslaved to it. The "I" here, though of course not the *regenerate*, is neither the *unregenerate*, but the sinful principle of the renewed man, as is expressly stated in [Ro 7:18](#).

15, 16. For, &c.—better, "For that which I do I know not"; that is, "In obeying the impulses of my carnal nature I act the slave of another will than my own as a renewed man?"

for, &c.—rather, "for not what I would (wish, desire) that do I, but what I hate that I do."

16. If then I do that which I would not—"But if what I would not that I do,"

I consent unto the law that it is good—"the judgment of my inner man going along with the law."

17. Now then it is no more I—*my renewed self*.

that do it—"that work it."

but sin which dwelleth in me—that principle of sin that still has its abode in me. To explain this and the following statements, as many do (even Bengel and Tholuck), of the sins of unrenewed men against their better convictions, is to do painful violence to the apostle's language, and to affirm of the unregenerate what is untrue. That coexistence and mutual hostility of "flesh" and "spirit" in the same renewed man, which is so clearly taught in [Ro 8:4](#), &c., and in [Ga 5:16](#), &c., is the true and only key to the language of this and the following verses. (It is hardly necessary to say that the apostle means not to disown the blame of yielding to his corruptions, by saying, "it is not he that does it, but sin that dwelleth in him." Early heretics thus abused his language; but the whole strain of the passage shows that his sole object in thus expressing himself was to bring more vividly before his readers the conflict of two opposite principles, and how entirely, as a new man—honoring from his inmost soul the law of God—he condemned and renounced his corrupt nature, with its affections and lusts, its stirrings and its outgoings, root and branch).

18. For, &c.—better, "For I know that there dwelleth not in me, that is in my flesh, any good."

for to will—"desire."

is present with me; but how to perform that which is good—the supplement "how," in our version, weakens the statement.

I find not—Here, again, we have the *double self* of the renewed man; "In me dwelleth no good; but this corrupt self is not my true self; it is but sin dwelling in my real self, as a renewed man."

19, 21. For, &c.—The conflict here graphically described between a self that "desires" to do good and a self that in spite of this does evil, cannot be the struggles between conscience and passion in the *unregenerate*, because the description given of this "desire to do good" in [Ro 7:22](#) is such as cannot be ascribed, with the least show of truth, to any but the *renewed*.

22. For I delight in the law of God after the inward man—"from the bottom of my heart." The word here rendered "delight" is indeed stronger than "consent" in [Ro 7:16](#); but both express a state of mind and heart to which the unregenerate man is a stranger.

23. But I see another—it should be "a different"

law in my members—(See on [Ro 7:5](#)).

warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members—In this important verse, observe, first, that the word "law" means *an inward principle of action, good or evil, operating with the fixedness and regularity of a law*. The apostle found two such laws within him; the one "the law of sin in his members," called (in [Ga 5:17, 24](#)) "the flesh which lusteth against the spirit," "the flesh with the affections and lusts," that is, the sinful principle in the regenerate; the other, "the law of the mind," or the holy principle of the renewed nature. Second, when the apostle says he "sees" the one of these principles "warring against" the other, and "bringing him into captivity" to itself, *he is*

not referring to any actual rebellion going on within him while he was writing, or to any captivity to his own lusts then existing. He is simply describing the two conflicting principles, and pointing out what it was the inherent property of each to aim at bringing about. Third, when the apostle describes himself as "*brought into captivity*" by the triumph of the sinful principle of his nature, he clearly speaks in the person of a *renewed man*. Men do not feel themselves to be in captivity in the territories of their own sovereign and associated with their own friends, breathing a congenial atmosphere, and acting quite spontaneously. But here the apostle describes himself, when drawn under the power of his sinful nature, as forcibly seized and reluctantly dragged to his enemy's camp, from which he would gladly make his escape. This ought to settle the question, whether he is here speaking as a regenerate man or the reverse.

24. O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?—The apostle speaks of the "body" here with reference to "the law of sin" which he had said was "in his members," but merely as the instrument by which the sin of the heart finds vent in action, and as itself the seat of the lower appetites (see on [Ro 6:6](#), and [Ro 7:5](#)); and he calls it "the body of *this death*," as feeling, at the moment when he wrote, the horrors of that death ([Ro 6:21](#), and [Ro 7:5](#)) into which it dragged him down. But the language is not that of a sinner newly awakened to the sight of his lost state; it is the cry of a living but agonized believer, weighed down under a burden which is not himself, but which he longs to shake off from his renewed self. Nor does the question imply ignorance of the way of relief at the time referred to. It was designed only to prepare the way for that outburst of thankfulness for the divinely provided remedy which immediately follows.

25. I thank God—the Source.

through Jesus Christ—the Channel of deliverance.

So then—to sum up the whole matter.

with the mind—the mind indeed.

I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin—"Such then is the unchanging character of these two principles within me. God's holy law is dear to my renewed mind, and has the willing service of my new man; although that corrupt nature which still remains in me listens to the dictates of sin."

Note, (1) This whole chapter was of essential service to the Reformers in their contentings with the Church of Rome. When the divines of that corrupt church, in a Pelagian spirit, denied that the sinful principle in our fallen nature, which they called "Concupiscence," and which is commonly called "Original Sin," had the nature of *sin* at all, they were triumphantly answered from this chapter, where—both in the first section of it, which speaks of it in the unregenerate, and in the second, which treats of its presence and acting in believers—it is explicitly, emphatically, and repeatedly called "*sin*." As such, they held it to be *damnable*. (See the Confessions both of the Lutheran and Reformed churches). In the following century,

the orthodox in Holland had the same controversy to wage with "the Remonstrants" (the followers of Arminius), and they waged it on the field of this chapter. (2) Here we see that *Inability* is consistent with *Accountability*. (See [Ro 7:18](#); [Ga 5:17](#)). "As the Scriptures constantly recognize the truth of these two things, so are they constantly united in Christian experience. Everyone feels that he cannot do the things that he would, yet is sensible that he is guilty for not doing them. Let any man test his power by the requisition to love God perfectly at all times. Alas! how entire our inability! Yet how deep our self-loathing and self-condemnation!" [Hodge]. (3) If the first sight of the Cross by the eye of faith kindles feelings never to be forgotten, and in one sense never to be repeated—like the first view of an enchanting landscape—the experimental discovery, in the latter stages of the Christian life, of its power to beat down and mortify inveterate corruption, to cleanse and heal from long-continued backslidings and frightful inconsistencies, and so to triumph over all that threatens to destroy those for whom Christ died, as to bring them safe over the tempestuous seas of this life into the haven of eternal rest—is attended with yet more heart—affecting wonder draws forth deeper thankfulness, and issues in more exalted adoration of Him whose work Salvation is from first to last ([Ro 7:24, 25](#)). (4) It is sad when such topics as these are handled as mere questions of biblical interpretation or systematic theology. Our great apostle could not treat of them apart from personal experience, of which the facts of his own life and the feelings of his own soul furnished him with illustrations as lively as they were apposite. When one is unable to go far into the investigation of indwelling sin, without breaking out into an, "O wretched man that I am!" and cannot enter on the way of relief without exclaiming "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord," he will find his meditations rich in fruit to his own soul, and may expect, through Him who presides in all such matters, to kindle in his readers or hearers the like blessed emotions ([Ro 7:24, 25](#)). So be it even now, O Lord!

CHAPTER 8

Ro 8:1-39. Conclusion of the Whole Argument—The Glorious Completeness of Them That Are in Christ Jesus.

In this surpassing chapter the several streams of the preceding argument meet and flow in one "river of the water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb," until it seems to lose itself in the ocean of a blissful eternity.

First: *The Sanctification of Believers* (Ro 8:1-13).

1. There is therefore now, &c.—referring to the immediately preceding context [Olshausen, Philippi, Meyer, Alford, &c.]. The subject with which the seventh chapter concludes is still under consideration. The scope of Ro 8:1-4 is to show how "the law of sin and death" is deprived of its power to bring believers again into bondage, and how the holy law of God receives in them the homage of a living obedience [Calvin, Fraser, Philippi, Meyer, Alford, &c.].

no condemnation: to them which are in Christ Jesus—As Christ, who "knew no sin," was, to all legal effects, "made sin for us," so are we, who believe in Him, to all legal effects, "made the righteousness of God in Him" (2Co 5:21); and thus, one with Him in the divine reckoning, there is to such "NO CONDEMNATION." (Compare Joh 3:18; 5:24; Ro 5:18, 19). But this is no mere legal *arrangement*: it is a union in *life*; believers, through the indwelling of Christ's Spirit in them, having one life with Him, as truly as the head and the members of the same body have one life.

who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit—The evidence of manuscripts seems to show that this clause formed no part of the original text of this verse, but that the first part of it was early introduced, and the second later, from Ro 8:4, probably as an explanatory comment, and to make the transition to Ro 8:2 easier.

2. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free—rather, "freed me"—referring to the time of his conversion, when first he believed.

from the law of sin and death—It is the Holy Ghost who is here called "the Spirit of life," as opening up in the souls of believers a fountain of spiritual life (see on Joh 7:38, 39); just as He is called "the Spirit of truth," as "guiding them into all truth" (Joh 16:13), and "the Spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord" (Isa 11:2), as the inspirer of these qualities. And He is called "the Spirit of life *in Christ Jesus*," because it is as members of Christ that He takes up His abode in believers, who in consequence of this have one life with their Head. And as the word "*law*" here has the same meaning as in Ro 7:23, namely, "an inward principle of action, operating with the fixedness and regularity of a law," it thus appears that "*the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus*" here means, "that new principle of action which the Spirit of Christ has opened up within us—the law of our new being." This "*sets us free*," as soon as it takes possession of our inner man, "from the law of sin and death" that is, from the enslaving power of that corrupt principle which carries death

in its bosom. The "strong man armed" is overpowered by the "stronger than he"; the weaker principle is dethroned and expelled by the more powerful; the principle of spiritual life prevails against and brings into captivity the principle of spiritual death—"leading captivity captive." If this be the apostle's meaning, the whole verse is to this effect: That the triumph of believers over their inward corruption, through the power of Christ's Spirit in them, *proves* them to be in Christ Jesus, and as such absolved from condemnation. But this is now explained more fully.

3, 4. For what the law could not do, &c.—a difficult and much controverted verse. But it is clearly, we think, the law's inability to *free us from the dominion of sin* that the apostle has in view; as has partly appeared already (see on [Ro 8:2](#)), and will more fully appear presently. The law could irritate our sinful nature into more virulent action, as we have seen in [Ro 7:5](#), but it could not secure its own fulfilment. How that is accomplished comes now to be shown.

in that it was weak through the flesh—that is, having to address itself to us through a corrupt nature, too strong to be influenced by mere commands and threatenings.

God, &c.—The sentence is somewhat imperfect in its structure, which occasions a certain obscurity. The meaning is, that *whereas* the law was powerless to secure its own fulfilment for the reason given, God took the method now to be described for attaining that end.

sending—"having sent"

his own Son—This and similar expressions plainly imply that Christ was God's "OWN Son" *before* He was sent—that is, in His own proper Person, and independently of His mission and appearance in the flesh (see on [Ro 8:32](#) and [Ga 4:4](#)); and if so, He not only has the *very nature* of God, even as a son of his father, but is essentially *of* the Father, though in a sense too mysterious for any language of ours properly to define (see on the first through fourth chapters). And this peculiar relationship is put forward here to *enhance the greatness* and *define the nature* of the relief provided, as coming *from beyond the precincts of sinful humanity altogether, yea, immediately from the Godhead itself.*

in the likeness of sinful flesh—literally, "of the flesh of sin"; a very remarkable and pregnant expression. He was made in the reality of our flesh, but only in the *likeness* of its sinful condition. He took our nature as it is in us, compassed with infirmities, with nothing to distinguish Him as man from sinful men, save that He was without sin. Nor does this mean that He took our nature with all its properties save one; for sin is *no property of humanity at all*, but only the disordered state of our souls, as the fallen family of Adam; a disorder affecting, indeed, and overspreading our entire nature, but still purely *our own.*

and for sin—literally, "and about sin"; that is, "on the business of sin." The expression is purposely a general one, because the design was not to speak of Christ's mission to *atone* for sin, but in virtue of that atonement to *destroy its dominion* and *extirpate it altogether* from believers. We think it wrong, therefore, to render the words (as in the *Margin*) "by a

sacrifice for sin" (suggested by the language of the *Septuagint* and approved by Calvin, &c.); for this sense is too definite, and makes the idea of *expiation* more prominent than it is.

condemned sin—"condemned it to *lose its power* over men" [Beza, Bengel, Fraser, Meyer, Tholuck, Philippi, Alford]. In this glorious sense our Lord says of His approaching death ([Joh 12:31](#)), "Now is the *judgment* of this world; now shall the prince of this world be *cast out*," and again (see on [Joh 16:11](#)), "When He (the Spirit) shall come, He shall convince the world of ... judgment, because the prince of this world is *judged*," that is, condemned to let go his hold of men, who, through the Cross, shall be emancipated into the liberty and power to be holy.

in the flesh—that is, in human nature, henceforth set free from the grasp of sin.

4. That the righteousness of the law—"the righteous demand," "the requirement" [Alford], Or "the precept" of the law; for it is not precisely the word so often used in this Epistle to denote "the righteousness which justifies" ([Ro 1:17](#); [3:21](#); [4:5, 6](#); [5:17, 18, 21](#)), but another form of the same word, intended to express the *enactment* of the law, meaning here, we believe, the practical obedience which the law calls for.

might be fulfilled in us—or, as we say, "*realized* in us."

who walk—the most ancient expression of *the bent of one's life*, whether in the direction of good or of evil ([Ge 48:15](#); [Ps 1:1](#); [Isa 2:5](#); [Mic 4:5](#); [Eph 4:17](#); [1Jo 1:6, 7](#)).

not after—that is, according to the dictates of

the flesh, but after the spirit—From [Ro 8:9](#) it would seem that what is more immediately intended by "the spirit" here is *our own mind* as renewed and actuated by the Holy Ghost.

5. For they that are after the flesh—that is, under the influence of the fleshly principle.

do mind—give their attention to ([Php 3:19](#)).

the things of the flesh, &c.—Men must be under the predominating influence of one or other of these two principles, and, according as the one or the other has the mastery, will be the complexion of their life, the character of their actions.

6. For—a mere particle of transition here [Tholuck], like "but" or "now."

to be carnally minded—literally, "the mind" or "minding of the flesh" (*Margin*); that is, the pursuit of fleshly ends.

is death—not only "ends in" [Alford, &c.], but even now "is"; carrying death into its bosom, so that such are "dead while they live" ([1Ti 5:6](#); [Eph 2:1, 5](#)) [Philippi].

but to be spiritually minded—"the mind" or "minding of the spirit"; that is, the pursuit of spiritual objects.

is life and peace—not "life" only, in contrast with the "death" that is in the other pursuit, but "peace"; it is the very element of the soul's deepest repose and true bliss.

7. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God—The desire and pursuit of carnal ends is a state of enmity to God, wholly incompatible with true life and peace in the soul.

for it is not subject—"doth not submit itself."

to the law of God, neither indeed can be—In such a state of mind there neither is nor can be the least subjection to the law of God. Many things may be done which the law requires, but nothing either is or can be done *because* God's law requires it, or purely to please God.

8. So then—nearly equivalent to "And so."

they that are in—and, therefore, under the government of

the flesh cannot please God—having no obediential principle, no desire to please Him.

9. But ye are not in the flesh, but in the spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you—This does not mean, "if the *disposition* or *mind* of God dwell in you"; but "if *the Holy Ghost* dwell in you" (see [1Co 6:11, 19](#); [3:16](#), &c.). (It thus appears that to be "in the spirit" means here to be under the dominion of *our own renewed mind*; because the indwelling of God's Spirit is given as the evidence that we are "in the spirit").

Now—"But."

if any man have not the Spirit of Christ—Again, this does not mean "the *disposition* or *mind* of Christ," but the Holy Ghost; here called "the Spirit of Christ," just as He is called "the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus" (see on [Ro 8:2](#)). It is as "the Spirit of Christ" that the Holy Ghost takes possession of believers, introducing into them all the gracious, dove-like disposition which dwelt in Him ([Mt 3:16](#); [Joh 3:34](#)). Now if any man's heart be void, not of such dispositions, but of the blessed Author of them, "the Spirit of Christ."

he is none of his—even though intellectually convinced of the truth of Christianity, and in a general sense influence by its spirit. Sharp, solemn statement this!

10, 11. And if Christ be in you—by His indwelling Spirit in virtue of which we have *one life* with him.

the body—"the body indeed."

is dead because of—"by reason of"

sin; but the spirit is life because—or, "by reason"

of righteousness—The word "indeed," which the original requires, is of the nature of a concession—"I grant you that the body is dead ... and so far redemption is incomplete, *but*," &c.; that is, "If Christ be in you by His indwelling Spirit, though your 'bodies' have to pass through the stage of 'death' in consequence of the first Adam's 'sin,' your spirit is instinct with new and undying 'life,' brought in by the 'righteousness' of the second Adam" [Tholuck, Meyer, and Alford in part, but only Hodge entirely].

11. But—"And."

if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you—that is, "If He dwell in you as the Spirit of the Christ-raising One," or, "in all the *resurrection-power* which He put forth in raising Jesus."

he that raised up Christ from the dead—Observe the change of name from Jesus, as the historical Individual whom God raised from the dead, to Christ, the same Individual, considered as the Lord and Head of all His members, or of redeemed Humanity [Alford].

shall also quicken—rather, "shall quicken even"

your mortal bodies by—the true reading appears to be "by reason of."

his Spirit that dwelleth in you—"Your bodies indeed are not exempt from the death which sin brought in; but your spirits even now have in them an undying life, and if the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, even these bodies of yours, though they yield to the last enemy and the dust of them return to the dust as it was, shall yet experience the same resurrection as that of their living Head, in virtue of the indwelling of same Spirit in you that quickened Him."

12, 13. Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh—"Once we were sold under sin (Ro 7:14); but now that we have been set free from that hard master and become servants to Righteousness (Ro 6:22), we owe nothing to the flesh, we disown its unrighteous claims and are deaf to its imperious demands." Glorious sentiment!

13. For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die—in the sense of Ro 6:21.

but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body—(See on Ro 7:23).

ye shall live—in the sense of Ro 6:22. The apostle is not satisfied with assuring them that they are under no *obligations* to the flesh, to hearken to its suggestions, without reminding them where it will end if they do; and he uses the word "mortify" (put to death) as a kind of play upon the word "die" just before. "If ye do not kill sin, it will kill you." But he tempers this by the bright alternative, that if they do, through the Spirit, mortify the deeds of the body, such a course will infallibly terminate in "life" everlasting. And this leads the apostle into a new line of thought, opening into his final subject, the "glory" awaiting the justified believer.

Note, (1) "There can be no *safety*, no holiness, no happiness, to those who are out of Christ: No "safety," because all such are under the condemnation of the law (Ro 8:1); no *holiness*, because such only as are united to Christ have the spirit of Christ (Ro 8:9); no *happiness*, because to be "carnally minded is death" (Ro 8:6)" [Hodge]. (2) The sanctification of believers, as it has its whole foundation in the atoning death, so it has its living spring in the indwelling of the Spirit of Christ (Ro 8:2-4). (3) "The bent of the thoughts, affections, and pursuits, is the only decisive test of character (Ro 8:5)" [Hodge]. (4) No human refinement of the carnal mind will make it spiritual, or compensate for the absence of spirituality. "Flesh" and "spirit" are essentially and unchangeably opposed; nor can the carnal mind, as such, be brought into real subjection to the law of God (Ro 8:5-7). Hence (5) the estrangement of God and the sinner is mutual. For as the sinner's state of mind is "enmity against God" (Ro 8:7), so in this state he "cannot please God" (Ro 8:8). (6) Since the Holy Ghost is, in the

same breath, called indiscriminately "the Spirit of God," "the Spirit of Christ," and "Christ" Himself (as an indwelling life in believers), the *essential unity* and yet Personal *distinctness* of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, in the one adorable Godhead must be believed, as the only consistent explanation of such language (Ro 8:9-11). (7) The consciousness of spiritual life in our renewed souls is a glorious assurance of resurrection life in the body also, in virtue of the same quickening Spirit whose inhabitation we already enjoy (Ro 8:11). (8) Whatever professions of spiritual life men may make, it remains eternally true that "if we live after the flesh we shall die," and only "if we through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body we shall live" (Ro 8:13, and compare Ga 6:7, 8; Eph 5:6; Php 3:18, 19; 1Jo 3:7, 8).

Second: *The Sonship of Believers—Their Future Inheritance—The Intercession of the Spirit for Them* (Ro 8:14-27).

14. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God, they, &c.—"these are sons of God." Hitherto the apostle has spoken of the Spirit simply as a *power* through which believers mortify sin: now he speaks of Him as a gracious, loving *Guide*, whose "leading"—enjoyed by all in whom is the Spirit of God's dear Son—shows that they also are "sons of God."

