

ROMANS

THE GOSPEL OF GOD

ROMANS

THE GOSPEL OF GOD

By Ian Potts

“THE GOSPEL OF GOD...
CONCERNING HIS SON JESUS CHRIST OUR LORD”
ROMANS 1:1,3

www.graceandtruthonline.com

Produced and Published by
Grace and Truth Online Publications
Honiton, Devon,
England

-

© Grace and Truth Online Publications MMIX
All Rights Reserved

-

First Published MMIX

-

ISBN 978-1-4092-5549-9

-

Printed by Lulu Press Inc.

www.graceandtruthonline.com

Dedication

This work is dedicated to all of
God's elect, chosen in Christ unto salvation
ready to be revealed in these last days, through
the preaching of the Gospel of Christ – that very
Gospel of which Paul was not ashamed, knowing
it to be “*the power of God unto salvation*”.

Acknowledgements

This work is the culmination of several years of writing expositions at various times of passages in the Epistle to the Romans. This glorious epistle has been a constant source of encouragement and truth, in which my LORD has revealed Christ to me in the truths of His precious Gospel.

May God be pleased to take what He has shown me in His word, by His Spirit and bless others with the knowledge of the same Gospel and the same Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, in which, and in whom, the Apostle Paul rejoiced – that Gospel which he was unashamed to proclaim.

May God have all the glory and honour,
to whom all praise is due.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Preface	xi
Introduction	
A Famine of the Word of God – Ruth 1:1	3
The Prologue	
The Gospel of God – Romans 1:1-7	9
 THE WORD OF FAITH	
 Romans I	
Ready to Preach the Gospel – Romans 1:15	27
Ashamed of the Gospel? – Romans 1:16	31
 THE WANT OF FAITH	
 Romans II	
The Beginning of the Gospel – Romans 1:18-3:20	43
 THE ENTRANCE OF FAITH	
 Romans III	
But Now – Romans 3:21	57
The Faith of Jesus Christ – Romans 3:21-22	67
For All Have Sinned – Romans 3:23	79
What is Faith? – Romans 3:26	89
 Romans IV	
Abraham Believed God – Romans 3:27-4:25	97
 Romans V	
Reconciled to God – Romans 5:10-21	111
Grace Reigns – Romans 5:21	125

THE FIGHT OF FAITH

Romans VI

What Shall We Say Then? – Romans 6 - 8 145

Shall We Continue in Sin? – Romans 6:1 149

Romans VII

Delivered From the Law – Romans 7:6 159

Romans VIII

Sons of God – More Than Conquerors – Romans 8:37 185

THE PEOPLE OF FAITH

Romans IX

Of God That Showeth Mercy – Romans 9:16 203

Romans X

Whosoever Shall Call Upon The Name of the Lord
– Romans 10:13 211

How Shall They Believe? – Romans 10:14 217

How Shall They Preach? – Romans 10:15 223

Romans XI

All Israel Shall Be Saved – Romans 11:26 247

THE LIFE OF FAITH

Romans XII

One Body in Christ – Romans 12:5 261

The Gifts of Grace – Romans 12:6 273

Romans XIII

Faith Which Works by Love – Romans 13:8 293

Romans XIV

What is Not of Faith – Romans 14:23 307

The Regarding of Days – Romans 14:6 311

THE FAITH ONCE DELIVERED

Romans XV

Ministering the Gospel of God – Romans 15:16 323

Romans XVI

The Epilogue

The Revelation of the Mystery – Romans 16:25-27 337

Colophon 343

PREFACE

WHAT is the Gospel of God? This is the question which this book sets out to answer, by considering that gospel as declared in Paul's Epistle to the Romans.

Gospel is an old English word used to translate the Greek *Evangelion*, essentially meaning 'Glad Tidings' or 'Good News', and the Gospel of God is His *message* (His *good* message) to mankind. Delivered through Jesus Christ – the 'Word of God' – God's speech declares the message of His salvation of sinners by Christ, the Son of God, who died for sinners – those whom the Father chose and gave to Him before ever the world was created.

The gospel is an objective, definitive message setting forth the Person and the Work of Christ. It encompasses all God's truth regarding Him and His salvation. It is the message of God's word, the Bible. It concerns God and man, good and evil, life and death, time and eternity, heaven and hell. Is any question more important than how we stand in relation to the Gospel of Christ? How is it with your soul? Is Christ – the Son of God – your Saviour? Do you love His gospel, His message of salvation?

Paul says of that gospel in Romans 1:16: "*I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth*".

Yet to the natural man the gospel is offensive. 1 Corinthians 1 clearly tells us that. But it is also man's greatest need – he is lost in sin and needs a Saviour. How vital in this day is the preaching of this message. Oh! That many would be given ears to hear, and eyes

to see the wondrous truths of God's mercy towards sinners as set forth in the Gospel of God, concerning His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

To that end, the intent of this book is to present truth from the Gospel of God in its various parts, and the sum of those parts, as found in the Epistle to the Romans. It does not seek to be a verse-by-verse commentary, but rather to consider the vital aspects of the truth as set forth in this, surely one of the most glorious of all epistles. May God be pleased to use it for the good of His people and for His glory.

May the Lord bless His word.