15. For, &c.—"For ye received not (at the time of your conversion) the spirit of bondage," that is, "The spirit ye received was not a spirit of bondage."

again—gendering.

to fear—as under the law which "worketh wrath," that is, "Such was your condition before ye believed, living in legal bondage, haunted with incessant forebodings under a sense of unpardoned sin. But it was not to perpetuate that wretched state that ye received the Spirit."

but ye have received—"ye received."

the spirit of adoption, whereby—rather, "wherein."

we cry, Abba, Father—The word "cry" is emphatic, expressing the spontaneousness, the strength, and the exuberance of the final emotions. In Ga 4:6 this cry is said to proceed from *the Spirit* in us, drawing forth the filial exclamation in our hearts. Here, it is said to proceed from *our own hearts* under the vitalizing energy of the Spirit, as the very element of the new life in believers (compare Mt 10:19, 20; and see on Ro 8:4). "Abba" is the *Syro-Chaldaic* word for "Father"; and the *Greek* word for that is added, not surely to tell the reader that both mean the same thing, but for the same reason which drew both words from the lips of Christ Himself during his agony in the garden (Mr 14:36). He, doubtless, loved to utter His Father's name in both the accustomed forms; beginning with His cherished mother tongue, and adding that of the learned. In this view the use of both words here has a charming simplicity and warmth.

16. The Spirit itself—It should be "Himself" (see on Ro 8:26).

bear witness with our spirit, that we are the children—"are children"

of God—The testimony of our own spirit is borne in that cry of *conscious sonship*, "Abba, Father"; but we are not therein alone; for the Holy Ghost within us, yea, even in that very cry which it is His to draw forth, sets His own distinct seal to ours; and thus, "in the mouth of two witnesses" the thing is established. The apostle had before called us "sons of God," referring to our *adoption*; here the word changes to "children," referring to our *new birth*. The one expresses the *dignity* to which we are *admitted*; the other the *new life* which we *receive*. The latter is more suitable here; because a son by *adoption* might not be heir of the property, whereas a son by *birth* certainly is, and this is what the apostle is now coming to.

17. And if children, then heirs—"heirs also."

heirs of God—of our Father's kingdom.

and joint-heirs with Christ—as the "First-born among many brethren" (Ro 8:29), and as "Heir of all things" (Heb 1:2).

if so be that we suffer—"provided we be suffering with Him."

that we may be also glorified together—with Him. This necessity of conformity to Christ in suffering in order to participate in His glory, is taught alike by Christ Himself and by His apostles (Joh 12:24-26; Mt 16:24, 25; 2Ti 2:12).

18. For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us—that is, "True, we must suffer with Christ, if we would partake of His glory; but what of that? For if such sufferings are set over against the coming glory, they sink into insignificance."

19-22. For, &c.—"The apostle, fired with the thought of the future glory of the saints, pours forth this splendid passage, in which he represents the whole creation groaning under its present degradation, and looking and longing for the revelation of this glory as the end and consummation of its existence" [Hodge].

the earnest expectation—(compare Php 1:20).

of the creature—rather, "the creation."

waiteth for the manifestation—"is waiting for the revelation"

of the sons of God—that is, "for the redemption of their bodies" from the grave (Ro 8:23), which will reveal their sonship, now hidden (compare Lu 20:36; Re 21:7).

20. For the creature—"the creation."

was made subject to vanity, not willingly—that is, through no natural principle of decay. The apostle, personifying creation, represents it as only submitting to the vanity with which it was smitten, on man's account, in obedience to that superior power which had mysteriously linked its destinies with man's. And so he adds

but by reason of him who hath subjected *the same*—"who subjected it."

in hope—or "in hope that."

21. Because the creature itself also—"even the creation itself."

shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption—its bondage to the principle of decay.

into the glorious liberty—rather, "the liberty of the glory."

of the children of God—that is, the creation itself shall, in a glorious sense, be delivered into that freedom from debility and decay in which the children of God, when raised up in glory, shall expatiate: into this freedom from corruptibility the creation itself shall, in a glorious sense, be delivered (So Calvin, Beza, Bengel, Tholuck, Olshausen, De Wette, Meyer, Philippi, Hodge, Alford, &c.).

22. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now—If for man's sake alone the earth was cursed, it cannot surprise us that it should share in his recovery. And if so, to represent it as sympathizing with man's miseries, and as looking forward to his complete redemption as the period of its own emancipation from its present sin-blighted condition, is a beautiful thought, and in harmony with the general teaching of Scripture on the subject. (See on [2Pe 3:13](#)).

23. And not only they, but ourselves also—or "not only [so], but even we ourselves"—that is, besides the inanimate creation.

which have the first-fruits of the Spirit—or, "the Spirit as the first-fruits" of our full redemption (compare [2Co 1:22](#)), moulding the heart to a heavenly frame and attempering it to its future element.

even we ourselves—though we have so much of heaven already within us.

groan within ourselves—under this "body of sin and death," and under the manifold "vanity and vexation of spirit" that are written upon every object and every pursuit and every enjoyment under the sun.

waiting for the—manifestation of our

adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body—from the grave: "not (be it observed) the deliverance of ourselves from the body, but the redemption of the body itself from the grave" [Bengel].

24. For we are saved by hope—rather, "For in hope we are saved"; that is, it is more a salvation in hope than as yet in actual possession.

but hope that is seen is not hope—for the very meaning of hope is, the expectation that something now *future* will become *present*.

for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for?—the latter ending when the other comes.

25. But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it—that is, then, patient waiting for it is our fitting attitude.

26, 27. Likewise the Spirit also, &c.—or, "But after the like manner doth the Spirit also help.

our infirmities—rather (according to the true reading), "our infirmity"; not merely the one infirmity here specified, but *the general weakness of the spiritual life* in its present state, of which one example is here given.

for we know not what we should pray for as we ought—It is not the proper *matter* of prayer that believers are at so much loss about, for the fullest directions are given them on this head: but to ask for the right things "as they ought" is the difficulty. This arises partly from the dimness of our spiritual vision in the present veiled state, while we have to "walk by faith, not by sight" (see on [1Co 13:9](#) and [2Co 5:7](#)), and the large admixture of the ideas and feelings which spring from the fleeting objects of sense that there is in the very best views and affections of our renewed nature; partly also from the necessary imperfection of all human language as a vehicle for expressing the subtle spiritual feelings of the heart. In these circumstances, how can it be but that much uncertainty should surround all our spiritual exercises, and that in our nearest approaches and in the freest outpourings of our hearts to our Father in heaven, doubts should spring up within us whether our *frame* of mind in such exercises is altogether befitting and well pleasing to God? Nor do these anxieties subside, but rather deepen, with the depth and ripeness of our spiritual experience.

but the Spirit itself—rather, "Himself." (See end of [Ro 8:27](#)).

maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered—that is, which cannot be expressed in articulate language. Sublime and affecting ideas, for which we are indebted to this passage alone! "As we struggle to express in articulate language the desires of our hearts and find that our deepest emotions are the most inexpressible, we 'groan' under this felt inability. But not in vain are these groanings. For 'the Spirit Himself' is in them, giving to the emotions which He Himself has kindled the only language of which they are capable; so that though on our part they are the fruit of impotence to utter what we feel, they are at the same time the intercession of the Spirit Himself in our behalf."

27. And—rather, "But," inarticulate though these groanings be.

he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he—the Spirit

maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God—As the Searcher of hearts, He watches the surging emotions of them in prayer, and knows perfectly what the Spirit means by the groanings which He draws forth within us, because that blessed Intercessor pleads by them only for what God Himself designs to bestow.

Note, (1) Are believers "led by the Spirit of God" ([Ro 8:14](#))? How careful then should they be not to "grieve the Holy Spirit of God" ([Eph 4:30](#))! Compare [Ps 32:8, 9](#): "I will ... *guide* thee with Mine eye. *Be not* (then) *as the horse, or as the mule,*" &c. (2) "The spirit of bondage," to which many Protestants are "all their lifetime subject," and the "doubtful faith" which the Popish Church systematically inculcates, are both rebuked here, being in direct and painful contrast to that "spirit of adoption," and that witness of the Spirit, along with our

own spirit, to the fact of our sonship, which it is here said the children of God, as such, enjoy (Ro 8:15, 16). (3) As suffering with Christ is the ordained preparation for participating in this glory, so the insignificance of the one as compared with the other cannot fail to lighten the sense of it, however bitter and protracted (Ro 8:17, 18). (4) It cannot but swell the heart of every intelligent Christian to think that if external nature has been mysteriously affected for evil by the fall of man, it only awaits his completed recovery, at the resurrection, to experience a corresponding emancipation from its blighted condition into undecaying life and unfading beauty (Ro 8:19-23). (5) It is not when believers, through sinful "quenching of the Spirit," have the fewest and faintest glimpses of heaven, that they sigh most fervently to be there; but, on the contrary, when through the unobstructed working of the Spirit in their hearts, "the first-fruits" of the glory to be revealed are most largely and frequently tasted, then, and just for that reason, is it that they "groan within themselves" for full redemption (Ro 8:23). For thus they reason: If such be the drops, what will the ocean be? If thus "to see through a glass darkly" be so very sweet, what will it be to "see face to face?" If when "my Beloved stands behind our wall, looking forth at the windows, showing Himself through the lattice" (So 2:9)—that thin veil which parts the seen from the unseen—if He is even thus to me "Fairer than the children of men," what shall He be when He stands confessed before my undazzled vision, the Only-begotten of the Father in my own nature, and I shall be like Him, for I shall see Him as He is? (6) "The patience of hope" (1Th 1:3) is the fitting attitude for those who with the joyful consciousness that they are already "saved" (2Ti 1:9; Tit 3:5), have yet the painful consciousness that they are saved but *in part*: or, "that being justified by His grace, they are made (in the present state) heirs according to the hope (only) of eternal life," Tit 3:7 (Ro 8:24, 25). (7) As prayer is the breath of the spiritual life, and the believer's only effectual relief under the "infirmity" which attaches to his whole condition here below, how cheering is it to be assured that the blessed Spirit, cognizant of it all, comes in aid of it all; and in particular, that when believers, unable to articulate their case before God, can at times do nothing but lie "groaning" before the Lord, these inarticulate groanings are the Spirit's own vehicle for conveying into "the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth" their whole case; and come up before the Hearer of prayer as the Spirit's own intercession in their behalf, and that they are recognized by Him that sitteth on the Throne, as embodying only what His own "will" determined before to bestow upon them (Ro 8:26, 27)! (8) What a view do these two verses (Ro 8:26, 27) give of the relations subsisting between the Divine Persons in the economy of redemption, and the harmony of their respective operations in the case of each of the redeemed!

Third: *Triumphant Summary of the Whole Argument* (Ro 8:28-39).

28. And—or, "Moreover," or "Now"; noting a transition to a new particular.

we know, &c.—The order in the original is more striking: "We know that to them that love God" (compare 1Co 2:9; Eph 6:24; Jas 1:12; 2:5) "all things work together for good [even]

to them who are the called (rather, 'who are called') according to His (eternal) purpose." Glorious assurance! And this, it seems, was a "household word," a "known" thing, among believers. This working of all things for good is done quite naturally to "them that love God," because such souls, persuaded that He who gave His own Son for them cannot but mean them well in all His procedure, learn thus to take in good part whatever He sends them, however trying to flesh and blood: and to them who are the called, according to "His purpose," all things do in the same intelligible way "work together for good"; for, even when "He hath His way in the whirlwind," they see "His chariot paved with love" (So 3:10). And knowing that it is in pursuance of an eternal "*purpose*" of love that they have been "*called*" into the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ" (1Co 1:9), they naturally say within themselves, "It cannot be that He 'of whom, and through whom, and to whom are all things,' should suffer that purpose to be thwarted by anything really adverse to us, or that He should not make all things, dark as well as light, crooked as well as straight, to co-operate to the furtherance and final completion of His high design."

29. For—as touching this "calling according to his purpose" (Ro 8:28).

whom he did foreknow he also did predestinate—foreordain. In what sense are we to take the word "foreknow" here? "Those who He foreknew would repent and believe," say *Pelagians* of every age and every hue. But this is to thrust into the text what is contrary to the whole spirit, and even letter, of the apostle's teaching (see Ro 9:11; 2Ti 1:9). In Ro 11:2, and Ps 1:6, God's "knowledge" of His people cannot be restricted to a mere foresight of future events, or acquaintance with what is passing here below. Does "whom He did foreknow," then, mean "whom He foreordained?" Scarcely, because both "foreknowledge" and "foreordination" are here mentioned, and the one as the *cause* of the other. It is difficult indeed for our limited minds to distinguish them as states of the Divine Mind towards men; especially since in Ac 2:23 "the counsel" is put *before* "the foreknowledge of God," while in 1Pe 1:2 "election" is said to be "*according to* the foreknowledge of God." But probably God's foreknowledge of His own people means His "*peculiar, gracious, complacency in them*," while His "predestinating" or "foreordaining" them signifies His fixed *purpose*, flowing from this, to "save them and call them with an holy calling" (2Ti 1:9).

to be conformed to the image of his Son—that is, to be His sons after the pattern, model, or image of *His* Sonship in our nature.

that he might be the first-born among many brethren—"The First-born," the Son by nature; His "many brethren," sons by adoption: He, in the Humanity of the Only-begotten of the Father, bearing our sins on the accursed tree; they in that of mere men ready to perish by reason of sin, but redeemed by His blood from condemnation and wrath, and transformed into His likeness: He "the First-born from the dead"; they "that sleep in Jesus," to be in due time "brought with Him"; "The First-born," now "crowned with glory and honor"; His "many brethren," "when He shall appear, to be like Him, for they shall see Him as He is."

30. Moreover—"And," or "Now"; explanatory of [Ro 8:29](#)—In "predestinating us to be conformed to the image of His Son" in final glory, He settled all the successive steps of it. Thus

whom he did predestinate, them he also called—The word "called" (as Hodge and others truly observe) is never in the Epistles of the New Testament applied to those who have only the *outward invitation* of the Gospel (as in [Mt 20:16](#); [22:14](#)). It always means "*internally, effectually, savingly called*." It denotes the *first great step* in personal salvation and answers to "conversion." Only the word *conversion* expresses the *change of character* which then takes place, whereas this "calling" expresses the *divine authorship* of the change, and the *sovereign power* by which we are summoned, Matthew-like, Zaccheus-like, out of our old, wretched, perishing condition, into a new, safe, blessed life.

and whom he called—thus.

them he also justified—brought into the definite state of reconciliation already so fully described.

and whom he justified, them he also glorified—brought to final glory ([Ro 8:17, 18](#)). Noble climax, and so rhythmically expressed! And all this is viewed as past; because, starting from the past decree of "predestination to be conformed to the image of God's Son" of which the other steps are but the successive unfoldings—all is beheld as one entire, eternally completed salvation.

31. What shall we then say to these things?—"We can no farther go, think, wish" [Bengel]. This whole passage, to [Ro 8:34](#), and even to the end of the chapter, strikes all thoughtful interpreters and readers, as transcending almost every thing in language, while Olshausen notices the "profound and colossal" character of the thought.

If God be for us, who can be against us?—If God be *resolved* and *engaged* to bring us through, all *our* enemies must be *His*; and "Who would set the briers and thorns against Him in battle? He would go through them. He would burn them together" ([Isa 27:4](#)). What strong consolation is here! Nay, but the great Pledge of all has already been given; for,

32. He—rather, "He surely." (It is a pity to lose the emphatic particle of the original).

that spared not—"withheld not," "kept not back." This expressive phrase, as well as the whole thought, is suggested by [Ge 22:12](#), where Jehovah's touching commendation of Abraham's conduct regarding his son Isaac seems designed to furnish something like a glimpse into the spirit of His own act in *surrendering* His own Son. "Take now (said the Lord to Abraham) thy *son*, thine *only*, whom thou lovest, and ... offer him for a burnt offering" ([Ge 22:2](#)); and only when Abraham had all but performed that loftiest act of self-sacrifice, the Lord interposed, saying, "Now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou HAST NOT WITHHELD THY SON, THINE ONLY SON, from Me." In the light of this incident, then, and of this language, our apostle can mean to convey nothing less than this, that in "not sparing His own Son, but delivering Him up," or surrendering Him, God exercised, in His

Paternal character, a mysterious act of *Self-sacrifice*, which, though involving none of the *pain* and none of the *loss* which are inseparable from the very idea of self-sacrifice on our part, was not less real, but, on the contrary, as far transcended any such acts of ours as His nature is above the creature's. But this is inconceivable if Christ be not God's "own (or proper) Son," partaker of His very nature, as really as Isaac was of his father Abraham's. In that sense, certainly, the Jews charged our Lord with making Himself "equal with God" (see on [Joh 5:18](#)), which He in reply forthwith proceeded, not to disown, but to illustrate and confirm. Understand Christ's Sonship thus, and the language of Scripture regarding it is intelligible and harmonious; but take it to be an *artificial* relationship, ascribed to Him in virtue either of His miraculous birth, or His resurrection from the dead, or the grandeur of His works, or all of these together—and the passages which speak of it neither explain of themselves nor harmonize with each other.

delivered him up—not to *death* merely (as many take it), for that is too narrow an idea here, but "surrendered Him" in the most comprehensive sense; compare [Joh 3:16](#), "God so loved the world that He GAVE His only-begotten Son."

for us all—that is, for all believers alike; as nearly every good interpreter admits must be the meaning here.

how shall he not—how can we conceive that He should not.

with him also—rather, "also with Him." (The word "also" is often so placed in our version as to obscure the sense; see on [Heb 12:1](#)).

freely give us all things?—all other gifts being not only immeasurably *less* than this Gift of gifts, but virtually *included in it*.

33, 34. Who shall lay anything to the charge of—or, "bring any charge against."

God's elect?—the first place in this Epistle where believers are styled "the *elect*." In what sense this is meant will appear in next chapter.

34. yea rather, that is risen again—to make good the purposes of His death. Here, as in some other cases, the apostle delightfully corrects himself (see [Ga 4:9](#); and see on [Ro 1:12](#)); not meaning that the resurrection of Christ was of more saving value than His death, but that having "put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself"—which though precious to us was to Him of unmingled bitterness—it was incomparably more delightful to think that He was again *alive*, and living to see to the efficacy of His death in our behalf.

who is even—"also"

at the right hand of God—The right hand of the king was anciently the seat of honor (compare [1Sa 20:25](#); [1Ki 2:19](#); [Ps 45:9](#)), and denoted participation in the royal power and glory ([Mt 20:21](#)). The classical writings contain similar allusions. Accordingly Christ's sitting at the right hand of God—predicted in [Ps 110:1](#), and historically referred to in [Mr 16:19](#); [Ac 2:33](#); [7:56](#); [Eph 1:20](#); [Col 3:1](#); [1Pe 3:22](#); [Re 3:21](#)—signifies the *glory* of the exalted Son of man, and the *power* in the government of the world in which He participates. Hence it is

called "sitting on the right hand of *Power*" (Mt 26:64), and "sitting on the right hand of the *Majesty* on high" (Heb 1:3) [Philippi].

who also maketh intercession for us—using all His boundless *interest* with God in our behalf. This is the top of the climax. "His *Session* at God's right hand denotes His *power* to save us; His *Intercession*, His *will* to do it" [Bengel]. But how are we to conceive of this intercession? Not certainly as of one pleading "on bended knees and with outstretched arms," to use the expressive language of Calvin. But yet, neither is it merely a figurative intimation that the power of Christ's redemption is continually operative [Tholuck], or merely to show the fervor and vehemence of His love for us [Chrysostom]. It cannot be taken to mean less than this: that the glorified Redeemer, conscious of His claims, expressly *signifies His will* that the efficacy of His death should be made good to the uttermost, and signifies it in some such royal style as we find Him employing in that wonderful Intercessory Prayer which He spoke *as from within the veil* (see on Joh 17:11, 12): "Father, I WILL that they also whom Thou hast given Me be with Me where I am" (see on Joh 17:24). But *in what form* this will is expressed is as undiscoverable as it is unimportant.

35, 36. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?—This does not mean "our love to Christ," as if, Who shall hinder us from loving Christ? but "Christ's love to us," as is clear from the closing words of the chapter, which refer to the same subject. Nor would the other sense harmonize with the scope of the chapter, which is to exhibit the ample ground of the believer's confidence in Christ. "It is no ground of confidence to assert, or even to feel, that we will never forsake Christ; but it is the strongest ground of assurance to be convinced that His love will never change" [Hodge].

shall tribulation, &c.—"None of these, nor all together, how terrible soever to the flesh, are tokens of God's wrath, or the least ground for doubt of His love. From whom could such a question come better than from one who had himself for Christ's sake endured so much? (See 2Co 11:11-33; 1Co 4:10-13). The apostle says not (remarks Calvin nobly) "What," but "Who," just as if all creatures and all afflictions were so many gladiators taking arms against the Christians [Tholuck].

36. As it is written, For thy sake, &c.—(Ps 44:22)—quoted as descriptive of what God's faithful people may expect from their enemies *at any period* when their hatred of righteousness is roused, and there is nothing to restrain it (see Ga 4:29).

37. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors, through him that loved us—not, "We are so far from being conquered by them, that they do us much good" [Hodge]; for though this be true, the word means simply, "We are pre-eminently conquerors." See on Ro 5:20. And so far are they from "separating us from Christ's love," that it is just "through Him that loved us" that we are victorious over them.

38, 39. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers—whether good or bad. But as the bad are not called "angels," or "principalities,"

or "powers," save with some addition to show that such are meant ([Mt 25:41](#); [Col 2:15](#); [Eph 6:12](#); [2Pe 2:4](#)—except perhaps [1Co 6:3](#)), probably the *good* are meant here, but merely as the same apostle *supposes* an angel from heaven to preach a false gospel. (So the best interpreters).

nor things present, nor things to come—no condition of the present life and none of the unknown possibilities of the life to come.

39. nor any other creature—rather, "created thing"—any other thing in the whole created universe of God

shall be able to separate us, &c.—"All the terms here are to be taken in their most general sense, and need no closer definition. The indefinite expressions are meant to denote all that can be thought of, and are only a rhetorical paraphrase of the conception of *allness*" [Olshausen].

from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord—Thus does this wonderful chapter, with which the argument of the Epistle properly closes, leave us who are "justified by faith" in the arms of everlasting Love, whence no hostile power or conceivable event can ever tear us. "Behold what manner of love is this?" And "what manner of persons ought we to be," who are thus "blessed with all spiritual blessings in Christ?"

Note, (1) There is a glorious consistency between the eternal purposes of God and the free agency of men, though the link of connection is beyond human, perhaps created, apprehension ([Ro 8:28](#)). (2) How ennobling is the thought that the complicated movements of the divine government of the world are all arranged in expressed furtherance of the "good" of God's chosen ([Ro 8:28](#))! (3) To whatever conformity to the Son of God in dignity and glory, believers are or shall hereafter be raised, it will be the joy of everyone of them, as it is most fitting, "that in all things He should have the pre-eminence" ([Col 1:18](#)), ([Ro 8:29](#)). (4) "As there is a beautiful harmony and necessary connection between the several doctrines of grace, so must there be a like harmony in the character of the Christian. He cannot experience the joy and confidence flowing from his election without the humility which" the consideration of its being gratuitous must produce; nor can he have the peace of one who is justified without the holiness of one who is saved" ([Ro 8:29, 30](#)) [Hodge]. (5) However difficult it may be for finite minds to comprehend the emotions of the Divine Mind, let us never for a moment doubt that in "not sparing His own Son, but delivering Him up for us all," God made a real sacrifice of all that was dearest to His heart, and that in so doing He meant for ever to assure His people that all other things which they need—inasmuch as they are nothing to this stupendous gift, and indeed but the necessary sequel of it—will in due time be forthcoming ([Ro 8:32](#)). (6) In return for such a sacrifice on God's part, what can be considered too great on ours? (7) If there could be any doubt as to the meaning of the all-important word "Justification" in this Epistle—whether, as the Church of Rome teaches, and many others affirm, it means "*infusing* righteousness into the unholy, so as to *make*

them righteous," or, according to Protestant teaching, "*absolving, acquitting, or pronouncing righteous the guilty*" [Ro 8:33](#) ought to set such doubt entirely at rest. For the apostle's question in this verse is, "Who shall *bring a charge against* God's elect?" In other words, "Who shall *pronounce*" or "*hold them guilty?*" seeing that "God *justifies*" them: showing beyond all doubt, that to "justify" was intended to express precisely the opposite of "holding guilty"; and consequently (as Calvin triumphantly argues) that it means "*to absolve from the charge of guilt.*" (8) If there could be any reasonable doubt in what light the *death* of Christ is to be regarded in this Epistle, [Ro 8:34](#) ought to set that doubt entirely at rest. For there the apostle's question is, Who shall "*condemn*" God's elect, since "Christ *died*" for them; showing beyond all doubt (as Philippi justly argues) that it was the *expiatory* (character of that death which the apostle had in view). (9) What an affecting view of the love of Christ does it give us to learn that His greatest *nearness* to God and most powerful *interest* with Him—as "seated on His right hand"—is employed in behalf of His people here below ([Ro 8:34](#))! (10) "The whole universe, with all that it contains, so far as it is good, is the friend and ally of the Christian; and, so far as it is evil, is more than a conquered foe" ([Ro 8:35-39](#)) [Hodge]. (11) Are we who "have tasted that the Lord is gracious," both "kept by the *power* of God through faith unto salvation" ([1Pe 1:5](#)), and embraced in the arms of *Invincible Love*? Then surely, while "building ourselves up on our most holy faith," and "praying in the Holy Ghost," only the more should we feel constrained to "*keep ourselves in the love of God*, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life" ([Jude 20, 21](#)).

CHAPTER 9

[Ro 9:1-33](#). The Bearing of the Foregoing Truths upon the Condition and Destiny of the Chosen People—Election—The Calling of the Gentiles.

Too well aware that he was regarded as a traitor to the dearest interests of his people ([Ac 21:33](#); [22:22](#); [25:24](#)), the apostle opens this division of his subject by giving vent to his real feelings with extraordinary vehemence of protestation.

1, 2. I say the truth in Christ—as if steeped in the spirit of Him who wept over impenitent and doomed Jerusalem (compare [Ro 1:9](#); [2Co 12:19](#); [Php 1:8](#)).

my conscience bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost—"my conscience as quickened, illuminated, and even now under the direct operation of the Holy Ghost."

2. That I have, &c.—"That I have great grief (or, sorrow) and unceasing anguish in my heart"—the bitter hostility of his nation to the glorious Gospel, and the awful consequences of their unbelief, weighing heavily and incessantly upon his spirit.

3. For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for—"in behalf of"

my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh—In proportion as he felt himself severed from his nation, he seems to have realized all the more vividly their natural relationship. To explain away the wish here expressed, as too strong for any Christian to utter or conceive, some have rendered the opening words, "I *did* wish," referring it to his former unenlightened state; a sense of the words too tame to be endured: others unwarrantably soften the sense of the word "accursed." But our version gives the true import of the original; and if it be understood as the language rather of "strong and indistinct emotions than of definite ideas" [Hodge], expressing passionately how he felt his whole being swallowed up in the salvation of his people, the difficulty will vanish, and we shall be reminded of the similar idea so nobly expressed by Moses ([Ex 32:32](#)).

4. Who are Israelites—See [Ro 11:1](#); [2Co 11:22](#); [Php 3:5](#).

to whom pertaineth—"whose is"

the adoption—It is true that, compared with the new economy, the old was a state of minority and pupilage, and so far that of a bond-servant ([Ga 4:1-3](#)); yet, compared with the state of the surrounding heathen, the choice of Abraham and his seed was a real separation of them to be a *Family of God* ([Ex 4:22](#); [De 32:6](#); [Isa 1:2](#); [Jer 31:9](#); [Ho 11:1](#); [Mal 1:6](#)).

and the glory—that "glory of the Lord," or "visible token of the Divine Presence in the midst of them," which rested on the ark and filled the tabernacle during all their wanderings in the wilderness; which in Jerusalem continued to be seen in the tabernacle and temple, and only disappeared when, at the Captivity, the temple was demolished, and the sun of the ancient economy began to go down. This was what the Jews called the "*Shekinah*."

and the covenants—"the covenants of promise" to which the Gentiles before Christ were "strangers" ([Eph 2:12](#)); meaning the *one covenant* with Abraham in its successive *renewals* (see [Ga 3:16, 17](#)).

and the giving of the law—from Mount Sinai, and the possession of it thereafter, which the Jews justly deemed their peculiar honor ([De 26:18, 19](#); [Ps 147:19, 20](#); [Ro 2:17](#)).

and the service of God—or, of the sanctuary, meaning the whole divinely instituted religious service, in the celebration of which they were brought so nigh unto God.

and the promises—the great Abrahamic promises, successively unfolded, and which had their fulfilment only in Christ; (see [Heb 7:6](#); [Ga 3:16, 21](#); [Ac 26:6, 7](#)).

5. Whose are the fathers—here, probably, the three great fathers of the covenant—Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—by whom God condescended to name Himself ([Ex 8:6, 13](#); [Lu 20:37](#)).

and—most exalted privilege of all, and as such, reserved to the last.

of whom as concerning the flesh—(See on [Ro 1:3](#)).

Christ came—or, "is Christ"

who is over all, God—rather, "God over all."

blessed for ever. Amen—To get rid of the bright testimony here borne to the supreme divinity of Christ, various expedients have been adopted: (1) To place a period, either after the words "concerning the flesh Christ came," rendering the next clause as a doxology to the Father—"God who is over all be blessed for ever"; or after the word "all"—thus, "Christ came, who is over all: God be blessed.", &c. [Erasmus, Locke, Fritzsche, Meyer, Jowett, &c.]. But it is fatal to this view, as even *Socinus* admits, that in other Scripture doxologies the word "Blessed" *precedes* the name of God on whom the blessing is invoked (thus: "Blessed be God," [Ps 68:35](#); "Blessed be the Lord God, the God of Israel," [Ps 72:18](#)). Besides, any such doxology here would be "unmeaning and frigid in the extreme"; the sad subject on which he was entering suggesting anything but a doxology, even in connection with Christ's Incarnation [Alford]. (2) To transpose the words rendered "who is"; in which case the rendering would be, "whose (that is, the fathers') is Christ according to the flesh" [Crellius, Whiston, Taylor, Whitby]. But this is a desperate expedient, in the face of all manuscript authority; as is also the conjecture of Grotius and others, that the word "God" should be omitted from the text. It remains then, that we have here no doxology at all, but a naked statement of fact, that while Christ is "of" the Israelitish nation "*as concerning the flesh*," He is, *in another respect*, "God over all, blessed for ever." (In [2Co 11:31](#) the very *Greek* phrase which is here rendered "who is," is used in the same sense; and compare [Ro 1:25](#), *Greek*). In this view of the passage, as a testimony to the supreme divinity of Christ, besides all the orthodox fathers, some of the ablest modern critics concur [Bengel, Tholuck, Stuart, Olshausen, Philippi, Alford, &c.]

6. Not as though the word of God had taken none effect—"hath fallen to the ground," that is, failed: compare [Lu 16:17](#), *Greek*.

for they are not all Israel which are of Israel—better, "for not all they which are of Israel are Israel." *Here the apostle enters upon the profound subject of Election, the treatment of which extends to the end of the eleventh chapter*—"Think not that I mourn over the total

loss of Israel; for that would involve the failure of God's word to Abraham; but not all that belong to the natural seed, and go under the name of 'Israel,' are *the* Israel of God's irrevocable choice." The difficulties which encompass this subject lie not in the apostle's teaching, which is plain enough, but in the truths themselves, the evidence for which, taken by themselves, is overwhelming, but whose perfect harmony is beyond human comprehension in the present state. The great source of error here lies in hastily inferring (as Tholuck and others), from the apostle's taking tip, at the close of this chapter, the calling of the Gentiles in connection with the rejection of Israel, and continuing this subject through the two next chapters, that the Election treated of in the body of this chapter is *national*, not *personal* Election, and consequently is Election merely to *religious advantages*, not to *eternal salvation*. In that case, the argument of [Ro 9:6](#), with which the subject of Election opens, would be this: "The choice of Abraham and his seed has not failed; because though Israel has been rejected, *the Gentiles* have taken their place; and God has a right to choose what nation He will to the privileges of His visible kingdom." But so far from this, the Gentiles are not so much as mentioned at all till towards the close of the chapter; and the argument of this verse is, that "all Israel is *not* rejected, but only a portion of it, the remainder being *the* 'Israel' whom God has chosen in the exercise of His sovereign right." And that this is a choice not to mere external privileges, but to eternal salvation, will abundantly appear from what follows.

7-9. Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children—"Not in the line of mere fleshly descent from Abraham does the election run; else Ishmael, Hagar's child, and even Keturah's children, would be included, which they were not."

but—the true election are such of Abraham's seed as God unconditionally chooses, as exemplified in that promise.

in Isaac shall thy seed be called—([Ge 21:12](#)).

10-13. And not only *this*; but when Rebecca, &c.—It might be thought that there was a natural reason for preferring the child of Sarah, as being Abraham's true and first wife, both to the child of Hagar, Sarah's maid, and to the children of Keturah, his second wife. But there could be no such reason in the case of Rebecca, Isaac's only wife; for the choice of her son Jacob was the choice of one of two sons by the same mother and of the younger in preference to the elder, and before either of them was born, and consequently before either had done good or evil to be a ground of preference: and all to show that the sole ground of distinction lay in the unconditional choice of God—"not of works, but of Him that calleth."

14. What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid—This is the first of two objections to the foregoing doctrine, that God chooses one and rejects another, not on account of their works, but purely in the exercise of His own good pleasure: "*This doctrine is inconsistent with the justice of God.*" The answer to this objection extends to [Ro 9:19](#), where we have the second objection.

15. For he saith to Moses—([Ex 33:19](#)).

I will have mercy on whom I will have—"on whom I have"
mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have—"on whom I have"
compassion—"There can be no unrighteousness in God's choosing whom He will, for to Moses He expressly claims the right to do so." Yet it is worthy of notice that this is expressed in the positive rather than the negative form: not, "I will have mercy on *none but* whom I will"; but, "I will have mercy on *whomsoever* I will."

16. So then it is not of him that willeth—hath the inward *desire*
nor of him that runneth—maketh active *effort* (compare [1Co 9:24, 26](#); [Php 2:16](#); [3:14](#)). Both these are indispensable to salvation, yet salvation is owing to neither, but is purely "of God that showeth mercy." See on [Php 2:12, 13](#), "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling: for it is God which, *out of His own good pleasure*, worketh in you both to *will* and to *do*."

17. For the scripture saith to Pharaoh—observe here the light in which the Scripture is viewed by the apostle.

Even for this same—"this very"
purpose have I raised—"raised I"
thee up, &c.—The apostle had shown that God claims the right to choose whom He will: here he shows by an example that God punishes whom He will. But "God did not make Pharaoh wicked; He only forbore to make him good, by the exercise of special and altogether unmerited grace" [Hodge].

that I might—"may"
show my power in thee—It was not that Pharaoh was worse than others that he was so dealt with, but "in order that he might become a monument of the penal justice of God, and it was with a view to this that God provided that the evil which was in him should be manifested in this definite form" [Olshausen].

and that my name might—"may"
be declared—"proclaimed"
in all the earth—"This is the principle on which all punishment is inflicted, that the true character of the Divine Lawgiver should be known. This is of all objects, where God is concerned, the highest and most important; in itself the most worthy, and in its results the most beneficent" [Hodge].

18. Therefore hath he—"So then he hath." The result then is that He hath
mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth—by judicially abandoning them to the hardening influence of sin itself ([Ps 81:11, 12](#); [Ro 1:24, 26, 28](#); [Heb 3:8, 13](#)), and of the surrounding incentives to it ([Mt 24:12](#); [1Co 15:38](#); [2Th 2:17](#)).

Second objection to the doctrine of Divine Sovereignty:

19. Thou shalt say then unto me, Why—"Why then" is the true reading.
doth he yet find fault? for who hath resisted—"Who resisteth"

his will?—that is, "*This doctrine is incompatible with human responsibility*"; If God chooses and rejects, pardons and punishes, whom He pleases, why are those blamed who, if rejected by Him, cannot help sinning and perishing? This objection shows quite as conclusively as the former the real nature of the doctrine objected to—that it is Election and Non-election to eternal salvation prior to any difference of personal character; this is the only doctrine that could suggest the objection here stated, and to this doctrine the objection is plausible. What now is the apostle's answer? It is twofold. *First*: "It is irreverence and presumption in the creature to arraign the Creator."

20, 21. Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made—"didst thou make"
me thus?—(*Isa 45:9*).

21. Hath not the potter power over the clay; of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another to dishonour?—"The objection is founded on ignorance or misapprehension of the relation between God and His sinful creatures; supposing that He is under obligation to extend His grace to all, whereas He is under obligation to none. All are sinners, and have forfeited every claim to His mercy; it is therefore perfectly competent to God to spare one and not another, to make one vessel to honor and another to dishonor. But it is to be borne in mind that Paul does not here speak of God's right over His creatures *as creatures*, but *as sinful creatures*: as he himself clearly intimates in the next verses. It is the cavil of a sinful creature against his Creator that he is answering, and he does so by showing that God is under no obligation to give His grace to any, but is as sovereign as in fashioning the clay" [Hodge]. But, *Second*: "There is nothing unjust in such sovereignty."

22, 23. What if God, willing to show—"designing to manifest"

his wrath—His holy displeasure against sin.

and to make his power—to punish it

known endured with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath—that is, "destined to wrath"; just as "vessels of mercy," in [Ro 9:23](#), mean "vessels destined to mercy"; compare [Eph 2:3](#), "children of wrath."

fitted for destruction—It is well remarked by Stuart that the "difficulties which such statements involve are not to be got rid of by softening the language of one text, while so many others meet us which are of the same tenor; and even if we give up the Bible itself, so long as we acknowledge an omnipotent and omniscient God we cannot abate in the least degree from any of the difficulties which such texts make." Be it observed, however, that if God, as the apostle teaches, expressly "designed to manifest His wrath, and to make His power (in the way of wrath) known," it could only be by punishing some, while He pardons others; and if the choice between the two classes was not to be founded, as our apostle also teaches, on their own doings but on God's good pleasure, the decision behooved ultimately to rest with God. Yet, even in the necessary punishment of the wicked, as Hodge observes,

so far from proceeding with undue severity, the apostle would have it remarked that God "endures with much long-suffering" those objects of His righteous displeasure.

23. And that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy—that "glorious exuberance of Divine mercy" which "was manifested in choosing and eternally arranging for the salvation of sinners."

24. even us, whom he hath called, &c.—rather, "Whom he hath also called, even us," &c., in not only "*afore preparing*," but in due time effectually "*calling us*."

not of the Jews, &c.—better, "not from among Jews only, but also from among Gentiles." *Here for the first time in this chapter the calling of the Gentiles is introduced*; all before having respect, not to the substitution of the called Gentiles for the rejected Jews, but to the choice of one portion and the rejection of another of the same Israel. Had Israel's rejection been total, God's promise to Abraham would *not* have been fulfilled by the substitution of the Gentiles in their room; but Israel's rejection being only partial, the preservation of a "remnant," in which the promise was made good, was but "according to the election of grace." And now, for the first time, the apostle tells us that along with this elect remnant of *Israel*, it is God's purpose to "take out of the *Gentiles* a people for His name" ([Ac 28:14](#)); and that subject, thus introduced, is now continued to the end of the eleventh chapter.

25. As he saith also in Osee—"Hosea."

I will call them my people, which were not my people; and her beloved, which was not beloved—quoted, though not quite to the letter, from [Ho 2:23](#), a passage relating immediately, not to the heathen, but to the kingdom of the ten tribes; but since they had sunk to the level of the heathen, who were "not God's people," and in that sense "not beloved," the apostle legitimately applies it to the heathen, as "aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise" (so [1Pe 2:10](#)).

26. And—another quotation from [Ho 1:10](#).

it shall come to pass, that in the place where it was said unto them, Ye are not my people; there shall they be called the children—"called sons"

of the living God—The expression, "in the place where ... there," seems designed only to give greater emphasis to the gracious change here announced, from divine exclusion to divine admission to the privileges of the people of God.

27-29. Esaias also crieth—"But Isaiah crieth"—an expression denoting a solemn testimony openly borne ([Joh 1:15](#); [7:28, 37](#); [12:44](#); [Ac 23:6](#); [24:21](#)).

concerning Israel, Though the number of the children—"sons"

of Israel be as the sand of the sea, a—"the"

remnant—that is, the elect remnant *only* shall be saved.

28. For he will finish the work, and cut—"is finishing the reckoning, and cutting it"
it short in righteousness; because a short work—"reckoning"

will the Lord make upon the earth—(Isa 10:22, 23), as in the *Septuagint*. The sense given to these words by the apostle may seem to differ from that intended by the prophet. But the sameness of sentiment in both places will at once appear, if we understand those words of the prophet, "the consumption decreed shall overflow with righteousness," to mean that while a remnant of Israel should be graciously spared to return from captivity, "the decreed consumption" of the impenitent majority should be "replete with righteousness," or illustriously display God's righteous vengeance against sin. The "short reckoning" seems to mean the speedy completing of His word, both in cutting off the one portion and saving the other.

29. And as Esaias said—"hath said"

before—that is, probably in an earlier part of his book, namely, Isa 1:9.