In Christ Our Saviour,

Ian Potts

June MMVIII



INTRODUCTION

*"Behold, the days come, saith the Lord GOD,
that I will send a famine in the land,
not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water,
but of hearing the words of the LORD" Amos 8:11*

INTRODUCTION

A Famine of the Word of God

"A famine in the land" Ruth 1:1

IN the prophecy of Amos we are told, "*Behold, the days come, saith the Lord GOD, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the LORD*" (Amos 8:11). Surely we live in such a day, in Great Britain at least. If one takes but a casual examination of the 'churches' up and down this land and considers what is proclaimed from their pulpits, if indeed anything is proclaimed from their pulpits, it soon becomes evident that what is conspicuous by its absence is the faithful preaching of God's word, of the Gospel of Christ.

There is plenty of activity, plenty of singing, plenty of meetings, plenty of entertainment, plenty to 'keep the people happy' But an absolute famine of the hearing of the words of the LORD. For all the claims, all the promises, all the noise, all the bustle, the simple fact remains that what passes for 'worship' in many meetings has very little to do with, and very little resemblance to, the Gospel of Christ as it is recorded in the scriptures and as it was preached at the beginning by Christ and His Apostles, by which many were saved and the church established.

Yet such a state of affairs has crept in to one meeting after another to be met by little but complacency and apathy. No wonder then that our country slips into deeper and deeper moral decline, turning away at an increasing and alarming pace from God and from truth. For, when the salt loses its savour, wherewith shall it be salted? *It is good for nothing* (Matthew 5:13). When the 'church' ceases to be light,

ROMANS – THE GOSPEL OF GOD

or hides the light *'under a bushel'* it is no wonder that the world around lies in ever-increasing darkness.

But what is the light of the church? The light is Christ, and Christ is made known, and only made known, in the preaching of the gospel. It is by the preaching of that gospel that the church, the *ekklesia*, of Christ is both established and built up, and by which the light of God shines forth in a dark world. Christ is the Head of His church, He died for His church, He loves His church, He dwells in His church, He is the very reason, the *logos*, for its existence. Yet in so much of what professes to be the church today, despite being named after Him, we hardly even hear Christ mentioned – He who is described as the *one thing needful* (Luke 10:42) – and if we do, it is rarely if ever in the full body of truth known as the Gospel of God. How rare is the preaching of Christ in the gospel, as *according to the scriptures*, in the day in which we live. Why is this? Because there is *"a famine in the land"* (Ruth 1:1).

It is then a matter for much rejoicing whenever and wherever the Gospel of Christ continues to be preached in such a time. Whilst there has been a great turning away from the truth in much of professing 'Christendom', and whilst the preaching of the gospel has largely been replaced in most places by little more than drivel or worldly entertainment, yet the Lord continues to sound His word, He continues to send forth preachers to preach it, He continues to bring dead sinners to life by the mighty in-working of the Holy Spirit through that gospel, and He continues to keep and to feed His people – however scattered and however few they may appear to be at times.

How good – *how vital* – to hear the word of God preached plainly, clearly, boldly, and powerfully, without the fear of man, and without compromise. How much we need such preaching, that which comes *"not in word only, but in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance"* (1 Thessalonians 1:5).

INTRODUCTION

In a day and age when such preaching is rare, when many have to travel quite some distance to hear the word of God preached, if at all, how thankful we are for those times when the Lord comforts His people through His word. But how much the more it should make us see that we do indeed live in the midst of a famine, when the LORD in judgment has withheld His word from a wicked and rebellious nation. How we need the Lord to send forth food, real spiritual food. We may live in a 'day of plenty' in terms of material things, but Britain has hardly known a time of such lack in spiritual things. May the Lord remember His people, and continue to save, to gather and to feed the flock of Christ through the preaching of His gospel. That gospel, of which Paul was not ashamed, for "*it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth*".

*"Will the Lord cast off for ever? and will he be favourable no more?
Is his mercy clean gone for ever? doth his promise fail for evermore?
Hath God forgotten to be gracious? hath he in anger shut up his
tender mercies? Selah.*

*And I said, This is my infirmity: but I will remember the years of the
right hand of the most High. I will remember the works of the
LORD: surely I will remember thy wonders of old. I will meditate
also of all thy work, and talk of thy doings.*

*Thy way, O God, is in the sanctuary: who is so great a God as our
God? Thou art the God that doest wonders: thou hast declared thy
strength among the people. Thou hast with thine arm redeemed thy
people, the sons of Jacob and Joseph. Selah",
Psalm 77:7-15.*

A black and white photograph of a stone archway leading to a dirt path in a rural landscape. The archway is constructed from large, roughly-hewn stone blocks. The path leads away from the arch into a field with sparse vegetation and a hill in the background. The sky is bright and clear.

THE PROLOGUE

“Separated unto the gospel of God” Romans 1:1

THE PROLOGUE

The Gospel of God

“Separated unto the gospel of God” Romans 1:1

“AND when we came to Rome, the centurion delivered the prisoners to the captain of the guard: but Paul was suffered to dwell by himself with a soldier that kept him.

And it came to pass, that after three days Paul called the chief of the Jews together: and when they were come together, he said unto them, Men and brethren, though I have committed nothing against the people, or customs of our fathers, yet was I delivered prisoner from Jerusalem into the hands of the Romans. Who, when they had examined me, would have let me go, because there was no cause of death in me. But when the Jews spake against it, I was constrained to appeal unto Caesar; not that I had ought to accuse my nation of. For this cause therefore have I called for you, to see you, and to speak with you: because that for the hope of Israel I am bound with this chain.

And they said unto him, We neither received letters out of Judaea concerning thee, neither any of the brethren that came shewed or spake any harm of thee. But we desire to hear of thee what thou thinkest: for as concerning this sect, we know that every where it is spoken against.