Except the Lord of Sabaoth—that is, "The Lord of Hosts": the word is *Hebrew*, but occurs so in the Epistle of James (Jas 5:4), and has thence become naturalized in our Christian phraseology.

had left us a seed—meaning a "remnant"; small at first, but in due time to be a seed of plenty (compare Ps 22:30, 31; Isa 6:12, 13).

we had been—"become"

as Sodom, &c.—But for this precious seed, the chosen people would have resembled the cities of the plain, both in degeneracy of character and in merited doom.

30, 31. What shall we say then?—"What now is the result of the whole?" The result is this—very different from what one would have expected.

That the Gentiles, which followed not after righteousness, have attained—"attained"

to righteousness, even the righteousness of faith—As we have seen that "the righteousness of faith" is the righteousness which *justifies* (see on Ro 3:22, &c.), this verse must mean that "the Gentiles, who while strangers to Christ were quite indifferent about acceptance with God, having embraced the Gospel as soon as it was preached to them, experienced the blessedness of a justified state."

31. But Israel, which followed—"following"

after the law of righteousness, hath not attained—"attained not"

unto the law of righteousness—The word "law" is used here, we think, in the same sense as in Ro 7:23, to denote "a principle of action"; that is, "Israel, though sincerely and steadily aiming at acceptance with God, nevertheless missed it."

32, 33. Wherefore? Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were—rather simply, "as"

by the works of the law—as if it were thus attainable, which justification is not: Since, therefore, it is attainable only by faith, they missed it.

for—it is doubtful if this particle was originally in the text.

they stumbled at that stumbling-stone—better, "against the stone of stumbling," meaning *Christ*. But in this they only did.

33. As it is written—([Isa 8:14](#); [28:16](#)).

Behold, &c.—Two Messianic predictions are here combined, as is not unusual in quotations from the Old Testament. Thus combined, the prediction brings together both the classes of whom the apostle is treating: those to whom Messiah should be only a stone of stumbling, and those who were to regard Him as the Cornerstone of all their hopes. Thus expounded, this chapter presents no serious difficulties, none which do not arise out of the subject itself, whose depths are unfathomable; whereas on every other view of it the difficulty of giving it any consistent and worthy interpretation is in our judgment insuperable.

Note, (1) To speak and act "in Christ," with a conscience not only illuminated, but under the present operation of the Holy Ghost, is not peculiar to the supernaturally inspired, but is the privilege, and ought to be the aim, of every believer ([Ro 9:1](#)). (2) Grace does not destroy, but only intensify and elevate, the feelings of nature; and Christians should study to show this ([Ro 9:2, 3](#)). (3) To belong to the visible Church of God, and enjoy its high and holy distinctions, is of the sovereign mercy of God, and should be regarded with devout thankfulness ([Ro 9:4, 5](#)). (4) Yet the most sacred external distinctions and privileges will avail nothing to salvation without the heart's submission to the righteousness of God ([Ro 9:31-33](#)). (5) What manner of persons ought "God's elect" to be—in *humility*, when they remember that He hath saved them and called them, not according to their works, but according to His own purpose and grace, given them in Christ Jesus before the world began ([2Ti 1:9](#)); in *thankfulness*, for "Who maketh thee to differ, and what hast thou that thou didst not receive?" ([1Co 4:7](#)); in *godly jealousy* over themselves; remembering that "God is not mocked," but "whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap" ([Ga 6:7](#)); in *diligence* "to make our calling and election sure" ([2Pe 1:10](#)); and yet in calm *confidence* that "whom God predestinates, and calls, and justifies, them (in due time) He also glorifies" ([Ro 8:30](#)). (6) On all subjects which from their very nature lie beyond human comprehension, it will be our wisdom to set down what God says in His word, and has actually done in His procedure towards men, as indisputable, even though it contradict the results at which in the best exercise of our limited judgment we may have arrived ([Ro 9:14-23](#)). (7) Sincerity in religion, or a general desire to be saved, with assiduous efforts to do right, will prove fatal as a ground of confidence before God, if unaccompanied by implicit submission to His revealed method of salvation ([Ro 9:31-33](#)). (8) In the rejection of the great mass of the chosen people, and the inbringing of multitudes of estranged Gentiles, God would have men to see a law of His procedure, which the judgment of the great day will more vividly reveal that "the last shall be first and the first last" ([Mt 20:16](#)).

CHAPTER 10

Ro 10:1-21. Same Subject Continued—How Israel Came to Miss Salvation, and the Gentiles to Find It.

1. Brethren, my heart's desire—The word here expresses "entire complacency," that in which the heart would experience full satisfaction.

and prayer—"supplication."

to God for Israel—"for them" is the true reading; the subject being continued from the close of the preceding chapter.

is, that they may be saved—"for their salvation." Having before poured forth the anguish of his soul at the general unbelief of his nation and its dreadful consequences (**Ro 9:1-3**), he here expresses in the most emphatic terms his desire and prayer for their salvation.

2. For I bear them record—or, "witness," as he well could from his own sad experience.

that they have a zeal of—"for"

God, but not according to knowledge—(Compare **Ac 22:3; 26:9-11; Ga 1:13, 14**). He alludes to this well-meaning of his people, notwithstanding their spiritual blindness, not certainly to excuse their rejection of Christ and rage against His saints, but as some ground of hope regarding them. (See **1Ti 1:13**).

3. For they being ignorant of God's righteousness—that is, for the justification of the guilty (see on **Ro 1:17**).

and going about—"seeking"

to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves to the righteousness of God—The apostle views the general rejection of Christ by the nation as one act.

4. For Christ is the end—the object or aim.

of the law for—justifying

righteousness to every one that believeth—that is, contains within Himself all that the law demands for the justification of such as embrace Him, whether Jew or Gentile (**Ga 3:24**).

5-10. For Moses describeth the righteousness which is of the law, That the man that doeth—"hath done"

those things—which it commands.

shall live in them—(**Le 18:5**). This is the one way of justification and life—by "the righteousness which is of (or, by our own obedience to) the law."

6. But the—justifying

righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise—"speaketh thus"—its language or import is to this effect (quoting in substance **De 30:13, 14**).

Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? that is, to bring Christ down, &c.—that is, "Ye have not to sigh over the impossibility of attaining to justification; as if one should say, oh! if I could but get someone to mount up to heaven and fetch me down Christ, there might be some hope, but since that cannot be, mine is a desperate case."

7. **Or, Who shall descend, &c.**—another case of impossibility, suggested by [Pr 30:4](#), and perhaps also [Am 9:2](#)—probably proverbial expressions of impossibility (compare [Ps 139:7-10](#); [Pr 24:7](#), &c.).

8. **But what saith it? It saith**—continuing the quotation from [De 30:14](#).

The word is nigh thee—easily accessible.

in thy mouth—when thou confessest Him.

and in thine heart—when thou believest on Him. Though it is of *the law* which Moses more immediately speaks in the passage quoted, yet it is of the law as Israel shall be brought to look upon it when the Lord their God shall circumcise their heart "to love the Lord their God with all their heart" ([Ro 10:6](#)); and thus, in applying it, the apostle (as Olshausen truly observes) is not merely appropriating the language of Moses, but keeping in the line of his deeper thought.

that is, the word of faith, which we preach—that is, the word which men have to believe for salvation (compare [1Ti 4:6](#)).

9. **That if thou shalt, &c.**—So understanding the words, the apostle is here giving the language of the true method of justification; and this sense we prefer (with Calvin, Beza, Ferme, Locke, Jowett). But able interpreters render the words, "For," or "Because if thou shalt," &c. [*Vulgate*, Luther, De Wette, Stuart, Philippi, Alford, *Revised Version*]. In this case, these are the apostle's own remarks, confirming the foregoing statements as to the simplicity of the gospel method of salvation.

confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus—that is, probably, "If thou shalt confess Jesus [to be] the Lord," which is the proper manifestation or evidence of faith ([Mt 10:32](#); [1Jo 4:15](#)). This is put first merely to correspond with the foregoing quotation—"in thy mouth and in thine heart." So in [1Pe 1:10](#) the "calling of believers" is put before their "election," as that which is first "made sure," although in point of time it comes after it.

and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised—"that God raised"

him from the dead, &c.—(See on [Ro 4:25](#)). In [Ro 10:10](#) the two things are placed in their natural order.

10. **For with the heart man believeth unto**—justifying

righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation—This confession of Christ's name, especially in times of persecution, and whenever obloquy is attached to the Christian profession, is an indispensable test of discipleship.

11-13. **For the scripture saith**—in [Isa 28:16](#), a glorious Messianic passage.

Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed—Here, as in [Ro 9:33](#), the quotation is from the *Septuagint*, which renders those words of the original, "shall not make haste" (that is, fly for escape, as from conscious danger), "shall not be put to shame," which comes to the same thing.

12. **For there is no difference**—or "distinction"

between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord over all—that is, not *God* (as Calvin, Grotius, Olshausen, Hodge), but *Christ*, as will be seen, we think, by comparing [Ro 10:9, 12, 13](#) and observing the apostle's usual style on such subjects. (So Chrysostom, Melville, Bengel, Meyer, De Wette, Fritzsche, Tholuck, Stuart, Alford, Philippi).

is rich—a favorite Pauline term to express the exuberance of that saving grace which is in Christ Jesus.

unto all that call upon him—This confirms the application of the preceding words to *Christ*; since to call upon the name of the Lord Jesus is a customary expression. (See [Ac 7:59, 60; 9:14, 21; 22:16; 1Co 1:2; 2Ti 2:22](#)).

13. For—saith the scripture

whosoever—The expression is emphatic, "Everyone whosoever"

shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved—([Joe 2:32](#)); quoted also by Peter, in his great Pentecostal sermon ([Ac 2:21](#)), with evident application to Christ.

14, 15. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and ... believe in him of whom they have not heard? and ... hear without a preacher? and ... preach except ... sent?—that is, "True, the same Lord over all is rich unto all alike that call upon Him. But this calling implies believing, and believing hearing, and hearing preaching, and preaching *a mission to preach*: Why, then, take ye it so ill, O children of Abraham, that in obedience to our heavenly mission ([Ac 26:16-18](#)) we preach among *the Gentiles* the unsearchable riches of Christ?"

15. as it is written—([Isa 52:7](#)).

How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, &c.—The whole chapter of Isaiah from which this is taken, and the three that follow, are so richly Messianic, that there can be no doubt "the glad tidings" there spoken of announce a more glorious release than of Judah from the Babylonish captivity, and the very feet of its preachers are called "beautiful" for the sake of their message.

16, 17. But they have not all obeyed the gospel—that is, the Scripture hath prepared us to expect this sad result.

For Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report?—that is, "Where shall one find a believer?" The prophet speaks as if next to none would believe: The apostle softens this into "They have not all believed."

17. So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God—"This is another confirmation of the truth that faith supposes the hearing of the Word, and this a commission to preach it."

18. But I say, Have they not heard?—"Did they not hear?" Can Israel, through any region of his dispersion, plead ignorance of these glad tidings?

Yes, verily, their sound went—"their voice went out"

into all the earth, and their words unto the end of the world—These beautiful words are from [Ps 19:4](#). Whether the apostle quoted them as in their primary intention applicable to his subject (as Olshausen, Alford, &c.), or only "used scriptural language to express his own ideas, as is done involuntarily almost by every preacher in every sermon" [Hodge], expositors are not agreed. But though the latter may seem the more natural since "the rising of the Sun of righteousness upon the world" ([Mal 4:2](#)), "the Dayspring from on high visiting us, giving light to them that sat in darkness, and guiding our feet into the way of peace" ([Lu 1:78, 79](#)), must have been familiar and delightful to the apostle's ear, we cannot doubt that the irradiation of the world with the beams of a better Sun by the universal diffusion of the Gospel of Christ, must have a mode of speaking quite natural, and to him scarcely figurative.

19. But I say, Did not Israel know?—know, from their own Scriptures, of God's intention to bring in the Gentiles?

First—that is First in the prophetic line [De Wette].

Moses saith, &c.—"I will provoke you to jealousy ('against') [them that are] not a nation, and against a nation without understanding will I anger you" ([De 32:21](#)). In this verse God warns His ancient people that because they had (that is, in aftertimes would) moved Him to jealousy with their "no-gods," and provoked Him to anger with their vanities, He in requital would move them to jealousy by receiving into His favor a "no-people," and provoke them to anger by adopting a nation void of understanding.

20. But Esaias is very bold, and saith—that is, is still plainer, and goes even the length of saying.

I was found of them that sought me not—until I sought them.

I was made—"became"

manifest unto them that asked not after me—until the invitation from Me came to them. That the calling of the Gentiles was meant by these words of the prophet ([Isa 65:1](#)) is manifest from what immediately follows, "I said, Behold Me, behold Me, unto a nation that was not called by My name."

21. But to—rather, "with regard to"

Israel he saith, All day—"All the day"

long I have stretched out my hands—"did I stretch forth"

my hands—the attitude of gracious entreaty.

unto a disobedient and gainsaying people—These words, which immediately follow the announcement just quoted of the calling of the Gentiles, were enough to forewarn the Jews both of God's purpose to eject them from their privileges, in favor of the Gentiles, and of the cause of it on their own part.

Note, (1) Mere sincerity, and even earnestness in religion—though it may be some ground of hope for a merciful recovery from error—is no excuse, and will not compensate, for the deliberate rejection of saving truth, when in the providence of God presented for

acceptance ([Ro 10:1-3](#); and see on [Ro 9:7](#), *Note 7*). (2) The true cause of such rejection of saving truth, by the otherwise sincere, is the prepossession of the mind by some false notions of its own. So long as the Jews "sought to set up their own righteousness," it was in the nature of things impossible that they should "submit themselves to the righteousness of God"; the one of these two methods of acceptance being in the teeth of the other ([Ro 10:3](#)). (3) The essential terms of salvation have in every age been the same: "Whosoever will" is invited to "take of the water of life freely," [Re 22:17](#) ([Ro 10:13](#)). (4) How will the remembrance of the simplicity, reasonableness, and absolute freeness of God's plan of salvation overwhelm those that perish from under the sound of it ([Ro 10:4-13](#)). (5) How piercingly and perpetually should that question—"How shall they hear without a preacher?"—sound in the ears of all churches, as but the apostolic echo of their Lord's parting injunction, "Preach the Gospel to every creature" ([Mr 16:15](#)), and how far below the proper standard of love, zeal, and self-sacrifice must the churches as yet be, when with so plenteous a harvest the laborers are yet so few ([Mt 9:37, 38](#)), and that cry from the lips of pardoned, gifted, consecrated men—"Here am I, send me" ([Isa 6:8](#)), is not heard everywhere ([Ro 10:14, 15](#))! (6) The blessing of a covenant relation to God is the irrevocable privilege of no people and no Church; it can be preserved only by fidelity, on our part, to the covenant itself ([Ro 10:19](#)). (7) God is often found by those who apparently are the farthest from Him, while He remains undiscovered by those who think themselves the nearest ([Ro 10:20, 21](#)). (8) God's dealings even with reprobate sinners are full of tenderness and compassion; all the day long extending the arms of His mercy even to the disobedient and gainsaying. This will be felt and acknowledged at last by all who perish, to the glory of God's forbearance and to their own confusion ([Ro 10:21](#)).

CHAPTER 11

Ro 11:1-36. Same Subject Continued and Concluded—The Ultimate Inbringing of All Israel, to Be, with the Gentiles, One Kingdom of God on the Earth.

1. I say then, Hath—"Did"

God cast away his people? God forbid—Our Lord did indeed announce that "the kingdom of God should be *taken from* Israel" (**Mt 21:41**); and when asked by the Eleven, after His resurrection, if He would at that time "*restore* the kingdom to Israel," His reply is a virtual admission that Israel was in some sense already out of covenant (**Ac 1:9**). Yet here the apostle teaches that, in two respects, Israel was *not* "cast away"; First, Not *totally*; Second, Not *finally*. First, Israel is not *wholly* cast away.

for I also am an Israelite—See **Php 3:5**, and so a living witness to the contrary.

of the seed of Abraham—of pure descent from the father of the faithful.

of the tribe of Benjamin—(**Php 3:5**), that tribe which, on the revolt of the ten tribes, constituted, with Judah, the one faithful kingdom of God (**1Ki 12:21**), and after the captivity was, along with Judah, the kernel of the Jewish nation (**Ezr 4:1; 10:9**).

2-4. God hath—"did"

not cast away his people—that is, *wholly*

which he foreknew—On the word "foreknew," see on **Ro 8:29**.

Wot—that is, "Know"

ye not that the scripture saith of—literally, "in," that is, in the section which relates to **Elias? how he maketh intercession**—"pleadeth"

against Israel—(The word "saying," which follows, as also the particle "and" before "digged down," should be omitted, as without manuscript authority).

3. and I am left alone—"I only am left."

4. seven thousand, that have not bowed the knee to Baal—not "the image of Baal," according to the supplement of our version.

5. Even so at this present time—"in this present season"; this period of Israel's rejection. (See **Ac 1:7**, *Greek*).

there is—"there obtains," or "hath remained"

a remnant according to the election of grace—"As in Elijah's time the apostasy of Israel was not so universal as it seemed to be, and as he in his despondency concluded it to be, so now, the rejection of Christ by Israel is not so appalling in extent as one would be apt to think: There is now, as there was then, a faithful remnant; not however of persons naturally better than the unbelieving mass, but of persons graciously chosen to salvation." (See **1Co 4:7; 2Th 2:13**). This establishes our view of the argument on Election in **Ro 9:1-29**, as not being an election of Gentiles in the place of Jews, and merely to religious advantages, but a sovereign choice of some of Israel itself, from among others, to believe and be saved. (See on **Ro 9:6**.)

6. And, &c.—better, "Now if it (the election) be by grace, it is no more of works; for [then] grace becomes no more grace: but if it be of works," &c. (The authority of ancient manuscripts against this latter clause, as superfluous and not originally in the text, though strong, is not sufficient, we think, to justify its exclusion. Such seeming redundancies are not unusual with our apostle). The general position here laid down is of vital importance: That there are but two possible sources of salvation—men's works, and God's grace; and that these are so essentially distinct and opposite, that salvation cannot be of any combination or mixture of both, but must be wholly either of the one or of the other. (See on [Ro 4:3](#), *Note 3*.)

7-10. What then?—How stands the fact?

Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for—better, "What Israel is in search of (that is, Justification, or acceptance with God—see on [Ro 9:31](#)); this he found not; but the election (the elect remnant of Israel) found it, and the rest were hardened," or judicially given over to the "hardness of their own hearts."

8. as it is written—([Isa 29:10](#); [De 29:4](#)).

God hath given—"gave"

them the spirit of slumber—"stupor"

unto this day—"this present day."

9. And David saith—([Ps 69:23](#)), which in such a Messianic psalm must be meant of the rejecters of Christ.

Let their table, &c.—that is, Let their very blessings prove a curse to them, and their enjoyments only sting and take vengeance on them.

10. Let their eyes be darkened ... and bow down their back alway—expressive either of the *decrepitude*, or of the *servile condition*, to come on the nation through the just judgment of God. The apostle's object in making these quotations is to show that what he had been compelled to say of the then condition and prospects of his nation was more than borne out by their own Scriptures. But, Secondly, God has not cast away His people *finally*. The illustration of this point extends, [Ro 11:11-31](#).

11. I say then, Have they stumbled—"Did they stumble"

that they should fall? God forbid; but—the supplement "rather" is better omitted.

through their fall—literally, "trespass," but here best rendered "false step" [[De Wette](#)]; not "fall," as in our version.

salvation is come to the Gentiles, to provoke them to jealousy—Here, as also in [Ro 10:19](#) (quoted from [De 32:21](#)), we see that emulation is a legitimate stimulus to what is good.

12. Now if the fall of them—"But if their trespass," or "false step"

be the riches of the—Gentile

world—as being the occasion of their accession to Christ.

and the diminishing of them—that is, the reduction of the *true* Israel to so small a remnant.

the riches of the Gentiles; how much more their fulness!—that is, their full recovery (see on [Ro 11:26](#)); that is, "If an event so untoward as Israel's fall was the occasion of such unspeakable good to the Gentile world, of how much greater good may we expect an event so blessed as their full recovery to be productive?"

13, 14. I speak—"am speaking"

to you Gentiles—another proof that this Epistle was addressed to Gentile believers. (See on [Ro 1:13](#)).

I magnify—"glorify"

mine office—The clause beginning with "inasmuch" should be read as a parenthesis.

14. If ... I may provoke, &c. (See on [Ro 11:11](#).)

my flesh—Compare [Isa 58:7](#).

15. For if the casting away of them—The apostle had denied that they were cast away ([Ro 11:1](#)); here he affirms it. But both are true; they *were* cast away, though neither totally nor finally, and it is of this partial and temporary rejection that the apostle here speaks.

be the reconciling of the—Gentile

world, what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead?—The reception of the whole family of Israel, scattered as they are among all nations under heaven, and the most inveterate enemies of the Lord Jesus, will be such a stupendous manifestation of the power of God upon the spirits of men, and of His glorious presence with the heralds of the Cross, as will not only kindle devout astonishment far and wide, but so change the dominant mode of thinking and feeling on all spiritual things as to seem like a *resurrection from the dead*.