And when they had appointed him a day, there came many to him into his lodging; to whom he expounded and testified the kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus, both out of the law of Moses, and out of the prophets, from morning till evening. And some believed the things which were spoken, and some believed not. And

ROMANS – THE GOSPEL OF GOD

when they agreed not among themselves, they departed, after that Paul had spoken one word, Well spake the Holy Ghost by Esaias the prophet unto our fathers, Saying, Go unto this people, and say, Hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and not perceive: For the heart of this people is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed; lest they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them.

Be it known therefore unto you, that the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles, and that they will hear it.

*And when he had said these words, the Jews departed, and had great reasoning among themselves. And Paul dwelt two whole years in his own hired house, and received all that came in unto him, Preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, with all confidence, no man forbidding him",
Acts 28:16-31.*

Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ...

Delivered by the Jews into the hands of the Romans, just like his Master, Paul's experience recounted in these closing words in the book of Acts presents us with some striking similarities to that of the Saviour of whom Paul preached, the Lord Jesus Christ. Before his final missionary journeys to the far corners of the Roman empire and his eventual execution at the hands of the Romans, we read here of Paul's time spent in house-arrest at Rome, during which he preached the kingdom of God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, unto all who came unto him. But behind all this is seen the remarkable way in which the message of God's grace was delivered to the Romans, that "*faith which was once delivered unto the saints*".

THE PROLOGUE

Separated unto the gospel of God...

By the time Paul reached Rome a church *had already* been established in that city. This is that church, that assembly of the saints in Rome to whom Paul's epistle to the Romans was addressed. But how had the message of Jesus Christ already travelled so far, before Paul, God's messenger of the gospel unto the Gentiles, had even set foot in that city? The answer may be seen in the close of the Gospels and the opening chapters of the Acts of the Apostles.

...concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh

Jesus Christ having been handed over by the Jews into the hands of the Romans, an innocent man against whom were laid false accusations, was left to the mercy of the people. When Pilate, the Roman governor of Judaea, who wished to release him, asked, "*What shall I do then with Jesus which is called Christ?*" the people replied, "*Let him be crucified*" (Matthew 27:22),

"And the governor said, Why, what evil hath he done? But they cried out the more, saying, Let him be crucified.

When Pilate saw that he could prevail nothing, but that rather a tumult was made, he took water, and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, I am innocent of the blood of this just person: see ye to it. Then answered all the people, and said, His blood be on us, and on our children. Then released he Barabbas unto them: and when he had scourged Jesus, he delivered him to be crucified."

And declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness...

So Christ, this man of Nazareth, was taken to a place called Golgotha, nailed to a cross and lifted up in the heat of the sun to die,

“And set over his head his accusation written, THIS IS JESUS THE KING OF THE JEWS.”

“Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land unto the ninth hour. And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabach-thani? That is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?”

“Jesus, when he had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost. And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent; And the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, And came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many. Now when the centurion, and they that were with him, watching Jesus, saw the earthquake, and those things that were done, they feared greatly, saying, Truly this was the Son of God.”

By the resurrection from the dead

And truly He was the Son of God for...

“In the end of the Sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to see the sepulchre. And, behold, there was a great earthquake: for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it. His countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow: And for fear of him the keepers did shake, and became as dead men. And the angel answered and said unto the women, Fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus, which

THE PROLOGUE

was crucified. He is not here: for he is risen, as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay. And go quickly, and tell his disciples that he is risen from the dead; and, behold, he goeth before you into Galilee; there shall ye see him: lo, I have told you."

The women having run to tell the other disciples, those disciples then...

"...went away into Galilee, into a mountain where Jesus had appointed them. And when they saw him, they worshipped him: but some doubted. And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen", Matthew 28:16-20.

These things being done the opening chapter of Acts tells of the promises made to the disciples by Jesus just before His ascension,

"And, being assembled together with them, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me. For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence.

When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel? And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power. But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.

And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight. And while they looked stedfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood

ROMANS – THE GOSPEL OF GOD

by them in white apparel; Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven”, Acts 1:4-11.

By whom we have received grace and apostleship, for obedience to the faith among all nations

The dramatic fulfilment of these promises came soon after on the day of Pentecost:

“And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven. Now when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together, and were confounded, because that every man heard them speak in his own language. And they were all amazed and marvelled, saying one to another, Behold, are not all these which speak Galilaeans? And how hear we every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born?

Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Judaea, and Cappadocia, in Pontus, and Asia, Phrygia, and Pamphylia, in Egypt, and in the parts of Libya about Cyrene, and strangers of Rome, Jews and proselytes, Cretes and Arabians, we do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God”, Acts 2:1-11.

This remarkable event preceded Peter’s powerful declaration of the work of Christ, a declaration which culminated in the salvation of three thousand souls on that one day who, believing the message

THE PROLOGUE

delivered unto them, then “*continued steadfastly in the apostle’s doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers*” (Acts 2:42).

It is amongst this diverse company of people drawn “*out of every nation under heaven*” (Acts 2:5) that a people were saved, both Jews and Gentiles, who would then take the news of these things back with them to the city of Rome, where they began to meet as a company of people who believed on Jesus Christ of Nazareth. It is *this* people, and the others who would come to be gathered with them, to whom Paul addressed his epistle to the Romans. And it is that epistle and the gospel which it sets forth, which is the subject of this very book.

Paul... to all that be in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints

But what was the purpose of Paul’s writing – why write to the saints at Rome who had already believed on Christ? Romans 1 declares Paul’s desire to “*preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also*”, but in the meantime he would set forth that very gospel in the form of an epistle, a letter, which was delivered to those gathered at Rome. To what end? “*To the end that ye may be established.*” Established in what? In the *truth* of that gospel, which up to that point the saints in Rome knew but in measure, but now they should know in such a way, in such fullness, as to be *established* in the faith.

The means which Paul employs to this end is the *doctrinal exposition* of the truth – the truth of just who Christ is and just what He did when He laid down His life upon the cross. Paul wrote to answer the questions that lay behind the facts. To put the sinews on the bones. To present not just the truth that Christ died, but *why* He died, and *for whom* He died. To present not just the truth that Christ was crucified, but to reveal just what happened when He hung upon the tree, when the light of the sun was taken away for three hours and the face of the earth was darkened. It is these, and many other such-like questions, which Paul answers and which he opens

ROMANS – THE GOSPEL OF GOD

up, in this most profound, this most complete and most glorious of epistles – *the Epistle to the Romans*.

In Romans the apostle Paul, as inspired by the Holy Spirit, presents to us the truth of God's gospel concerning His Son the Lord Jesus Christ. In this tremendous epistle we read God's message to mankind regarding His work through the Person of His Son, Jesus Christ, by which He has saved His people from their sins. Here is a message greater than any other. A message which is vital. A message which concerns you and me. A message of life and death, of heaven and hell, time and eternity, sin and salvation. A message of *truth*. The only message which really matters. *The Gospel of God*.

But what do we *know* of the gospel? What do *you* know of the gospel? That gospel of which Paul was not ashamed, knowing it to be the power of God unto salvation: "*For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith*".

In the following chapters we will look into the truth of this gospel as it is revealed in the Epistle to the Romans. That gospel which is the power of God unto salvation. That message which we need to hear above all others. That message upon which our life depends.

Grace... in the gospel of God's Son

Paul introduces his epistle to the Romans with these words:

"Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God, (Which he had promised afore by his prophets in the holy scriptures,) Concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh; And declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead:

THE PROLOGUE

By whom we have received grace and apostleship, for obedience to the faith among all nations, for his name: Among whom are ye also the called of Jesus Christ: To all that be in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ", Romans 1:1-7.

Oh, the stupendous truths set forth in these opening sentences! In a few words Paul summarises that message which God gave to him to declare, a message he preached even unto the ends of the earth, even to those at Rome.

This message is *God's* message. It is His to declare, His to apply. He sends it by the mouths of those, like Paul, whom He calls and sends to preach it. And the message declares a *person*. That man of Nazareth, that man of Galilee, that man who was crucified on a tree between two thieves, even Jesus Christ – *the Son of God*.

Yes, the Son of God. The One who created the heavens and the earth, the One who created mankind upon that earth, the One who was Himself "*made of the seed of David*", made man, yet very God, in order to redeem that people, whom the Father gave Him, from their sins. How? Through death, *His death* upon a cross, in the place of that people who themselves deserved to die. For "*Christ died for the ungodly*" (Romans 5:6). But to what end? To this end: "*Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living*" (Romans 14:9).

Your Lord? My Lord? *Surely*, for whether we be dead or alive, Christ is Lord of all. And though death may hold us in unbelief, though death may blind us to who that man of Nazareth really was, though we may not care whether we be found on the right hand or the left of that crucified One, though death may have such power over man in his sin, nevertheless death had no power to keep Christ in the grave. Yea, could death hold the Son of God, *did* death hold the Son of God? No, for He was "*declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead*" (Romans 1:4). Oh, the *power* of His resurrection!

ROMANS – THE GOSPEL OF GOD

What truths are declared in just these opening verses. What depths to be dug, what riches to be unearthed! Oh, that God, in the person of Jesus Christ, should be pleased to be made man, to be “*made of the seed of David according to the flesh*”, to be “*made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death*” (Hebrews 2:9), in order to redeem His own. Oh, that He should come in the lineage of David, born in Bethlehem the city of David, of that royal line, in order to be that Prophet, Priest and King of all His people to whom the promises made to Israel pertained. Yet, *these* are the truths that Paul preached, and these are the truths of which he wrote, which he but hints at in these opening verses – and this is that message he took to all nations “*for obedience to the faith*”, that through faith, they believing might be saved.

This is the message of Romans. And this message is known as the “*gospel of God... concerning his Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.*”

What follows in the next sixteen chapters are not facts to be proved or reasoned out, but truths to be believed. What follows is the truth of the Gospel of God – ‘*The Faith*’.

A message of faith

This truth, this message, is *a message of faith*. Having introduced himself Paul then presents the Gospel of Christ, the Son of God (first His Person, and *then* His work), as facts, as *truth* to be *believed*. Paul doesn’t seek to prove the truth, but to state it, to proclaim it, to *preach* it. And as the message he preaches is of God, so too Paul’s own sending to preach that message, as the “*LORD’S messenger in the LORD’S message*” (Haggai 1:13), is very much a part of that gospel which he presents. For the gospel is *entirely* of God. *He* purposed it, *He* wrought it, *He* fulfilled it and *He* preaches it – and He does so by His Spirit *through those whom He sends* to preach.

Not only that, but this message of the gospel which is to be *believed* is *God’s message* to be believed. It is presented to the belief of

THE PROLOGUE

faith, it was wrought by faith, it is received by faith, it is “*from faith to faith*”, and so much is faith at the heart of its very message that scripture even refers to the gospel itself as ‘*The Faith*’ – “*the faith which was once delivered unto the saints*” (Jude 1:3).