16. For—"But"

if the first-fruit be holy, the lump is also holy; and if the root ... so the branches—The Israelites were required to offer to God the first-fruits of the earth—both in their raw state, in a sheaf of newly reaped grain ([Le 23:10, 11](#)), and in their prepared state, made into cakes of dough ([Nu 15:19-21](#))—by which the whole produce of that season was regarded as *hallowed*. It is probable that the latter of these offerings is here intended, as to it the word "lump" best applies; and the argument of the apostle is, that as the separation unto God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, from the rest of mankind, as the parent stem of their race, was as real an offering of first-fruits as that which hallowed the produce of the earth, so, in the divine estimation, it was as real a separation of the mass or "lump" of that nation in all time to God. The figure of the "root" and its "branches" is of like import—the consecration of the one of them extending to the other.

17, 18. And if—rather, "But if"; that is, "If notwithstanding this consecration of Abraham's race to God.

some of the branches—The mass of the unbelieving and rejected Israelites are here called "some," not, as before, to meet Jewish prejudice (see on [Ro 3:3](#), and on "not all" in [Ro 10:16](#)), but with the opposite view of checking Gentile pride.

and thou, being a wild olive, wert—"wast"

grafted in among them—Though it is more usual to graft the superior cutting upon the inferior stem, the opposite method, which is intended here, is not without example.

and with them partakest—"wast made partaker," along with the branches left, the believing remnant.

of the root and fatness of the olive tree—the rich grace secured by covenant to the true seed of Abraham.

18. Boast not against the—rejected

branches. But if thou—"do"

boast—remember that

thou bearest not—"it is not thou that bearest"

the root, but the root thee—"If the branches may not boast over the root that bears them, then may not the Gentile boast over the seed of Abraham; for what is thy standing, O Gentile, in relation to Israel, but that of a branch in relation to the root? From Israel hath come all that thou art and hast in the family of God; for "salvation is of the Jews" ([Joh 4:22](#)).

19-21. Thou wilt say then—as a plea for boasting.

The branches were broken off, that I might be grafted in.

20. Well—"Be it so, but remember that"

because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest—not as a Gentile, but solely

by faith—But as faith cannot live in those "whose soul is lifted up" ([Hab 2:4](#)).

Be not high-minded, but fear—([Pr 28:14](#); [Php 2:12](#)):

21. For if God spared not the natural branches—sprung from the parent stem.

take heed lest he also spare not thee—a mere wild graft. The former might, beforehand, have been thought very improbable; but, after that, no one can wonder at the latter.

22, 23. Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them that fell, severity—in rejecting the chosen seed.

but toward thee, goodness—"God's goodness" is the true reading, that is, His sovereign goodness in admitting thee to a covenant standing who before wert a "stranger to the covenants of promise" ([Eph 2:12-20](#)).

if thou continue in his goodness—in believing dependence on that pure goodness which made thee what thou art.

23. And they also—"Yea, and they"

if they abide not still in unbelief, shall be grafted in: for God is able to graft them in again—This appeal to the *power* of God to effect the recovery of His ancient people implies

the vast difficulty of it—which all who have ever labored for the conversion of the Jews are made depressingly to feel. That intelligent expositors should think that this was meant of *individual* Jews, reintroduced from time to time into the family of God on their believing on the Lord Jesus, is surprising; and yet those who deny the *national* recovery of Israel must and do so interpret the apostle. But this is to confound the two things which the apostle carefully distinguishes. Individual Jews have been at all times admissible, and have been admitted, to the Church through the gate of faith in the Lord Jesus. This is the "remnant, *even at this present time*, according to the election of grace," of which the apostle, in the first part of the chapter, had cited himself as one. But here he manifestly speaks of something *not* then existing, but to be looked forward to as a great future event in the economy of God, the reingrafting of *the nation as such*, when they "abide not in unbelief." And though this is here spoken of merely as a supposition (if their unbelief shall cease)—in order to set it over against the other supposition, of what will happen to the Gentiles if they shall not abide in the faith—the supposition is turned into an explicit prediction in the verses following.

24. For if thou wert cut—"wert cut off"

from the olive tree, which is wild by nature, and wast grafted contrary to nature into a good olive tree; how much more shall these, &c.—This is just the converse of [Ro 11:21](#): "As the excision of the merely *engrafted* Gentiles through unbelief is a thing much more to be expected than was the excision of the *natural* Israel, before it happened; so the restoration of Israel, when they shall be brought to believe in Jesus, is a thing far more in the line of what we should expect, than the admission of the Gentiles to a standing which they never before enjoyed."

25. For I would not ... that ye should be ignorant of this mystery—The word "mystery," so often used by our apostle, does not mean (as with us) something incomprehensible, but "something before kept secret, either wholly or for the most part, and now only fully disclosed" (compare [Ro 16:25](#); [1Co 2:7-10](#); [Eph 1:9, 10](#); [3:3-6, 9, 10](#)).

lest ye should be wise in your own conceits—as if ye alone were in all time coming to be the family of God.

that blindness—"hardness"

in part is happened to—"hath come upon"

Israel—that is, hath come partially, or upon a portion of Israel.

until the fulness of the Gentiles be—"have"

come in—that is, not the general conversion of the world to Christ, as many take it; for this would seem to contradict the latter part of this chapter, and throw the national recovery of Israel too far into the future: besides, in [Ro 11:15](#), the apostle seems to speak of the receiving of Israel, not as following, but as contributing largely to bring about the general conversion of the world—but, "until the Gentiles have had their *full* time of the visible Church all

to themselves while the Jews are out, which the Jews had till the Gentiles were brought in." (See [Lu 21:24](#)).

26, 27. And so all Israel shall be saved—To understand this great statement, as some still do, merely of such a gradual inbringing of *individual* Jews, that there shall at length remain none in unbelief, is to do manifest violence both to it and to the whole context. It can only mean the ultimate ingathering of Israel as a *nation*, in contrast with the present "remnant." (So Tholuck, Meyer, De Wette, Philippi, Alford, Hodge). Three confirmations of this now follow: two from the prophets, and a third from the Abrahamic covenant itself. *First*, as it is written, There shall come out of Zion the Deliverer, and

shall—or, according to what seems the true reading, without the "and"—"He shall"

turn away ungodliness from Jacob—The apostle, having drawn his illustrations of man's *sinfulness* chiefly from [Ps 14:1-7](#) and [Isa 59:1-21](#), now seems to combine the language of the same two places regarding Israel's *salvation* from it [Bengel]. In the one place the Psalmist longs to see the "salvation of Israel coming *out of Zion*" ([Ps 14:7](#)); in the other, the prophet announces that "the Redeemer (or, 'Deliverer') shall come *to* (or '*for*') Zion" ([Isa 59:20](#)). But as all the glorious manifestations of Israel's God were regarded as issuing out of Zion, as the seat of His manifested glory ([Ps 20:2](#); [110:2](#); [Isa 31:9](#)), the turn which the apostle gives to the words merely adds to them that familiar idea. And whereas the prophet announces that He "shall come *to* (or, '*for*') them that turn from transgression in Jacob," while the apostle makes Him say that He shall come "to turn away ungodliness *from* Jacob," this is taken from the *Septuagint* version, and seems to indicate a different reading of the original text. The sense, however, is substantially the same in both. *Second*,

27. For—rather, "and" (again); introducing a new quotation.

this is my covenant with them—literally, "this is the covenant from me unto them."

when I shall take away their sins—This, we believe, is rather a brief summary of [Jer 31:31-34](#) than the express words of any prediction, Those who believe that there are no predictions regarding the literal Israel in the Old Testament, that stretch beyond the end of the Jewish economy, are obliged to view these quotations by the apostle as mere adaptations of Old Testament language to express his own predictions [Alexander on Isaiah, &c.]. But how forced this is, we shall presently see.

28, 29. As concerning the Gospel they are enemies for your sakes—that is, they are regarded and treated as enemies (in a state of exclusion through unbelief, from the family of God) for the benefit of you Gentiles; in the sense of [Ro 11:11, 15](#).

but as touching, the election—of Abraham and his seed.

they are beloved—*even in their state of exclusion* for the fathers' sakes.

29. For the gifts and calling—"and the calling"

of God are without repentance—"not to be," or "cannot be repented of." By the "*calling* of God," in this case, is meant that sovereign act by which God, in the exercise of His free

choice, "called" Abraham to be the father of a peculiar people; while "the *gifts* of God" here denote the articles of the covenant which God made with Abraham, and which constituted the real distinction between his and all other families of the earth. Both these, says the apostle, are irrevocable; and as the point for which he refers to this at all is the *final destiny* of the Israelitish nation, it is clear that *the perpetuity through all time of the Abrahamic covenant* is the thing here affirmed. And lest any should say that though Israel, *as a nation*, has no destiny at all under the Gospel, but as a people disappeared from the stage when the middle wall of partition was broken down, yet the Abrahamic covenant still endures in the *spiritual* seed of Abraham, made up of Jews and Gentiles in one undistinguished mass of redeemed men under the Gospel—the apostle, as if to preclude that supposition, expressly states that the very Israel who, as concerning the Gospel, are regarded as "enemies for the Gentiles' sakes," are "*beloved for the fathers' sakes*"; and it is in proof of this that he adds, "For the gifts and the calling of God are without repentance." But in what sense are the now unbelieving and excluded children of Israel "beloved for the fathers' sakes?" Not merely from ancestral *recollections*, as one looks with fond interest on the child of a dear friend for that friend's sake [Dr. Arnold]—a beautiful thought, and not foreign to Scripture, in this very matter (see [2Ch 20:7](#); [Isa 41:8](#))—but it is from ancestral *connections* and *obligations*, or their lineal descent from and oneness in covenant with the fathers with whom God originally established it. In other words, the natural Israel—not "the *remnant* of them according to the election of grace," but THE NATION, sprung from Abraham according to the flesh—are still an elect people, and as such, "beloved." The very same love which chose the fathers, and rested on the fathers as a parent stem of the nation, still rests on their descendants at large, and will yet recover them from unbelief, and reinstate them in the family of God.

30, 31. For as ye in times past have not believed—or, "obeyed"

God—that is, yielded not to God "the obedience of faith," while strangers to Christ.

yet now have obtained mercy through—by occasion of

their unbelief—(See on [Ro 11:11](#); [Ro 11:15](#); [Ro 11:28](#)).

31. Even so have these—the Jews.

now not believed—or, "now been disobedient"

that through your mercy—the mercy shown to you.

they also may obtain mercy—Here is an entirely new idea. The apostle has hitherto dwelt upon the unbelief of the Jews as making way for the faith of the Gentiles—the exclusion of the one occasioning the reception of the other; a truth yielding to generous, believing Gentiles but mingled satisfaction. Now, opening a more cheering prospect, he speaks of the mercy shown to the Gentiles as a means of Israel's recovery; which seems to mean that it will be by the instrumentality of believing Gentiles that Israel as a nation is at length to "look on Him whom they have pierced and mourn for Him," and so to "obtain mercy." (See [2Co 3:15, 16](#)).

32. For God hath concluded them all in unbelief—"hath shut them all up to unbelief" **that he might have mercy upon all**—that is, those "all" of whom he had been discoursing; the Gentiles first, and after them the Jews [Fritzsche, Tholuck, Olshausen, De Wette, Philippi, Stuart, Hodge]. Certainly it is not "all mankind individually" [Meyer, Alford]; for the apostle is not here dealing with individuals, but with those great divisions of mankind, Jew and Gentile. And what he here says is that God's purpose was to shut each of these divisions of men to the experience first of an humbled, condemned state, without Christ, and then to the experience of His mercy in Christ.

33. Oh, the depth, &c.—The apostle now yields himself up to the admiring contemplation of the grandeur of that divine plan which he had sketched out.

of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God—Many able expositors render this, "of the riches and wisdom and knowledge," &c. [Erasmus, Grotius, Bengel, Meyer, De Wette, Tholuck, Olshausen, Fritzsche, Philippi, Alford, *Revised Version*]. The words will certainly bear this sense, "the depth of God's riches." But "the riches of God" is a much rarer expression with our apostle than the riches of this or that perfection of God; and the words immediately following limit our attention to the unsearchableness of God's "*judgments*," which probably means His decrees or plans ([Ps 119:75](#)), and of "His *ways*," or the method by which He carries these into effect. (So Luther, Calvin, Beza, Hodge, &c.). Besides, all that follows to the end of the chapter seems to show that while the *Grace* of God to guilty men in Christ Jesus is presupposed to be the whole theme of this chapter, that which called forth the special admiration of the apostle, after sketching at some length the divine purposes and methods in the bestowment of this grace, was "the depth of the riches of God's *wisdom and knowledge*" in these purposes and methods. The "knowledge," then, points probably to the vast sweep of divine comprehension herein displayed; the "wisdom" to that fitness to accomplish the ends intended, which is stamped on all this procedure.

34, 35. For who hath known the mind of the Lord?—See [Job 15:8](#); [Jer 23:18](#).

or who hath been his counsellor—See [Isa 40:13, 14](#).

35. Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed to him—"and shall have recompense made to him"

again—see [Job 35:7](#); [41:11](#). These questions, it will thus be seen, are just quotations from the Old Testament, as if to show how familiar to God's ancient people was the great truth which the apostle himself had just uttered, that God's plans and methods in the dispensation of His Grace have a reach of comprehension and wisdom stamped upon them which finite mortals cannot fathom, much less could ever have imagined, before they were disclosed.

36. For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom—"to Him"

be glory for ever. Amen—Thus worthily—with a brevity only equalled by its sublimity—does the apostle here sum up this whole matter. "Of Him are all things," as their eternal Source: "THROUGH Him are all things," inasmuch as He brings all to pass which

in His eternal counsels He purposed: "To Him are all things," as being His own last End; the manifestation of the glory of His own perfections being the ultimate, because the highest possible, design of all His procedure from first to last.

On this rich chapter, *Note*, (1) It is an unspeakable consolation to know that in times of deepest religious declension and most extensive defection from the truth, the lamp of God has never been permitted to go out, and that a faithful remnant has ever existed—a remnant larger than their own drooping spirits could easily believe (Ro 11:1-5). (2) The preservation of this remnant, even as their separation at the first, is all of mere grace (Ro 11:5, 6). (3) When individuals and communities, after many fruitless warnings, are abandoned of God, they go from bad to worse (Ro 11:7-10). (4) God has so ordered His dealings with the great divisions of mankind, "that no flesh should glory in His presence." Gentile and Jew have each in turn been "shut up to unbelief," that each in turn may experience the "mercy" which saves the chief of sinners (Ro 11:11-32). (5) As we are "justified by faith," so are we "kept by the power of God through faith"—faith alone—unto salvation (Ro 11:20-32). (6) God's covenant with Abraham and his natural seed is a perpetual covenant, in equal force under the Gospel as before it. Therefore it is, that the Jews as a nation still survive, in spite of all the laws which, in similar circumstances, have either extinguished or destroyed the identity of other nations. And therefore it is that the Jews as a nation will yet be restored to the family of God, through the subjection of their proud hearts to Him whom they have pierced. And as believing Gentiles will be honored to be the instruments of this stupendous change, so shall the vast Gentile world reap such benefit from it, that it shall be like the communication of life to them from the dead. (7) Thus has the Christian Church the highest motive to the establishment and vigorous prosecution of *missions to the Jews*; God having not only promised that there shall be a remnant of them gathered in every age, but pledged Himself to the final ingathering of the whole nation assigned the honor of that ingathering to the Gentile Church, and assured them that the event, when it does arrive, shall have a life-giving effect upon the whole world (Ro 11:12-16, 26-31). (8) Those who think that in all the evangelical prophecies of the Old Testament the terms "Jacob," "Israel," &c., are to be understood solely of *the Christian Church*, would appear to read the Old Testament differently from the apostle, who, from the use of those very terms in Old Testament prophecy, draws arguments to prove that God has mercy in store for *the natural Israel* (Ro 11:26, 27). (9) Mere intellectual investigations into divine truth in general, and the sense of the living oracles in particular, as they have a hardening effect, so they are a great contrast to the spirit of our apostle, whose lengthened sketch of God's majestic procedure towards men in Christ Jesus ends here in a burst of *admiration*, which loses itself in the still loftier frame of *adoration* (Ro 11:33-36).

CHAPTER 12

[Ro 12:1-21](#). Duties of Believers, General and Particular.

The doctrinal teaching of this Epistle is now followed up by a series of exhortations to practical duty. And *first*, the all-comprehensive duty.

1. I beseech you therefore—in view of all that has been advanced in the foregoing part of this Epistle.

by the mercies of God—those mercies, whose free and unmerited nature, glorious Channel, and saving fruits have been opened up at such length.

that ye present—See on [Ro 6:13](#), where we have the same exhortation and the same word there rendered "yield" (as also in [Ro 12:16, 19](#)).

your bodies—that is, "yourselves in the body," considered as the organ of the inner life. As it is through the body that all the evil that is in the unrenewed heart comes forth into palpable manifestation and action, so it is through the body that all the gracious principles and affections of believers reveal themselves in the outward life. Sanctification extends to the whole man ([1Th 5:23, 24](#)).

a living sacrifice—in glorious contrast to the legal sacrifices, which, save as they were *slain*, were no sacrifices at all. The death of the one "Lamb of God, taking away the sin of the world," has swept all dead victims from off the altar of God, to make room for the redeemed themselves as "living sacrifices" to Him who made "Him to be sin for us"; while every outgoing of their grateful hearts in praise, and every act prompted by the love of Christ, is itself a sacrifice to God of a sweet-smelling savor ([Heb 13:15, 16](#)).

holy—As the Levitical victims, when offered without blemish to God, were regarded as holy, so believers, "yielding themselves to God as those that are alive from the dead, and their members as instruments of righteousness unto God," are, in His estimation, not ritually but really "holy," and so

acceptable—"well-pleasing"

unto God—not as the Levitical offerings, merely as appointed symbols of spiritual ideas, but objects, intrinsically, of divine complacency, in their renewed character, and endeared relationship to Him through His Son Jesus Christ.

which is your reasonable—rather, "rational"

service—in contrast, not to the senselessness of idol-worship, but to the offering of irrational victims under the law. In this view the presentation of ourselves, as living monuments of redeeming mercy, is here called "our rational service"; and surely it is the most rational and exalted occupation of God's reasonable creatures. So [2Pe 1:5](#), "to offer up *spiritual sacrifices*, acceptable to God through Jesus Christ."

2. And be ye not conformed to this world—Compare [Eph 2:2](#); [Ga 1:4](#), *Greek*.

but be ye transformed—or, "transfigured" (as in [Mt 17:2](#); and [2Co 3:18](#), *Greek*).

by the renewing of your mind—not by a mere outward disconformity to the ungodly world, many of whose actions in themselves may be virtuous and praiseworthy; but by such an inward spiritual transformation as makes the whole life new—new in its motives and ends, even where the actions differ in nothing from those of the world—new, considered as a whole, and in such a sense as to be wholly unattainable save through the constraining power of the love of Christ.

that ye may prove—that is, experimentally. (On the word "experience" see on [Ro 5:4](#), and compare [1Th 5:10](#), where the sentiment is the same).

what is that—"the"

good and acceptable—"well-pleasing"

and perfect, will of God—We prefer this rendering (with Calvin) to that which many able critics [Tholuck, Meyer, De Wette, Fritzsche, Philippi, Alford, Hodge] adopt—"that ye may prove," or "discern the will of God, [even] what is good, and acceptable, and perfect." God's will is "*good*," as it demands only what is essentially and unchangeably good ([Ro 7:10](#)); it is "*well pleasing*," in contrast with all that is arbitrary, as demanding only what God has eternal complacency in (compare [Mic 6:8](#), with [Jer 9:24](#)); and it is "*perfect*," as it required nothing else than the perfection of God's reasonable creature, who, in proportion as he attains to it, reflects God's own perfection. Such then is the great general duty of the redeemed—SELF-CONSECRATION, in our whole spirit and soul and body to Him who hath called us into the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ. Next follow specific duties, chiefly social; beginning with Humility, the chiefest of all the graces—but here with special reference to spiritual gifts.

3. For I say—authoritatively

through the grace given unto me—as an apostle of Jesus Christ; thus exemplifying his own precept by modestly falling back on that office which both warranted and required such plainness towards all classes.

to every man that is among you, not to think, &c.—It is impossible to convey in good English the emphatic play, so to speak, which each word here has upon another: "not to be high-minded above what he ought to be minded, but so to be minded as to be sober-minded" [Calvin, Alford]. This is merely a strong way of characterizing all undue self-elevation.

according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith—Faith is here viewed as the inlet to all the other graces, and so, as the receptive faculty of the renewed soul—that is, "as God hath given to each his particular capacity to take in the gifts and graces which He designs for the general good."

4, 5. For as we have many members, &c.—The same diversity and yet unity obtains in the body of Christ, whereof all believers are the several members, as in the natural body.