With this in mind, the following chapters have been divided into seven sections which present the truth of the gospel, as God wrought it, and Paul preached it, under the following titles:

The Word of Faith

The Want of Faith


The Entrance of Faith

The Fight of Faith

The People of Faith

The Life of Faith

And, The Faith Once Delivered



THE
WORD OF
FAITH

I ROMANS

*“So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel
to you that are at Rome also” Romans 1:15*

ROMANS I

PAUL, A SERVANT OF JESUS CHRIST, CALLED TO BE AN APOSTLE, SEPARATED UNTO THE GOSPEL OF GOD, (WHICH HE HAD PROMISED AFORE BY HIS PROPHETS IN THE HOLY SCRIPTURES,) CONCERNING HIS SON JESUS CHRIST OUR LORD, WHICH WAS MADE OF THE SEED OF DAVID ACCORDING TO THE FLESH; AND DECLARED TO BE THE SON OF GOD WITH POWER, ACCORDING TO THE SPIRIT OF HOLINESS, BY THE RESURRECTION FROM THE DEAD: BY WHOM WE HAVE RECEIVED GRACE AND APOSTLESHIP, FOR OBEDIENCE TO THE FAITH AMONG ALL NATIONS, FOR HIS NAME: AMONG WHOM ARE YE ALSO THE CALLED OF JESUS CHRIST: TO ALL THAT BE IN ROME, BELOVED OF GOD, CALLED TO BE SAINTS: GRACE TO YOU AND PEACE FROM GOD OUR FATHER, AND THE LORD JESUS CHRIST.

FIRST, I THANK MY GOD THROUGH JESUS CHRIST FOR YOU ALL, THAT YOUR FAITH IS SPOKEN OF THROUGHOUT THE WHOLE WORLD. FOR GOD IS MY WITNESS, WHOM I SERVE WITH MY SPIRIT IN THE GOSPEL OF HIS SON, THAT WITHOUT CEASING I MAKE MENTION OF YOU ALWAYS IN MY PRAYERS; MAKING REQUEST, IF BY ANY MEANS NOW AT LENGTH I MIGHT HAVE A PROSPEROUS JOURNEY BY THE WILL OF GOD TO COME UNTO YOU. FOR I LONG TO SEE YOU, THAT I MAY IMPART UNTO YOU SOME SPIRITUAL GIFT, TO THE END YE MAY BE ESTABLISHED; THAT IS, THAT I MAY BE COMFORTED TOGETHER WITH YOU BY THE MUTUAL FAITH BOTH OF YOU AND ME.

NOW I WOULD NOT HAVE YOU IGNORANT, BRETHREN, THAT OFTENTIMES I PURPOSED TO COME UNTO YOU, (BUT WAS LET HITHERTO,) THAT I MIGHT HAVE SOME FRUIT AMONG YOU ALSO, EVEN AS AMONG OTHER GENTILES. I AM DEBTOR BOTH TO THE GREEKS, AND TO THE BARBARIANS; BOTH TO THE WISE, AND TO THE UNWISE. SO, AS MUCH AS IN ME IS, I AM READY TO PREACH THE GOSPEL TO YOU THAT ARE AT ROME ALSO.

FOR I AM NOT ASHAMED OF THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST: FOR IT IS THE POWER OF GOD UNTO SALVATION TO EVERY ONE THAT BELIEVETH; TO THE JEW FIRST, AND ALSO TO THE GREEK. FOR THEREIN IS THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD REVEALED FROM FAITH TO FAITH: AS IT IS WRITTEN, THE JUST SHALL LIVE BY FAITH.

FOR THE WRATH OF GOD IS REVEALED FROM HEAVEN AGAINST ALL UNGODLINESS AND UNRIGHTEOUSNESS OF MEN, WHO HOLD THE TRUTH IN UNRIGHTEOUSNESS; BECAUSE THAT WHICH MAY BE KNOWN OF GOD IS MANIFEST IN THEM; FOR GOD HATH SHEWED IT UNTO THEM. FOR THE INVISIBLE THINGS OF HIM FROM THE CREATION OF THE WORLD ARE CLEARLY SEEN, BEING UNDERSTOOD BY THE THINGS THAT ARE MADE, EVEN HIS ETERNAL POWER AND GODHEAD; SO THAT THEY ARE WITHOUT EXCUSE: BECAUSE THAT, WHEN THEY KNEW GOD, THEY GLORIFIED HIM NOT AS GOD, NEITHER WERE THANKFUL; BUT BECAME VAIN IN THEIR IMAGINATIONS, AND THEIR FOOLISH HEART WAS DARKENED. PROFESSING THEMSELVES TO BE WISE, THEY BECAME FOOLS, AND CHANGED THE GLORY OF THE UNCORRUPTIBLE GOD INTO AN IMAGE MADE LIKE TO CORRUPTIBLE MAN, AND TO BIRDS, AND FOURFOOTED BEASTS, AND CREEPING THINGS.

WHEREFORE GOD ALSO GAVE THEM UP TO UNCLEANNESS THROUGH THE LUSTS OF THEIR OWN HEARTS, TO DISHONOUR THEIR OWN BODIES BETWEEN THEMSELVES: WHO CHANGED THE TRUTH OF GOD INTO A LIE, AND WORSHIPPED AND SERVED THE CREATURE MORE THAN THE CREATOR, WHO IS BLESSED FOR EVER. AMEN.