6-8. Having then gifts differing according to the grace given to us—Here, let it be observed, all the gifts of believers alike are viewed as communications of mere *grace*.

whether—we have the gift of
prophecy—that is, of inspired teaching (as in [Ac 15:32](#)). Anyone speaking with divine authority—whether with reference to the past, the present, or the future—was termed a prophet ([Ex 7:1](#)).

let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith—rather, "of our faith." Many Romish expositors and some Protestant (as Calvin and Bengel, and, though, hesitatingly, Beza and Hodge), render this "the analogy of faith," understanding by it "the general tenor" or "rule of faith," divinely delivered to men for their guidance. But this is against the context, whose object is to show that, as all the gifts of believers are according to their respective capacity for them, they are not to be puffed up on account of them, but to use them purely for their proper ends.

7. Or ministry, let us wait on—"be occupied with."

our ministering—The word here used imports any kind of service, from the dispensing of the word of life ([Ac 6:4](#)) to the administering of the temporal affairs of the Church ([Ac 6:1-3](#)). The latter seems intended here, being distinguished from "prophesying," "teaching," and "exhorting."

or he that teacheth—Teachers are expressly distinguished from prophets, and put after them, as exercising a lower function ([Ac 13:1](#); [1Co 12:28, 29](#)). Probably it consisted mainly in opening up the evangelical bearings of Old Testament Scripture; and it was in this department apparently that Apollos showed his power and eloquence ([Ac 18:24](#)).

8. Or he that exhorteth—Since all preaching, whether by apostles, prophets, or teachers, was followed up by exhortation ([Ac 11:23](#); [14:22](#); [15:32](#), &c.), many think that no specific class is here in view. But if liberty was given to others to exercise themselves occasionally in exhorting the brethren, generally, or small parties of the less instructed, the reference may be to them.

he that giveth—in the exercise of private benevolence probably, rather than in the discharge of diaconal duty.

with simplicity—so the word probably means. But as simplicity seems enjoined in the next clause but one of this same verse, perhaps the meaning here is, "with liberality," as the same word is rendered in [2Co 8:2](#); [9:11](#).

he that ruleth—whether in the Church or his own household. See [1Ti 3:4, 5](#), where the same word is applied to both.

with diligence—with earnest purpose.

he that showeth mercy, with cheerfulness—not only without grudging either trouble or pecuniary relief, but feeling it to be "more blessed to give than to receive," and to help than be helped.

9. Let love be without dissimulation—"Let your love be unfeigned" (as in [2Co 6:6](#); [1Pe 2:22](#); and see [1Jo 3:18](#)).

Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good—What a lofty tone of moral principle and feeling is here inculcated! It is not, Abstain from the one, and do the other; nor, Turn away from the one, and draw to the other; but, Abhor the one, and cling, with deepest sympathy, to the other.

10. Be, &c.—better, "In brotherly love be affectionate one to another; in [giving, or showing] honor, outdoing each other." The word rendered "prefer" means rather "to go before," "take the lead," that is, "show an example." How opposite is this to the reigning morality of the heathen world! and though Christianity has so changed the spirit of society, that a certain beautiful disinterestedness and self-sacrifice shines in the character of not a few who are but partially, if at all under the transforming power of the Gospel, it is only those whom "the love of Christ constrains to live not unto themselves," who are capable of thoroughly acting in the spirit of this precept.

11. not slothful in business—The word rendered "business" means "zeal," "diligence," "purpose"; denoting the energy of action.

servng the Lord—that is, the Lord Jesus (see [Eph 6:5-8](#)). Another reading—"serving the time," or "the occasion"—which differs in form but very slightly from the received reading, has been adopted by good critics [Luther, Olshausen, Fritzsche, Meyer]. But as manuscript authority is decidedly against it, so is internal evidence; and comparatively few favor it. Nor is the sense which it yields a very Christian one.

12. Rejoicing, &c.—Here it is more lively to retain the order and the verbs of the original: "In hope, rejoicing; in tribulation, enduring; in prayer, persevering." Each of these exercises helps the other. If our "hope" of glory is so assured that it is a rejoicing hope, we shall find the spirit of "endurance in tribulation" natural and easy; but since it is "prayer" which strengthens the faith that begets hope and lifts it up into an assured and joyful expectancy, and since our patience in tribulation is fed by this, it will be seen that all depends on our "perseverance in prayer."

13. given to hospitality—that is, the entertainment of strangers. In times of persecution, and before the general institution of houses of entertainment, the importance of this precept would be at once felt. In the East, where such houses are still rare, this duty is regarded as of the most sacred character [Hodge].

14. Bless—that is, Call down by prayer a blessing on.

them which persecute you, &c.—This is taken from the Sermon on the Mount ([Mt 5:44](#)), which, from the allusions made to it, seems to have been the storehouse of Christian morality among the churches.

15. Rejoice with them that rejoice; and weep—the "and" should probably be omitted.

with them that weep—What a beautiful spirit of sympathy with the joys and sorrows of others is here inculcated! But it is only one charming phase of the unselfish character which belongs to all living Christianity. What a world will ours be when this shall become

its reigning spirit! Of the two, however, it is more easy to sympathize with another's sorrows than his joys, because in the one case he *needs* us; in the other not. But just for this reason the latter is the more disinterested, and so the nobler.

16. Be—"Being"

of the same mind one toward another—The feeling of the common bond which binds all Christians to each other, whatever diversity of station, cultivation, temperament, or gifts may obtain among them, is the thing here enjoined. This is next taken up in detail.

Mind not—"not minding"

high things—that is, Cherish not ambitious or aspiring purposes and desires. As this springs from selfish severance of our own interests and objects from those of our brethren, so it is quite incompatible with the spirit inculcated in the preceding clause.

but condescend—"condescending"

to men of low estate—or (as some render the words), "inclining unto the things that be lowly." But we prefer the former.

Be not wise in your own conceits—This is just the application of the caution against high-mindedness to the estimate we form of our own mental character.

17. Recompense—"Recompensing," &c.—(See on [Ro 12:14](#)).

Provide—"Providing"

things honest—"honorable"

in the sight of all men—The idea (which is from [Pr 3:4](#)) is the care which Christians should take so to demean themselves as to command the respect of all men.

18. If it be possible—that is, If others will let you.

as much as lieth in you—or, "dependeth on you."

live peaceably—or, "be at peace."

with all men—The impossibility of this in some cases is hinted at, to keep up the hearts of those who, having done their best unsuccessfully to live in peace, might be tempted to think the failure was *necessarily* owing to themselves. But how emphatically expressed is the injunction to let nothing on our part prevent it! Would that Christians were guiltless in this respect!

19-21. avenge not, &c.—(See on [Ro 12:14](#)).

but rather give place unto wrath—This is usually taken to mean, "but give room or space for wrath to spend itself." But as the context shows that the injunction is to leave vengeance to God, "wrath" here seems to mean, not the *offense*, which we are tempted to avenge, but the *avenging wrath* of God (see [2Ch 24:18](#)), which we are enjoined to await, or give room for. (So the best interpreters).

20. if thine enemy hunger, &c.—This is taken from [Pr 25:21, 22](#), which without doubt supplied the basis of those lofty precepts on that subject which form the culminating point of the Sermon on the Mount.

in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head—As the heaping of "coals of fire" is in the Old Testament the figurative expression of divine vengeance (Ps 140:10; 11:6, &c.), the true sense of these words seems to be, "That will be the most effectual vengeance—a vengeance under which he will be fain to bend" (So Alford, Hodge, &c.). Ro 12:21 confirms this.

21. Be not overcome of evil—for then you are the conquered party.

but overcome evil with good—and then the victory is yours; you have subdued your enemy in the noblest sense.

Note, (1) The redeeming mercy of God in Christ is, in the souls of believers, the living spring of all holy obedience (Ro 12:1). (2) As redemption under the Gospel is not by irrational victims, as under the law, but "by the precious blood of Christ" (1Pe 1:18, 19), and, consequently, is not ritual but real, so the sacrifices which believers are now called to offer are all "living sacrifices"; and these—summed up in self-consecration to the service of God—are "holy and acceptable to God," making up together "our rational service" (Ro 12:1). (3) In this light, what are we to think of the so-called "unbloody sacrifice of the mass, continually offered to God as a propitiation for the sins both of the living and the dead," which the adherents of Rome's corrupt faith have been taught for ages to believe is the highest and holiest act of Christian worship—in direct opposition to the sublimely simple teaching which the Christians of Rome first received (Ro 12:1)—(4) Christians should not feel themselves at liberty to be conformed to the world, if only they avoid what is manifestly sinful; but rather, yielding themselves to the transforming power of the truth as it is in Jesus, they should strive to exhibit before the world an entire renovation of heart and life (Ro 12:2). (5) What God would have men to be, in all its beauty and grandeur, is for the first time really apprehended, when "written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tables of stone, but on the fleshy tables of the heart," 2Co 3:3 (Ro 12:2). (6) Self-sufficiency and lust of power are peculiarly unlovely in the vessels of mercy, whose respective graces and gifts are all a divine trust for the benefit of the common body and of mankind at large (Ro 12:3, 4). (7) As forgetfulness of this has been the source of innumerable and unspeakable evils in the Church of Christ, so the faithful exercise by every Christian of his own peculiar office and gifts, and the loving recognition of those of his brethren, as all of equal importance in their own place, would put a new face upon the visible Church, to the vast benefit and comfort of Christians themselves and to the admiration of the world around them (Ro 12:6-8). (8) What would the world be, if it were filled with Christians having but one object in life, high above every other—to "serve the Lord"—and throwing into this service "alacrity" in the discharge of all duties, and abiding "warmth of spirit" (Ro 12:11)! (9) Oh, how far is even the living Church from exhibiting the whole character and spirit, so beautifully portrayed in the latter verses of this chapter (Ro 12:12-21)! What need of a fresh baptism of the Spirit in order to this! And how "fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with

banners," will the Church become, when at length instinct with this Spirit! The Lord hasten it in its time!

CHAPTER 13

Ro 13:1-14. Same Subject Continued—Political and Social Relations—Motives.

1, 2. Let every soul—every man of you

be subject unto the higher powers—or, "submit himself to the authorities that are above him."

For there is no power—"no authority"

but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God—"have been ordained of God."

2. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power—"So that he that setteth himself against the authority."

resisteth the ordinance of God; and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation—or, "condemnation," according to the old sense of that word; that is, not from the magistrate, but from God, whose authority in the magistrate's is resisted.

3, 4. For rulers are not a terror to good works—"to the good work," as the true reading appears to be

but to the evil.

4. he beareth not the sword in vain—that is, the symbol of the magistrate's authority to punish.

5. Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath—for fear of the magistrate's vengeance.

but also for conscience' sake—from reverence for God's authority. It is of *Magistracy in general*, considered as a divine ordinance, that this is spoken: and the statement applies equally to all forms of government, from an unchecked despotism—such as flourished when this was written, under the Emperor Nero—to a pure democracy. The inalienable right of all subjects to endeavor to alter or improve the form of government under which they live is left untouched here. But since Christians were constantly charged with turning the world upside down, and since there certainly were elements enough in Christianity of moral and social revolution to give plausibility to the charge, and tempt noble spirits, crushed under misgovernment, to take redress into their own hands, it was of special importance that the pacific, submissive, loyal spirit of those Christians who resided at the great seat of political power, should furnish a visible refutation of this charge.

6, 7. For, for this cause pay ye—rather, "ye pay"

tribute also—that is, "This is the reason why ye pay the contributions requisite for maintaining the civil government."

for they are God's ministers, attending continually upon this very thing—"to this very thing."

7. Render therefore to all their dues—From magistrates the apostle now comes to other officials, and from them to men related to us by whatever tie.

tribute—land tax.

custom—mercantile tax.

fear—reverence for superiors.

honour—the respect due to persons of distinction.

8. Owe no man anything, but to love one another—"Acquit yourselves of all obligations except love, which is a debt that must remain ever due" [Hodge].

for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law—for the law itself is but love in manifold action, regarded as matter of duty.

9. For this, &c.—better thus: "For the [commandments], Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not covet, and whatever other commandment [there may be], it is summed up," &c. (The clause, "Thou shalt not bear false witness," is wanting in all the most ancient manuscripts). The apostle refers here only to the second table of the law, as love to our neighbor is what he is treating of.

10. Love worketh no ill to his—or, "one's"

neighbour; therefore, &c.—As love, from its very nature, studies and delights to please its objects, its very existence is an effectual security against our wilfully injuring him. Next follow some general motives to the faithful discharge of all these duties.

11. And that—rather, "And this [do]"

knowing the time, that now it is high time—literally, "the hour has already come."

to awake out of sleep—of stupid, fatal indifference to eternal things.

for now is our salvation—rather, "the salvation," or simply "salvation."

nearer than when we—first

believed—This is in the line of all our Lord's teaching, which represents the decisive day of Christ's second appearing as at hand, to keep believers ever in the attitude of wakeful expectancy, but without reference to the *chronological* nearness or distance of that event.

12. The night—of evil

is far spent, the day—of consummated triumph over it

is at hand: let us therefore cast off—as a dress

the works of darkness—all works holding of the kingdom and period of darkness, with which, as followers of the risen Saviour, our connection has been dissolved.

and let us put on the armour of light—described at length in [Eph 6:11-18](#).

13. Let us walk honestly—"becomingly," "seemingly"

as in the day—"Men choose the night for their revels, but our night is past, for we are all the children of the light and of the day ([1Th 5:5](#)): let us therefore only do what is fit to be exposed to the light of such a day."

not in rioting and drunkenness—varied forms of intemperance; denoting revels in general, usually ending in intoxication.

not in chambering and wantonness—varied forms of impurity; the one pointing to definite acts, the other more general.

not in strife and envying—varied forms of that venomous feeling between man and man which reverses the law of love.

14. But—to sum up all in one word.

put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ—in such wise that Christ only may be seen in you (see [2Co 3:3](#); [Ga 3:27](#); [Eph 4:24](#)).

and make no provision—"take no forethought."

for the flesh, to fulfil the lust thereof—"Direct none of your attention to the cravings of your corrupt nature, how you may provide for their gratification."

Note, (1) How gloriously adapted is Christianity for human society in all conditions! As it makes war directly against no specific forms of government, so it directly recommends none. While its holy and benign principles secure the ultimate abolition of all iniquitous government, the reverence which it teaches for magistracy, under whatever form, as a divine institution, secures the loyalty and peaceableness of its disciples, amid all the turbulence and distractions of civil society, and makes it the highest interest of all states to welcome it within their pale, as in this as well as every other sense—"the salt of the earth, the light of the world" ([Ro 13:1-5](#)). (2) Christianity is the grand specific for the purification and elevation of all the social relations; inspiring a readiness to discharge all obligations, and most of all, implanting in its disciples that love which secures all men against injury from them, inasmuch as it is the fulfilling of the law ([Ro 13:6-10](#)). (3) The rapid march of the kingdom of God, the advanced stage of it at which we have arrived, and the ever-nearing approach of the perfect day—nearer to every believer the longer he lives—should quicken all the children of light to redeem the time, and, seeing that they look for such things, to be diligent, that they may be found of Him in peace, without spot and blameless ([2Pe 3:14](#)). (4) In virtue of "the expulsive power of a new and more powerful affection," the great secret of persevering holiness in all manner of conversation will be found to be "Christ IN US, the hope of glory" ([Col 1:27](#)), and Christ ON US, as the character in which alone we shall be able to shine before men ([2Co 3:8](#)) ([Ro 13:14](#)).

CHAPTER 14

[Ro 14:1-23](#). Same Subject Continued—Christian Forbearance.

The subject here, and on to [Ro 15:13](#), is *the consideration due from stronger Christians to their weaker brethren*; which is but the great law of love (treated of in the thirteenth chapter) in one particular form.

1. Him that is weak in the faith—rather, "in faith"; that is, not "him that is weak in the truth believed" [Calvin, Beza, Alford, &c.], but (as most interpreters agree), "him whose faith wants that firmness and breadth which would raise him above small scruples." (See on [Ro 14:22, 23](#)).

receive ye—to cordial Christian fellowship.

but not to doubtful disputations—rather, perhaps, "not to the deciding of doubts," or "scruples;" that is, not for the purpose of arguing him out of them: which indeed usually does the reverse; whereas to receive him to full brotherly confidence and cordial interchange of Christian affection is the most effectual way of drawing them off. Two examples of such scruples are here specified, touching Jewish *meats* and *days*. "The strong," it will be observed, are those who knew these to be abolished under the Gospel; "the weak" are those who had scruples on this point.

2. one believeth that he may eat all things—See [Ac 10:16](#).

another, who is weak, eateth herbs—restricting himself probably to a vegetable diet, for fear of eating what might have been offered to idols, and so would be unclean. (See [1Co 8:1-13](#)).

3. Let not him that eateth despise—look down superciliously upon "him that eateth not."

and let not him that eateth not judge—sit in judgment censoriously upon "him that eateth."

for God hath received him—as one of His dear children, who in this matter acts not from laxity, but religious principle.

4. Who art thou that judges another man's—rather, "another's"

servant?—that is, Christ's, as the whole context shows, especially [Ro 14:8, 9](#).

Yea, &c.—"But he shall be made to stand, for God is able to make him stand"; that is, to make good his standing, not at the day of judgment, of which the apostle treats in [Ro 14:10](#), but in the true fellowship of the Church *here*, in spite of thy censures.

5. One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day—The supplement "alike" should be omitted, as injuring the sense.

Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind—be guided in such matters by conscientious conviction.

6. He that regardeth the day, regardeth it to the Lord—the Lord Christ, as before.

and he ... not, to the Lord he doth not—each doing what he believes to be the Lord's will.

He that eateth to the Lord, for he giveth God thanks; and he that eateth not, to the Lord he eateth not, and giveth God thanks—The one gave thanks to God for the flesh which the other scrupled to use; the other did the same for the herbs to which, for conscience' sake, he restricted himself. From this passage about the observance of days, Alford unhappily infers that such language could not have been used if the *sabbath law* had been in force under the Gospel in any form. Certainly it could not, if the sabbath were merely one of the Jewish festival days; but it will not do to take this for granted merely because it was observed *under* the Mosaic economy. And certainly, if the sabbath was more ancient than Judaism; if, even under Judaism, it was enshrined among the eternal sanctities of the Decalogue, uttered, as no other parts of Judaism were, amidst the terrors of Sinai; and if the Lawgiver Himself said of it when on earth, "The Son of man is Lord even of the sabbath day" (see [Mr 2:28](#))—it will be hard to show that the apostle must have meant it to be ranked by his readers among those vanished Jewish festival days, which only "weakness" could imagine to be still in force—a weakness which those who had more light ought, out of love, merely to bear with.

7, 8. For none of us—Christians

liveth to himself—(See [2Co 5:14, 15](#)), to dispose of himself or shape his conduct after his own ideas and inclinations.

and no man—"and none" of us Christians "dieth to himself."

8. For whether we live, we live unto the Lord—the Lord Christ; see [Ro 14:9](#).

and whether we die, we die unto the Lord; whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's—Nothing but the most vivid explanation of these remarkable words could make them endurable to any Christian ear, if Christ were a *mere creature*. For Christ is here—in the most emphatic terms, and yet in the most unimpassioned tone—held up as the supreme Object of the Christian's life, and of his death too; and that by the man whose horror of creature worship was such, that when the poor Lycaonians would have worshipped him, he rushed forth to arrest the deed, directing them to "the living God," as the only legitimate Object of worship ([Ac 14:15](#)). Nor does Paul *teach* this here, but rather *appeals* to it as a known and recognized fact, of which he had only to remind his readers. And since the apostle, when he wrote these words, had never been at Rome, he could only know that the Roman Christians would assent to this view of Christ, because it was *the common teaching of all the accredited preachers of Christianity, and the common faith of all Christians*.

9. For to this end Christ both, &c.—The true reading here is, To this end Christ died and lived ("again").

that he might be Lord both of the dead and—"and of the"

living—The grand object of His death was to *acquire* this absolute Lordship over His redeemed, both in their living and in their dying, as His of right.

10. But why, &c.—The original is more lively:—"But thou (the weaker believer), why judgest thou thy brother? And thou again (the stronger), why despisest thou thy brother?"

for we shall all—the strong and the weak together.

stand before the judgment-seat of Christ—All the most ancient and best manuscripts read here, "the judgment-seat of God." The present reading doubtless crept in from [2Co 5:10](#), where "the judgment-seat of *Christ*" occurs. But here "the judgment-seat of *God*" seems to have been used, with reference to the quotation and the inference in [Ro 14:11, 12](#).

11, 12. For it is written—([Isa 45:23](#)).

As I live, saith the Lord—*Hebrew*, Jehovah.

every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God—consequently, shall bow to the award of God upon their character and actions.

12. So then—infers the apostle.

every one of us shall give account of himself to God—Now, if it be remembered that all this is adduced quite incidentally, to show that Christ is the absolute Master of all Christians, to rule their judgments and feelings towards each other while "living," and to dispose of them "dying," the testimony which it bears to the absolute Divinity of Christ will appear remarkable. On any other view, the quotation to show that we shall all stand before the judgment-seat of *God* would be a strange proof that Christians are all amenable to *Christ*.

13. Let us not therefore judge—"assume the office of judge over"

one another; but judge this rather, &c.—a beautiful sort of play upon the word "judge," meaning, "But let this be your judgment, not to put a stumbling-block," &c.

14, 15. I know, and am persuaded by—or rather, "in"

the Lord Jesus—as "having the mind of Christ" ([1Co 2:16](#)).

that there is nothing unclean of itself—Hence it is that he calls those "the strong" who believed in the abolition of all ritual distinctions under the Gospel. (See [Ac 10:15](#)).

but—"save that"

to him that esteemeth anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean—"and therefore, though *you* can eat of it with out sin, *he cannot*."

15. But if thy brother be grieved—has his weak conscience hurt

with thy meat—rather, "because of meat." The word "meat" is purposely selected as something contemptible in contrast with the tremendous risk run for its sake. Accordingly, in the next clause, that idea is brought out with great strength.

Destroy not him with—"by"

thy meat for whom Christ died—"The worth of even the poorest and weakest brother cannot be more emphatically expressed than by the words, 'for whom Christ died'" [*Olshausen*]. The same sentiment is expressed with equal sharpness in [1Co 8:11](#). *Whatever*

tends to make anyone violate his conscience tends to the destruction of his soul; and he who helps, whether wittingly or no, to bring about the one is guilty of aiding to accomplish the other.

16, 17. Let not then your good—that is, this liberty of yours as to Jewish meats and days, well founded though it be.

be evil spoken of—for the evil it does to others.

17. For the kingdom of God—or, as we should say, Religion; that is, the proper business and blessedness for which Christians are formed into a community of renewed men in thorough subjection to God (compare [1Co 4:20](#)).

is not meat and drink—"eating and drinking"

but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost—a beautiful and comprehensive division of living Christianity. The first—"righteousness"—has respect to *God*, denoting here "rectitude," in its widest sense (as in [Mt 6:33](#)); the second—"peace"—has respect to *our neighbors*, denoting "concord" among brethren (as is plain from [Ro 14:19](#); compare [Eph 4:3](#); [Col 3:14, 15](#)); the third—"joy in the Holy Ghost"—has respect to *ourselves*. This phrase, "joy in the Holy Ghost," represents Christians as so thinking and feeling under the workings of the Holy Ghost, that their joy may be viewed rather as that of the blessed Agent who inspires it than their own (compare [1Th 1:6](#)).

18. For he that in these things—"in this," meaning this threefold life.

serveth Christ—Here again observe how, though we do these three things as a "kingdom of *God*," yet it is "*Christ*" that we serve in so doing; the apostle passing here from God to Christ as naturally as before from Christ to God—in a way to us inconceivable, if Christ had been viewed as a mere creature (compare [2Co 8:21](#)).

is acceptable to God, and approved of men—these being the things which God delights in, and men are constrained to approve. (Compare [Pr 3:4](#); [Lu 2:52](#); [Ac 2:47](#); [19:20](#)).

19. the things, &c.—more simply, "the things of peace, and the things of mutual edification."

20. For—"For the sake of"

meat destroy not the work of God—(See on [Ro 14:15](#)). The apostle sees in whatever tends to violate a brother's conscience the *incipient* destruction of God's work (for every converted man is such)—on the same principle as "he that hateth his brother is a murderer" ([1Jo 3:15](#)).

All things indeed are pure—"clean"; the ritual distinctions being at an end.

but it is evil to that man—there is criminality in the man

who eateth with offence—that is, so as to stumble a weak brother.

21. It is good not to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor any thing—"nor to do any thing" **whereby**—"wherein"

thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak—rather, "is weak." These three words, it has been remarked, are each intentionally weaker than the other:—"Which may cause a brother to stumble, or even be obstructed in his Christian course, nay—though neither of these may follow—wherein he continues weak; unable wholly to disregard the example, and yet unprepared to follow it." But this injunction to abstain from *flesh*, from *wine*, and from *whatsoever* may hurt the conscience of a brother, must be properly understood. Manifestly, the apostle is treating of the regulation of the Christian's conduct with reference simply to the prejudices of the weak in faith; and his directions are to be considered not as *prescriptions for one's entire lifetime*, even to promote the good of men on a large scale, but simply as cautions against the too free use of Christian liberty in matters where other Christians, through weakness, are not persuaded that such liberty is divinely allowed. How far the *principle* involved in this may be legitimately extended, we do not inquire here; but ere we consider that question, it is of great importance to fix how far it is here actually expressed, and what is the precise nature of the illustrations given of it.

22. Hast thou faith—on such matters?

have it to thyself—within thine own breast

before God—a most important clause. It is not mere *sincerity*, or a private *opinion*, of which the apostle speaks; it is conviction as to what is the truth and will of God. If thou hast formed this conviction in the sight of God, keep thyself in this frame before Him. Of course, this is not to be over-pressed, as if it were wrong to discuss such points at all with our weaker brethren. All that is here condemned is such a zeal for small points as endangers Christian love.

Happy is he that condemneth not himself in that which he alloweth—allows himself to do nothing, about the lawfulness of which he has scruples; does only what he neither knows nor fears to be sinful.

23. And—rather, "But"

he that doubteth is damned—On the word "damnation," see on [Ro 13:2](#).

if he eat, because he eateth not of faith—On the meaning of "faith" here, see on [Ro 14:22](#).

for whatsoever is not of faith is sin—a maxim of unspeakable importance in the Christian life.

Note, (1) Some points in Christianity are unessential to Christian fellowship; so that though one may be in error upon them, he is not on that account to be excluded either from the communion of the Church or from the full confidence of those who have more light. This distinction between essential and non-essential truths is denied by some who affect more than ordinary zeal for the honor and truth of God. But they must settle the question with our apostle. (2) Acceptance with God is the only proper criterion of right to Christian fellowship. Whom God receives, men cannot lawfully reject ([Ro 14:3, 4](#)). (3) As there is

much self-pleasing in setting up narrow standards of Christian fellowship, so one of the best preservatives against the temptation to do this will be found in the continual remembrance that Christ is the one Object for whom all Christians live, and to whom all Christians die; this will be such a living and exalted bond of union between the strong and the weak as will overshadow all their lesser differences and gradually absorb them (Ro 14:7-9). (4) The consideration of the common judgment-seat at which the strong and the weak shall stand together will be found another preservative against the unlovely disposition to sit in judgment one on another (Ro 14:10-12). (5) How brightly does the supreme Divinity of Christ shine out in this chapter! The exposition itself supersedes further illustration here. (6) Though forbearance be a great Christian duty, indifference to the distinction between truth and error is not thereby encouraged. The former is, by the tax, made an excuse for the latter. But our apostle, while teaching "the strong" to bear with "the weak," repeatedly intimates in this chapter where the truth really lay on the points in question, and takes care to call those who took the wrong side "the weak" (Ro 14:1, 2, 14). (7) With what holy jealousy ought the purity of the conscience to be guarded, since every deliberate violation of it is incipient perdition (Ro 14:15, 20)! Some, who seem to be more jealous for the honor of certain doctrines than for the souls of men, enervate this terrific truth by asking how it bears upon the "perseverance of the saints"; the advocates of that doctrine thinking it necessary to explain away what is meant by "destroying the work of God" (Ro 14:20), and "destroying him for whom Christ died" (Ro 14:15), for fear of the doctrinal consequences of taking it nakedly; while the opponents of that doctrine are ready to ask, How could the apostle have used such language if he had believed that such a catastrophe was impossible? The true answer to both lies in dismissing the question as impertinent. The apostle is enunciating a great and eternal principle in Christian Ethics—that *the wilful violation of conscience contains within itself a seed of destruction*; or, to express it otherwise, that the total destruction of the work of God in the renewed soul, and, consequently, the loss of that soul for eternity, needs only the carrying out to its full effect of such violation of the conscience. Whether such effects *do* take place, in point of fact, the apostle gives not the most distant hint here; and therefore that point must be settled elsewhere. But, beyond all doubt, as the position we have laid down is emphatically expressed by the apostle, so the interests of all who call themselves Christians require to be proclaimed and pressed on every suitable occasion. (8) Zeal for comparatively small points of truth is a poor substitute for the substantial and catholic and abiding realities of the Christian life (Ro 14:17, 18). (9) "Peace" among the followers of Christ is a blessing too precious to themselves, and, as a testimony to them that are without, too important, to be ruptured for trifles, even though some lesser truths be involved in these (Ro 14:19, 20). Nor are those truths themselves disparaged or endangered thereby, but the reverse. (10) Many things which are lawful are not expedient. In the use of any liberty, therefore, our question should be, not simply, Is this lawful? but even if so, Can it be used

with safety to a brother's conscience?—How will it affect my brother's soul (Ro 14:21)? It is permitted to no Christian to say with Cain, "Am I my brother's keeper?" (Ge 4:9). (11) Whenever we are in doubt as to a point of duty—where abstinence is manifestly sinless, but compliance not clearly lawful—the safe course is ever to be preferred, for to do otherwise is itself sinful. (12) How exalted and beautiful is the Ethics of Christianity—by a few great principles teaching us how to steer our course amidst practical difficulties, with equal regard to Christian liberty, love, and confidence!

CHAPTER 15

[Ro 15:1-13](#). Same Subject Continued and Concluded.

1. We then that are strong—on such points as have been discussed, the abolition of the Jewish distinction of meats and days under the Gospel. See on [Ro 14:14](#); [Ro 14:20](#).

ought ... not to please ourselves—ought to think less of what we may lawfully do than of how our conduct will affect others.

2, 3. Let every one of us—lay himself out to

please his neighbour—not indeed for his mere gratification, but

for his good—with a view

to his edification.

3. For even Christ pleased not—lived not to please

himself; but, as it is written—([Ps 69:9](#)).

The reproaches, &c.—see [Mr 10:42-45](#).

4. For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning—"instruction"

through, &c.—"through the comfort and the patience of the Scriptures"

might have hope—that is, "Think not that because such portions of Scripture relate immediately to Christ, they are inapplicable to you; for though Christ's sufferings, as a Saviour, were exclusively His own, the *motives* that prompted them, the *spirit* in which they were endured, and the *general principle* involved in His whole work—self-sacrifice for the good of others—furnish our most perfect and beautiful model; and so all Scripture relating to these is for our instruction; and since the duty of *forbearance*, the strong with the weak, requires 'patience,' and this again needs 'comfort,' all those Scriptures which tell of *patience* and *consolation*, particularly of the patience of Christ, and of the consolation which sustained Him under it, are our appointed and appropriate nutriment, ministering to us '*hope*' of that blessed day when these shall no more be needed." See on [Ro 4:7](#), *Note 7*. (For the same connection between "patience and hope" see on [Ro 12:12](#), and [1Th 1:3](#)).

5, 6. Now the God of patience and consolation—Such beautiful names of God are taken from the graces which He inspires: as "the God of hope" ([Ro 15:13](#)), "the God of peace" ([Ro 15:33](#)).

grant you to be likeminded—"of the same mind"

according to Christ Jesus—It is not mere unanimity which the apostle seeks for them; for unanimity in evil is to be deprecated. But it is "*according to Christ Jesus*"—after the sublimest model of Him whose all-absorbing desire was to do, "not His own will, but the will of Him that sent Him" ([Joh 6:38](#)).

6. That, &c.—rather, "that with one accord ye may with one mouth glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ"; the mind and the mouth of all giving harmonious glory to His name. What a prayer! And shall this never be realized on earth?

7. Wherefore—returning to the point

receive ye one another ... to the glory of God—If Christ received us, and bears with all our weaknesses, well may we receive and compassionate one with another, and by so doing God will be glorified.

8-12. Now—"For" is the true reading: the apostle is merely assigning an additional motive to Christian forbearance.

I say that Jesus Christ was—"hath become"

a minister of the circumcision—a remarkable expression, meaning "the Father's Servant for the salvation of the circumcision (or, of Israel)."

for the truth of God—to make good the veracity of God towards His ancient people.

to confirm the—Messianic

promises made unto the fathers—To cheer the Jewish believers, whom he might seem to have been disparaging, and to keep down Gentile pride, the apostle holds up Israel's salvation as the primary end of Christ's mission. But next after this, Christ was sent.

9. that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy—A number of quotations from the Old Testament here follow, to show that God's plan of mercy embraced, from the first, the Gentiles along with the Jews.

as it is written—([Ps 18:49](#)).

I will confess to—that is, glorify thee among the Gentiles.

10. And again—([De 32:43](#), though there is some difficulty in the *Hebrew*).

Rejoice, ye Gentiles—along with his people—Israel.

11. And again—([Ps 117:1](#)).

Praise the Lord, all ye Gentiles; and laud him, all ye people—"peoples"—the various nations outside the pale of Judaism.

12. And again, Esaias saith—([Isa 11:10](#)).

There shall be a—"the"

root of Jesse—meaning, not "He from whom Jesse sprang," but "He that is sprung from Jesse" (that is, Jesse's son David)—see [Re 22:16](#).

and he that shall rise, &c.—So the *Septuagint* in substantial, though not verbal, agreement with the original.

13. Now, &c.—This seems a concluding prayer, suggested by the whole preceding subject matter of the epistle.

the God of hope—(See on [Ro 15:5](#)).

fill you with all joy and peace in believing—the native truth of that *faith* which is the great theme of this epistle (compare [Ga 5:22](#)).

that ye may abound in hope—"of the glory of God." (See on [Ro 5:1](#)).

through the power of the Holy Ghost—to whom, in the economy of redemption, it belongs to inspire believers with all gracious affections.

On the foregoing portion, *Note*, (1) No Christian is at liberty to regard himself as an isolated disciple of the Lord Jesus, having to decide questions of duty and liberty solely with reference to himself. As Christians are one body in Christ, so the great law of love binds them to act in all things with tenderness and consideration for their brethren in "the common salvation" (Ro 15:1, 2). (2) Of this unselfishness Christ is the perfect model of all Christians (Ro 15:3). (3) Holy Scripture is the divine storehouse of all furniture for the Christian life, even in its most trying and delicate features (Ro 15:4). (4) The harmonious glorification of the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ by the whole body of the redeemed, as it is the most exalted fruit of the scheme of redemption, so it is the last end of God in it (Ro 15:5-7).

Ro 15:14-33. Conclusion: In Which the Apostle Apologizes for Thus Writing to the Roman Christians, Explains Why He Had Not Yet Visited Them, Announces His Future Plans, and Asks Their Prayers for the Completion of Them.

14, 15. And, &c.—rather, "Now I am persuaded, my brethren, even I myself, concerning you"

that ye also yourselves are full of goodness—of inclination to all I have been enjoining on you

filled with all knowledge—of the truth expounded

and able—without my intervention.

to admonish one another.

15. Nevertheless, I have written the more boldly unto you in some sort—"measure" **as putting you in mind, because of the grace that is given to me of God**—as an apostle of Jesus Christ.

16. that I should be the—rather, "a"

minister—The word here used is commonly employed to express the office of the priesthood, from which accordingly the figurative language of the rest of the verse is taken.

of Jesus Christ—"Christ Jesus," according to the true reading.

to the Gentiles—a further proof that the Epistle was addressed to a *Gentile* church. (See on Ro 1:13).

ministering the gospel of God—As the word here is a still more priestly one, it should be rendered, "ministering as a priest in the Gospel of God."

that the offering up of the Gentiles—as an oblation to God, in their converted character.

might be acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy Ghost—the end to which the ancient offerings typically looked.

17. I have therefore whereof I may glory—or (adding the article, as the reading seems to be), "I have my glorying."

through—"in"

Christ Jesus in those things which pertain to God—the things of the ministry committed to me of God.

18-22. For I will not dare to speak of any—"to speak aught"

of those things which Christ hath not wrought by me—a modest, though somewhat obscure form of expression, meaning, "I will not dare to go beyond what Christ *hath* wrought by me"—in which form accordingly the rest of the passage is expressed. Observe here how Paul ascribes all the success of his labors to the activity of the living Redeemer, working in and by him.

by word and deed—by preaching and working; which latter he explains in the next clause.

19. Through mighty—literally, "in the power of"

signs and wonders—that is, glorious miracles.

by the power of the Spirit of God—"the Holy Ghost," as the true reading seems to be. This seems intended to explain the efficacy of the word preached, as well as the working of the miracles which attested it.

so that from Jerusalem, and round about unto—"as far as"

Illyricum—to the extreme northwestern boundary of Greece. It corresponds to the modern Croatia and Dalmatia ([2Ti 4:10](#)). See [Ac 20:1, 2](#).

I have fully preached the gospel of Christ.

20, 21. Yea, &c.—rather, "Yet making it my study (compare [2Co 5:9](#); [1Th 4:11](#), *Greek*) so to preach the Gospel, not where Christ was [already] named, that I might not build upon another man's foundation: but (might act) as it is written, To whom no tidings of Him came, they shall see," &c.

22. For which cause—"Being so long occupied with this missionary work, I have been much (or, 'for the most part') hindered," &c. (See on [Ro 1:9-11](#).)

23, 24. But now having no more place—"no longer having place"—that is, unbroken ground, where Christ has not been preached.

and having a great desire—"a longing"

these many years to come unto you—(as before, see on [Ro 1:9-11](#)).

24. whensoever I take my journey into Spain—Whether this purpose was ever accomplished has been much disputed, as no record of it nor allusion to it anywhere occurs. Those who think our apostle was never at large after his first imprisonment at Rome will of course hold that it never was; while those who are persuaded, as we are, that he underwent a second imprisonment, prior to which he was at large for a considerable time after his first, incline naturally to the other opinion.

I will come to you—If these words were not originally in the text, and there is weighty evidence against them, they must at least be inserted as a necessary supplement.

in my journey, &c.—"as I pass through by you, to be set forward on my journey thither, if first I be somewhat filled with your company": that is, "I should indeed like to stay longer with you than I can hope to do, but I must, to some extent at least, have my fill of your company."

25-27. But now I go to Jerusalem to minister—"ministering"
to the saints—in the sense immediately to be explained.

26. For, &c.—better, "For Macedonia and Achaia have thought good to make a certain contribution for the poor of the saints which are at Jerusalem." (See [Ac 24:17](#)). "They have thought it good; and their debtors verily they are"; that is, "And well they may, considering what the Gentile believers owe to their Jewish brethren."

27. For if the Gentiles have been made partakers of their spiritual things, their duty is also—"they owe it also"

to minister unto them in carnal things—(Compare [1Co 9:11](#); [Ga 6:6](#); and see [Lu 7:4](#); [Ac 10:2](#)).

28, 29. When therefore I have ... sealed—that is, delivered over safely
to them this fruit—of the faith and love of the Gentile converts

I will come—"come back," or "return"

by you into Spain—(See on [Ro 15:24](#)).

29. And I am sure—"I know"

that ... I shall come in the fulness of the blessing of Christ—Such, beyond all doubts, is the true reading, the words "of the gospel" being in hardly any manuscripts of antiquity and authority. Nor was the apostle mistaken in this confidence, though his visit to Rome was in very different circumstances from what he expected. See [Ac 28:16-31](#).

30. Now I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit—or, "by the Lord Jesus Christ, and by the love of the Spirit"—not the love which the Spirit bears to us, but that love which He kindles in the hearts of believers towards each other; that is "By that Saviour whose name is alike dear to all of us and whose unsearchable riches I live only to proclaim, and by that love one to another which the blessed Spirit diffuses through all the brotherhood, making the labors of Christ's servants a matter of common interest to all—I beseech you."

that ye strive together with me in your prayers to God for me—implying that he had his grounds for anxious fear in this matter.

31. That I may be delivered from them that do not believe—"that do not obey," that is, the truth, by believing it; as in [Ro 2:8](#).

in Judea—He saw the storm that was gathering over him in Judea, which, if at all, would certainly burst upon his head when he reached the capital; and the event too clearly showed the correctness of these apprehensions.

and that my service which I have for Jerusalem—(See on [Ro 15:25-28](#)).

may be accepted of—"prove acceptable to"

the saints—Nor was he without apprehension lest the opposition he had made to the narrow jealousy of the Jewish converts against the free reception of their Gentile brethren, should make this gift of theirs to the poor saints at Jerusalem less welcome than it ought to be. He would have the Romans therefore to join him in wrestling with God that this gift might be gratefully received, and prove a cement between the two parties. But further.

32. That I may come unto you with—"in"

joy by the will of God—([Ac 18:21](#); [1Co 4:19](#); [16:7](#); [Heb 6:3](#); [Jas 4:15](#))

and may with you be refreshed—rather, "with you refresh myself," after all his labors and anxieties, and so be refitted for future service.