FOR THIS CAUSE GOD GAVE THEM UP UNTO VILE AFFECTIONS: FOR EVEN THEIR WOMEN DID CHANGE THE NATURAL USE INTO THAT WHICH IS AGAINST NATURE: AND LIKEWISE ALSO THE MEN, LEAVING THE NATURAL USE OF THE WOMAN, BURNED IN THEIR LUST ONE TOWARD ANOTHER; MEN WITH MEN WORKING THAT WHICH IS UNSEEMLY, AND RECEIVING IN THEMSELVES THAT RECOMPENCE OF THEIR ERROR WHICH WAS MEET. AND EVEN AS THEY DID NOT LIKE TO RETAIN GOD IN THEIR KNOWLEDGE, GOD GAVE THEM OVER TO A REPROBATE MIND, TO DO THOSE THINGS WHICH ARE NOT CONVENIENT; BEING FILLED WITH ALL UNRIGHTEOUSNESS, FORNICATION, WICKEDNESS, COVETOUSNESS, MALICIOUSNESS; FULL OF ENVY, MURDER, DEBATE, DECEIT, MALIGNITY; WHISPERERS, BACKBITERS, HATERS OF GOD, DESPITEFUL, PROUD, BOASTERS, INVENTORS OF EVIL THINGS, DISOBEDIENT TO PARENTS, WITHOUT UNDERSTANDING, COVENANTBREAKERS, WITHOUT NATURAL AFFECTION, IMPLACABLE, UNMERCIFUL: WHO KNOWING THE JUDGMENT OF GOD, THAT THEY WHICH COMMIT SUCH THINGS ARE WORTHY OF DEATH, NOT ONLY DO THE SAME, BUT HAVE PLEASURE IN THEM THAT DO THEM.

Ready to Preach the Gospel

“So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also” Romans 1:15

WE live in days where we seem to be showered with ‘How To’ books on how to be effective in evangelism, or how to see more growth in the church, or how to see more results from ‘outreach’. Christian bookshops seem to have their shelves filled with such titles as *“Effective Evangelism”* or *“10 Steps to a Successful Church”*, or *“Dynamic Church Growth Methods”*. Glossy books written by friendly ‘with it’ pastors, of full and vibrant congregations, aim to provide us with the all the advice we could need on how to get our message right, how to put it across effectively, how long sermons should be, how short sermons should be, whether we should have sermons at all, what language we should be using, what visual aids are needed, how to appeal to the young, the old, the short and the tall. With an ever-changing, constantly-updating, moving-with-the-times package of proposals and methods, such books, videos, courses and seminars attempt to ensure that Evangelicalism remains up to date, fresh, vibrant and ‘relevant’, and, most importantly of all it seems, that the congregations are filled, by whatever means it takes, with enthusiastic worshippers, keen to embrace such methods and through demonstration of their success encourage yet more sales.

Whatever merit there may be in some of these books, it has to be said that more often than not, what is conspicuous by its absence is a strong emphasis on the centrality of the preaching of God’s word in all its truth. There is no doubt that the systems themselves can be very effective at filling congregations. Likewise the underlying wisdom behind them, and the methods employed, have a proven

ROMANS – THE GOSPEL OF GOD

track record in many fields, especially in the arenas of business and marketing upon which so many of these ideas are modelled. If you wish to fill a meeting with enthusiastic people, keen to be in each other's company, happy to gather to 'worship' a god who promises them much, especially in this life, then there are many effective ways and means of achieving that aim. I've seen it done several times.

However, to see sinners "*dead in trespasses and sins*", brought to conviction of their sin before a Holy God who holds their eternal destiny in His hands, to see them brought to the point of crying out for mercy and *salvation* from the only One who can save them, to see them born again by the mighty inworking of God the Holy Spirit in their souls, to see them delivered from death and the darkness of sin into everlasting life and light in Jesus Christ, to see them gathered in amongst God's people as One Body united in Christ, as one people who worship "*in spirit and in truth*", requires a very different method, a very different power and a very different message from that espoused by the sort of books I've just described. In Romans chapter 1 the Apostle Paul sets forth clearly his absolute and confident assurance in that which God has given as His one means of achieving "*effective evangelism*". There Paul declares:

"For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith",
Romans 1:16-17.

Yes, Paul was not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ. It is that gospel, that *evangel*, which he preached (evangelised) at Rome, at Corinth, at Ephesus, at Galatia. It is that which he preached to the Colossians, the Thessalonians, and the Philippians. It is that which he preached to both Jew and Greek. And it is that by which God saved His people, adding them to the church, building the church, and sustaining the church. Why? Because it is the *power of God unto*

READY TO PREACH THE GOSPEL

salvation. It is effective. It works! It saves! It is God's means of saving His people and building His church... *and nothing else is*.

Hence Paul could write in 1 Corinthians 1:18-21:

"For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God. For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent. Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe."

Whilst the 'How To' guides may effectively propose an *evangelism* without an *evangel*, whilst such guides may point us to any and every method of 'evangelising', other than the plain, simple preaching of the gospel, the evangel of Christ, whilst they may demonstrate that their authors are, in fact, ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, Paul wasn't. For Paul knew that the only thing which is effective in saving the souls of sinners is the preaching of the Gospel of Christ. Why? Because *it* is the *power* of God unto salvation to every one that believeth. And whilst professing churches may, in their wisdom, in their prudence, effectively shut their ears to both the message of the gospel and to those whom God sends to preach it, may God yet be pleased to give us grace to see that there is no power on earth as effective as the preaching of the Gospel of Christ, that *it* and *it* alone is the power of God unto salvation – and to gladly receive and open our ears to both God's message and His messengers and be fervent in prayer that God would continue to open doors for His glorious gospel of salvation to be preached in power, in the Spirit, in this day and age, to the saving of souls, the building up of God's church and to the praise and glory of His Name for evermore.

Amen.

ROMANS – THE GOSPEL OF GOD

*“Withal praying also for us, that God would open unto us a door of utterance, to speak the mystery of Christ”,
Colossians 4:3.*

*“But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them. For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus’ sake. For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us”,
2 Corinthians 4:3-7.*

Ashamed of the Gospel?

“...I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith” Romans 1:16-17

IN the opening chapter of Romans the Apostle Paul declares boldly that, *“...I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith” (Romans 1:16-17).*

Most professing Christians would also claim, with Paul, not to be ashamed of the gospel. However in this day and age of great confusion the question we must ask ourselves is, Do we really know what the gospel *is*? Well Paul certainly did, and knowing the power of it he was bold and unashamed in its proclamation. I've heard one preacher break down Romans 1:16 into five helpful headings. Let's consider the verse under these headings to draw out five clear aspects of the gospel which the Holy Spirit reveals which are essential to its character and important for us to see.

Firstly, the gospel is *definitive*

It is the *“gospel of Christ”*. The gospel is not something abstract, something vague, something to be guessed at. It isn't a collection of testimonies or subjective experiences. It is defined. It is the gospel, the good news *of Christ*. As Romans 1:1-3 states *“the gospel of God... concerning his Son Jesus Christ, our Lord”*. The gospel is God's message concerning the Person and the Work of His eternal Son,

ROMANS – THE GOSPEL OF GOD

Jesus Christ, our Lord. It *declares* Him, it sets Him forth. And any message, any ‘gospel’ which fails to set forth Christ, in all His fullness, is *no* gospel, and has *no* power to save.

Secondly, the gospel is objective

Paul states “*I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation*”. The gospel is an objective message, not subjective. IT is the power of God unto salvation. What is? The *gospel* is. For the gospel, in and of itself, when proclaimed by God the Holy Spirit through those whom He sends to preach it, is the power of God unto salvation.

Paul here does not say that the Spirit is the power of God unto salvation, but that the gospel is. It is of course true that except the Spirit apply the word inwardly to the hearts of His hearers, they will remain dead in trespasses and sins, yet nevertheless the Spirit does not work in isolation. The gospel is the *power* of the Spirit, His *sword*, which He uses to save sinners, to quicken them unto life in Christ. The gospel itself, as an objective message, is the power of God unto salvation, and it is by the preaching of this objective message that God is pleased to save sinners: “*For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.*”

“Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever. For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you”, 1 Peter 1:23-25.

Thirdly, the gospel is effective

Yes, the gospel is *"the power of God unto salvation"*. The power of God. It is effective, it saves. There is no other power like it, and yet to the world, to them that perish, to the wise in their own understanding it is 'foolishness'. As 1 Corinthians 1:18 states, *"For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness"* and yet *"unto us which are saved it is the power of God."*

What makes the gospel so effective, so powerful? Romans 1:17 tells us: *"For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith"*. That makes it powerful. For here is a message that declares that though all men are sinners, though all fell in their father Adam into sin, death and ruin, though all sin daily, being at enmity to God, though man stands in his fallen nature guilty before God, deserving of eternal wrath and damnation, *nevertheless* God, in His great love, sent His Son to take His people's sins away through His own death, to deliver them from judgment and to bring in everlasting *righteousness*, and everlasting life, which He freely gives them by grace (2 Corinthians 5:21). And this justifying righteousness is what is revealed in the gospel, hence its *power* to save.

Fourthly, the gospel is elective

The gospel is *"the power of God unto salvation"*. Not of man. The gospel is God's – it is *His* message concerning *His* work in the Person of *His* Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, who died to *"save His people from their sins"* (Matthew 1:21). This gospel was God's to purpose, God's to perform, is God's to proclaim, and God's to apply. Consistently, and repeatedly, throughout its message the gospel clearly proclaims the salvation of that people of God, chosen in Christ *"before the foundation of the world"* (Ephesians 1:4) who have been *"predestinated ... unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will"*. This people, described in the scriptures as God's *"sheep"* (John 10:15) are those for whom Christ died, *and none else*, and are those who are saved, not

ROMANS – THE GOSPEL OF GOD

according to their will but God's (John 1:13, John 15:16). Yes, the gospel, the *power of God* unto salvation, being God's to apply to whom *He wills*, is by definition, *elective* (see Romans 9).

"But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light", 1 Peter 2:9.

And fifthly, the gospel is *redemptive*

Finally Romans 1:16 declares the effect of the gospel – the redemption of God's people. *"For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation"*. The gospel saves, and it does so, because Christ laid down His life for His own in order to *redeem* them from their sins. His *own blood* was the redemption price He paid to deliver them from death and secure their freedom. He died in their place, bearing their sins *"in His own body on the tree"* (1 Peter 2:24), suffering under the outpouring of God's wrath against sin, that through His death, by the shedding of His blood, they would be delivered from death, from sin and from condemnation, and have everlasting life in Him (Romans 3:24, Ephesians 1:7, Colossians 1:14, Hebrews 9:12).


"Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot", 1 Peter 1:18-19.