33. Now the God of peace be with you all. Amen—The peace here sought is to be taken in its widest sense: the peace of reconciliation to God, first, "through the blood of the everlasting covenant" ([Heb 13:20](#); [1Th 5:23](#); [2Th 3:16](#); [Php 4:9](#)); then the peace which that reconciliation diffuses among all the partakers of it ([1Co 14:33](#); [2Co 13:11](#); and see on [Ro 16:20](#)); more widely still, that peace which the children of God, in beautiful imitation of their Father in Heaven, are called and privileged to diffuse far and wide through this sin-distracted and divided world ([Ro 12:18](#); [Mt 5:9](#); [Heb 12:14](#); [Jas 3:18](#)).

Note, (1) Did "the chiefest of the apostles" apologize for writing to a Christian church which he had never seen, and a church that he was persuaded was above the need of it, save to "stir up their pure minds by way of remembrance" ([2Pe 1:13](#); [3:1](#)); and did he put even this upon the sole plea of apostolic responsibility ([Ro 15:14-16](#))? What a contrast is thus presented to hierarchical pride, and in particular to the affected humility of the bishop of this very Rome! How close the bond which the one spirit draws between ministers and people—how wide the separation produced by the other! (2) There is in the Christian Church no real priesthood, and none but figurative sacrifices. Had it been otherwise, it is inconceivable that [Ro 15:16](#) should have been expressed as it is. Paul's only priesthood and sacrificial offerings lay, first, in ministering to them as "the apostle of the Gentiles," not the sacrament with the "real presence" of Christ in it, or the sacrifice of the mass, but "the Gospel of God," and then, when gathered under the wing of Christ, presenting them to God as a grateful offering, "being sanctified [not by sacrificial gifts, but] by the Holy Ghost." (See [Heb 13:9-16](#)).

(3) Though the debt we owe to those by whom we have been brought to Christ can never be discharged, we should feel it a privilege when we render them any lower benefit in return ([Ro 15:26, 27](#)).

(4) Formidable designs against the truth and the servants of Christ should, above all other ways of counteracting them, be met by combined prayer to Him who rules all hearts and controls all events; and the darker the cloud, the more resolutely should all to whom Christ's cause is dear "strive together in their prayers to God" for the removal of it ([Ro 15:30, 31](#)).

(5) Christian fellowship is so precious that the most eminent servants of Christ, amid the toils and trials of their work, find it refreshing and invigorating; and it is

no good sign of any ecclesiastic, that he deems it beneath him to seek and enjoy it even amongst the humblest saints in the Church of Christ ([Ro 15:24, 32](#)).

CHAPTER 16

Ro 16:1-27. Conclusion, Embracing Sundry Salutations and Directions, and a Closing Prayer.

1. I commend unto you Phœbebe our sister, which is a servant—or "deaconess"

of the church which is at Cenchrea—The word is "Cenchreæ," the eastern part of Corinth ([Ac 18:18](#)). That in the earliest churches there were deaconesses, to attend to the wants of the female members, there is no good reason to doubt. So early at least as the reign of Trajan, we learn from Pliny's celebrated letter to that emperor—A.D. 110, or 111—that they existed in the Eastern churches. Indeed, from the relation in which the sexes then stood to each other, something of this sort would seem to have been a necessity. Modern attempts, however, to revive this office have seldom found favor; either from the altered state of society, or the abuse of the office, or both.

2. Receive her in the Lord—that is, as a genuine disciple of the Lord Jesus.

as—"so as"

becometh saints—so as saints should receive saints.

assist her in whatsoever business she hath—"may have"

need of you—some private business of her own.

for she hath been a succourer of many, and of myself also—(See [Ps 41:1-3](#); [2Ti 1:16-18](#)).

3-5. Salute Priscilla—The true reading here is "Prisca" (as in [2Ti 4:19](#)), a contracted form of Priscilla, as "Silas" of "Silvanus."

and Aquila my helpers—The wife is here named before the husband (as in [Ac 18:18](#), and [Ro 16:26](#), according to the true reading; also in [2Ti 4:19](#)), probably as being the more prominent and helpful to the Church.

4. who have for my life laid down—"who did for my life lay down"

their own necks—that is, risked their lives; either at Corinth ([Ac 18:6, 9, 10](#)), or more probably at Ephesus ([Ac 19:30, 31](#); and compare [1Co 15:32](#)). They must have returned from Ephesus (where we last find them in the history of the Acts) to Rome, whence the edict of Claudius had banished them ([Ac 18:2](#)); and doubtless, if not the principal members of that Christian community, they were at least the most endeared to our apostle.

unto whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles—whose special apostle this dear couple had rescued from imminent danger.

5. Likewise the church that is in their house—The Christian assembly that stately met there for worship. "From his occupation as tent-maker, he had probably better accommodations for the meetings of the church than most other Christians" [Hodge]. Probably this devoted couple had written to the apostle such an account of the stated meetings at their house, as made him feel at home with them, and include them in this salutation, which doubtless would be read at their meetings with peculiar interest.

Salute my well beloved Epænetus, who is the first-fruits—that is, the first convert

of Achaia unto Christ—The true reading here, as appears by the manuscripts, is, "the first-fruits of Asia unto Christ"—that is, Proconsular Asia (see [Ac 16:6](#)). In [1Co 16:15](#) it is said that "the household of Stephanas was the first-fruit of Achaia"; and though if Epænetus was one of that family, the two statements might be reconciled according to the received text, there is no need to resort to this supposition, as that text is in this instance without authority. Epænetus, as the first believer in that region called Proconsular Asia, was dear to the apostle. (See [Ho 9:10](#); [Mic 7:1](#)). None of the names mentioned from [Ro 16:5-15](#) are otherwise known. One wonders at the number of them, considering that the writer had never been at Rome. But as Rome was then the center of the civilized world, to and from which journeys were continually taken to the remotest parts, there is no great difficulty in supposing that so active a travelling missionary as Paul would, in course of time, make the acquaintance of a considerable number of the Christians then residing at Rome.

6. Greet—or "salute"

Mary, who bestowed much labour on us—labor, no doubt, of a womanly kind.

7. Andronicus and Junia—or, as it might be, "Junias," a contracted form of "Junianus"; in this case, it is a man's name. But if, as is more probable, the word be, as in our version, "Junia," the person meant was no doubt either the wife or the sister of Andronicus.

my kinsmen—or, "relatives."

and my fellow prisoners—on what occasion, it is impossible to say, as the apostle elsewhere tells us that he was "in prisons more frequent" ([2Co 11:23](#)).

which are of note among the apostles—Those who think the word "apostle" is used in a lax sense, in the Acts and Epistles, take this to mean "noted apostles" [Chrysostom, Luther, Calvin, Bengel, Olshausen, Tholuck, Alford, Jowett]; others, who are not clear that the word "apostle" is applied to any without the circle of the Twelve, save where the connection or some qualifying words show that the literal meaning of "one sent" is the thing intended, understand by the expression used here, "persons esteemed by the apostles" [Beza, Grotius, De Wette, Meyer, Fritzsche, Stuart, Philippi, Hodge]. And of course, if "Junia" is to be taken for a woman, this latter must be the meaning.

who also were in Christ before me—The apostle writes as if he envied them this priority in the faith. And, indeed, if to be "in Christ" be the most enviable human condition, the earlier the date of this blessed translation, the greater the grace of it. This latter statement about Andronicus and Junia seems to throw some light on the preceding one. Very possibly they may have been among the first-fruits of Peter's labors, gained to Christ either on the day of Pentecost or on some of the succeeding days. In that case they may have attracted the special esteem of those apostles who for some time resided chiefly at Jerusalem and its neighborhood; and our apostle, though he came late in contact with the other apostles, if he was aware of this fact, would have pleasure in alluding to it.

8. Amplias—a contracted form of "Ampliatius."

my beloved in the Lord—an expression of dear Christian affection.

9, 10. Urbane—rather, "Urbanus." It is a man's name.

our helper—"fellow labourer"

in Christ.

10. Salute Apelles approved—"the approved"

in Christ—or, as we should say, "that tried Christian"; a noble commendation.

Salute them which are of Aristobulus' household—It would seem, from what is said of Narcissus in [Ro 16:11](#), that this Aristobulus himself had not been a Christian; but that the Christians of his household simply were meant; very possibly some of his slaves.

11. Salute Herodion, my kinsman—(See on [Ro 16:7](#)).

Greet them that be of the household of Narcissus, which are in the Lord—which implies that others in his house, including probably himself, were not Christians.

12. Salute Tryphena and Tryphosa, who labour in the Lord—two active women.

Salute the beloved Persis—another woman.

which laboured much in the Lord—referring probably, not to official services, such as would fall to the deaconesses, but to such higher Christian labors—yet within the sphere competent to woman—as Priscilla bestowed on Apollos and others ([Ac 18:18](#)).

13. Salute Rufus, chosen—"the chosen"

in the Lord—meaning, not "who is one of the elect," as every believer is, but "the choice" or "precious one" in the Lord. (See [1Pe 2:4](#); [2Jo 13](#)). We read in [Mr 15:21](#) that Simon of Cyrene, who was compelled to bear our Lord's cross, was "the father of Alexander and Rufus." From this we naturally conclude that when Mark wrote his Gospel, Alexander and Rufus must have been well known as Christians among those by whom he expected his Gospel to be first read; and, in all likelihood, this was that very "Rufus"; in which case our interest is deepened by what immediately follows about his mother.

and—salute.

his mother and mine—The apostle calls her "his own mother," not so much as our Lord calls every elderly woman believer His mother ([Mt 12:49, 50](#)), but in grateful acknowledgment of her motherly attentions to himself, bestowed no doubt for his Master's sake, and the love she bore to his honored servants. To us it seems altogether likely that the conversion of Simon the Cyrenian dated from that memorable day when "passing [casually] by, as he came from the country" ([Mr 15:21](#)), "they compelled him to bear the" Saviour's cross. Sweet compulsion, if what he thus beheld issued in his *voluntarily* taking up his own cross! Through him it is natural to suppose that his wife would be brought in, and that this believing couple, now "heirs together of the grace of life" ([1Pe 3:7](#)), as they told their two sons, Alexander and Rufus, what honor had unwittingly been put upon their father at that hour of deepest and dearest moment to all Christians, might be blessed to the inbringing of both of them to Christ. In this case, supposing the elder of the two to have departed to be with Christ ere this letter

was written, or to have been residing in some other place, and Rufus left alone with his mother, how instructive and beautiful is the testimony here borne to her!

14, 15. Salute Asyncritus, &c.—These have been thought to be the names of ten less notable Christians than those already named. But this will hardly be supposed if it be observed that they are divided into two pairs of five each, and that after the first of these pairs it is added, "and the brethren which are with them," while after the second pair we have the words, "and all the saints which are with them." This perhaps hardly means that each of the five in both pairs had "a church at his house," else probably this would have been more expressly said. But at least it would seem to indicate that they were each a center of some few Christians who met at his house—it may be for further instruction, for prayer, for missionary purposes, or for some other Christian objects. These little peeps into the rudimental forms which Christian fellowship first took in the great cities, though too indistinct for more than conjecture, are singularly interesting. Our apostle would seem to have been kept minutely informed as to the state of the church at Rome, both as to its membership and its varied activities, probably by Priscilla and Aquila.

16. Salute one another with an holy kiss—[So 1Co 16:20; 1Th 5:26; 1Pe 5:14](#). The custom prevailed among the Jews, and doubtless came from the East, where it still obtains. Its adoption into the Christian churches, as the symbol of a higher fellowship than it had ever expressed before, was probably as immediate as it was natural. In this case the apostle's desire seems to be that on receipt of his epistle, with its salutations, they should in this manner expressly testify their Christian affection. It afterwards came to have a fixed place in the church service, immediately after the celebration of the Supper, and continued long in use. In such matters, however, the state of society and the peculiarities of different places require to be studied.

The churches of Christ salute you—The true reading is, "All the churches"; the word "all" gradually falling out, as seeming probably to express more than the apostle would venture to affirm. But no more seems meant than to assure the Romans in what affectionate esteem they were held by the churches generally; all that knew he was writing to Rome having expressly asked their own salutations to be sent to them. (See [Ro 16:19](#)).

17. Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned—"which ye learned."

and avoid them—The fomentors of "divisions" here referred to are probably those who were unfriendly to the truths taught in this epistle, while those who caused "offenses" were probably those referred to in [Ro 14:15](#) as haughtily disregarding the prejudices of the weak. The direction as to both is, first, to "mark" such, lest the evil should be done ere it was fully discovered; and next, to "avoid" them (compare [2Th 3:6, 14](#)), so as neither to bear any responsibility for their procedure, nor seem to give them the least countenance.

18. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ—"our Lord Christ" appears to be the true reading.

but their own belly—not in the grosset sense, but as "living for low ends of their own" (compare [Php 3:19](#)).

and by good words and fair speeches deceive the simple—the unwary, the unsuspecting. (See [Pr 14:15](#)).

19. For your obedience—that is, tractableness

is come abroad unto all. I am glad therefore on your behalf—"I rejoice therefore over you," seems the true reading.

but yet I would have you wise unto that which is good, and simple—"harmless," as in [Mt 10:16](#), from which the warning is taken.

concerning—"unto"

evil—"Your reputation among the churches for subjection to the teaching ye have received is to me sufficient ground of confidence in you; but ye need the serpent's wisdom to discriminate between transparent truth and plausible error, with that guileless simplicity which instinctively cleaves to the one and rejects the other."

20. And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly—The apostle encourages the Romans to persevere in resisting the wiles of the devil with the assurance that, as good soldiers of Jesus Christ, they are "shortly" to receive their discharge, and have the satisfaction of "putting their feet upon the neck" of that formidable enemy—symbol familiar, probably, in all languages to express not only the completeness of the defeat, but the abject humiliation of the conquered foe. (See [Jos 10:24](#); [2Sa 22:41](#); [Eze 21:29](#); [Ps 91:13](#)). Though the apostle here styles Him who is thus to bruise Satan, the God of peace," with special reference to the "divisions" ([Ro 16:17](#)) by which the church at Rome was in danger of being disturbed, this sublime appellation of God has here a wider sense, pointing to the whole "purpose for which the Son of God was manifested, to destroy the works of the devil" ([1Jo 3:8](#)); and indeed this assurance is but a reproduction of the first great promise, that the Seed of the woman should bruise the Serpent's head ([Ge 3:15](#)).

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen—The "Amen" here has no manuscript authority. What comes after this, where one would have expected the epistle to close, has its parallel in [Php 4:20](#), &c., and being in fact common in epistolary writings, is simply a mark of genuineness.

21. Timotheus, my work-fellow—"my fellow labourer"; see [Ac 16:1-5](#). The apostle mentions him here rather than in the opening address to this church, as he had not been at Rome [Bengel].

and Lucius—not Luke, for the fuller form of "Lucas" is not "Lucius" but "Lucanus." The person meant seems to be "Lucius of Cyrene," who was among the "prophets and teachers" at Antioch with our apostle, before he was summoned into the missionary field ([Ac 13:1](#)).

and Jason—See [Ac 17:5](#). He had probably accompanied or followed the apostle from Thessalonica to Corinth.

Sosipater—See [Ac 20:4](#).

22. I, Tertius, who wrote this—"the" epistle—as the apostle's amanuensis, or penman.

salute you in the Lord—So usually did the apostle dictate his epistles, that he calls the attention of the Galatians to the fact that to them he wrote with his own hand ([Ga 6:11](#)). But this Tertius would have the Romans to know that, far from being a mere scribe, his heart went out to them in Christian affection; and the apostle, by giving his salutation a place here, would show what sort of assistants he employed.

23. Gaius mine host, and—the host

of the whole church—(See [Ac 20:4](#)). It would appear that he was one of only two persons whom Paul baptized with his own hand (compare [3Jo 1](#)). His Christian hospitality appears to have been something uncommon.

Erastus the chamberlain—"treasurer."

of the city—doubtless of Corinth. (See [Ac 19:22](#); [2Ti 4:20](#)).

and Quartus a brother—rather, "the" or "our brother"; as Sosthenes and Timothy are called ([1Co 1:1](#); [2Co 1:1](#), *Greek*). Nothing more is known of this Quartus.

24. The grace, &c.—a repetition of the benediction precisely as in [Ro 16:20](#), save that it is here invoked on them "all."

25. Now to him that is of power—more simply, as in [Jude 24](#), "to Him that is able."

to stablish—confirm, or uphold

you, according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ—that is, in conformity with the truths of that Gospel which I preach, and not I only, but all to whom has been committed "the preaching of Jesus Christ."

according to the revelation of the mystery—(See on [Ro 11:25](#)).

which was kept secret since the world began—literally, "which hath been kept in silence during eternal ages."

26. But is now made manifest—The reference here is to that peculiar feature of the Gospel economy which Paul himself was specially employed to carry into practical effect and to unfold by his teaching—the introduction of the Gentile believers to an equality with their Jewish brethren, and the new, and, to the Jews, quite unexpected form which this gave to the whole Kingdom of God (compare [Eph 3:1-10](#), &c.). This the apostle calls here a mystery hitherto undisclosed, in what sense [Ro 16:27](#) will show, but now fully unfolded; and his prayer for the Roman Christians, in the form of a doxology to Him who was able to do what he asked, is that they might be established in the truth of the Gospel, not only in its essential character, but specially in that feature of it which gave themselves, as Gentile believers, their whole standing among the people of God.

and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for—in order to

the obedience of faith—Lest they should think, from what he had just said, that God had brought in upon his people so vast a change on their condition without giving them any previous notice, the apostle here adds that, on the contrary, "the Scriptures of the prophets" contain all that he and other preachers of the Gospel had to declare on these topics, and indeed that the same "everlasting God," who "from eternal ages" had kept these things hid, had given "commandment" that they should now, according to the tenor of those prophetic Scriptures, be imparted to every nation for their believing acceptance.

27. To God, &c.—"To the only wise God through Jesus Christ, be"—literally, "to whom be"; that is, "to Him, I say, be the glory for ever. Amen." At its outset, this is an ascription of glory to the *power* that could do all this; at its close it ascribes glory to the *wisdom* that planned and that presides over the gathering of a redeemed people out of all nations. The apostle adds his devout "Amen," which the reader—if he has followed him with the astonishment and delight of him who pens these words—will fervently echo.

On this concluding section of the Epistle, *Note*, (1) In the minute and delicate manifestations of Christian feeling, and lively interest in the smallest movements of Christian life, love, and zeal, which are here exemplified, combined with the grasp of thought and elevation of soul which this whole Epistle displays, as indeed all the writings of our apostle, we have the secret of much of that grandeur of character which has made the name of Paul stand on an elevation of its own in the estimation of enlightened Christendom in every age, and of that influence which under God, beyond all the other apostles, he has already exercised, and is yet destined to exert, over the religious thinking and feeling of men. Nor can any approach him in these peculiarities without exercising corresponding influence on all with whom they come in contact ([Ro 16:1-16](#)). (2) "The wisdom of the serpent and the harmlessness of the dove"—in enjoining which our apostle here only echoes the teaching of his Lord ([Mt 10:16](#))—is a combination of properties the rarity of which among Christians is only equalled by its vast importance. In every age of the Church there have been real Christians whose excessive study of the serpent's wisdom has so sadly trenched upon their guileless simplicity, as at times to excite the distressing apprehension that they were no better than wolves in sheep's clothing. Nor is it to be denied, on the other hand, that, either from inaptitude or indisposition to judge with manly discrimination of character and of measures, many eminently simple, spiritual, devoted Christians, have throughout life exercised little or no influence on any section of society around them. Let the apostle's counsel on this head ([Ro 16:19](#)) be taken as a study, especially by young Christians, whose character has yet to be formed, and whose permanent sphere in life is but partially fixed; and let them prayerfully set themselves to the combined exercise of both those qualities. So will their Christian character acquire solidity and elevation, and their influence for good be proportionably

extended. (3) Christians should cheer their own and each other's hearts, amidst the toils and trials of their protracted warfare, with the assurance that it will have a speedy and glorious end; they should accustom themselves to regard all opposition to the progress and prosperity of Christ's cause—whether in their own souls, in the churches with which they are connected, or in the world at large—as just "Satan" in conflict, as ever, with Christ their Lord; and they should never allow themselves to doubt that "the God of peace" will "shortly" give them the neck of their Enemy, and make them to bruise the Serpent's head (Ro 16:20). (4) As Christians are held up and carried through solely by divine power, working through the glorious Gospel, so to that power, and to the wisdom that brought that Gospel nigh to them, they should ascribe all the glory of their stability now, as they certainly will of their victory at last (Ro 16:25-27). (5) "Has the everlasting God ... commanded" that the Gospel "mystery," so long kept hid but now fully disclosed, shall be "made known to all nations for the obedience of faith" (Ro 16:26)? Then, what "necessity is laid upon" all the churches and every Christian, to send the Gospel "to every creature!" And we may rest well assured that the prosperity or decline of churches, and of individual Christians, will have not a little to do with their faithfulness or indifference to this imperative duty.

The ancient subscription at the end of this epistle—though of course of no authority—appears to be in this case quite correct.