No wonder then that Paul was not ashamed of this gospel! For he knew its power; he knew what it was to be redeemed, to have his sins forgiven; he knew that it was God who saved him, by His will, not Paul's (see Acts 9); he knew the glorious revelation of the righteousness of God in the gospel, put to his account; he knew what it was to be born again by the mighty operation of the Holy Spirit; and most of all he knew *the Saviour* who loved him, and gave himself for him, the Lord Jesus Christ....

ASHAMED OF THE GOSPEL?

But do you? Do you know this gospel? Has it been revealed to you? Do you believe it? Is *this* the gospel of which, like Paul, you can say that you are *not* ashamed?

“And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people, Saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters”, Revelation 14:6-7.



THE
WANT OF
FAITH

III ROMANS

"The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God"
Mark 1:1

ROMANS II

THEREFORE THOU ART INEXCUSABLE, O MAN, WHOSOEVER THOU ART THAT JUDGEST: FOR WHEREIN THOU JUDGEST ANOTHER, THOU CONDEMNEST THYSELF; FOR THOU THAT JUDGEST DOEST THE SAME THINGS.

BUT WE ARE SURE THAT THE JUDGMENT OF GOD IS ACCORDING TO TRUTH AGAINST THEM WHICH COMMIT SUCH THINGS. AND THINKEST THOU THIS, O MAN, THAT JUDGEST THEM WHICH DO SUCH THINGS, AND DOEST THE SAME, THAT THOU SHALT ESCAPE THE JUDGMENT OF GOD? OR DESPISEST THOU THE RICHES OF HIS GOODNESS AND FORBEARANCE AND LONGSUFFERING; NOT KNOWING THAT THE GOODNESS OF GOD LEADETH THEE TO REPENTANCE?

BUT AFTER THY HARDNESS AND IMPENITENT HEART TREASUREST UP UNTO THYSELF WRATH AGAINST THE DAY OF WRATH AND REVELATION OF THE RIGHTEOUS JUDGMENT OF GOD; WHO WILL RENDER TO EVERY MAN ACCORDING TO HIS DEEDS: TO THEM WHO BY PATIENT CONTINUANCE IN WELL DOING SEEK FOR GLORY AND HONOUR AND IMMORTALITY, ETERNAL LIFE:

BUT UNTO THEM THAT ARE CONTENTIOUS, AND DO NOT OBEY THE TRUTH, BUT OBEY UNRIGHTEOUSNESS, INDIGNATION AND WRATH, TRIBULATION AND ANGUISH, UPON EVERY SOUL OF MAN THAT DOETH EVIL, OF THE JEW FIRST, AND ALSO OF THE GENTILE; BUT GLORY, HONOUR, AND PEACE, TO EVERY MAN THAT WORKETH GOOD, TO THE JEW FIRST, AND ALSO TO THE GENTILE: FOR THERE IS NO RESPECT OF PERSONS WITH GOD.

FOR AS MANY AS HAVE SINNED WITHOUT LAW SHALL ALSO PERISH WITHOUT LAW: AND AS MANY AS HAVE SINNED IN THE LAW SHALL BE JUDGED BY THE LAW; (FOR NOT THE HEARERS OF THE LAW ARE JUST BEFORE GOD, BUT THE DOERS OF THE LAW SHALL BE JUSTIFIED. FOR WHEN THE GENTILES, WHICH HAVE NOT THE LAW, DO BY NATURE THE THINGS CONTAINED IN THE LAW, THESE, HAVING NOT THE LAW, ARE A LAW UNTO THEMSELVES: WHICH SHEW THE WORK OF THE LAW WRITTEN IN THEIR HEARTS, THEIR CONSCIENCE ALSO BEARING WITNESS, AND THEIR THOUGHTS THE MEAN WHILE ACCUSING OR ELSE EXCUSING ONE ANOTHER;) IN THE DAY WHEN GOD SHALL JUDGE THE SECRETS OF MEN BY JESUS CHRIST ACCORDING TO MY GOSPEL.

BEHOLD, THOU ART CALLED A JEW, AND RESTEST IN THE LAW, AND MAKEST THY BOAST OF GOD, AND KNOWEST HIS WILL, AND APPROVEST THE THINGS THAT ARE MORE EXCELLENT, BEING INSTRUCTED OUT OF THE LAW; AND ART CONFIDENT THAT THOU THYSELF ART A GUIDE OF THE BLIND, A LIGHT OF THEM WHICH ARE IN DARKNESS, AN INSTRUCTOR OF THE FOOLISH, A TEACHER OF BABES, WHICH HAST THE FORM OF KNOWLEDGE AND OF THE TRUTH IN THE LAW. THOU THEREFORE WHICH TEACHEST ANOTHER, TEACHEST THOU NOT THYSELF? THOU THAT PREACHEST A MAN SHOULD NOT STEAL, DOST THOU STEAL? THOU THAT SAYEST A MAN SHOULD NOT COMMIT ADULTERY, DOST THOU COMMIT ADULTERY? THOU THAT ABHORREST IDOLS, DOST THOU COMMIT SACRILEGE? THOU THAT MAKEST THY BOAST OF THE LAW,

THROUGH BREAKING THE LAW DISHONOUREST THOU GOD? FOR THE NAME OF GOD IS
BLASPHEMED AMONG THE GENTILES THROUGH YOU, AS IT IS WRITTEN.

FOR CIRCUMCISION VERILY PROFITETH, IF THOU KEEP THE LAW: BUT IF THOU BE A
BREAKER OF THE LAW, THY CIRCUMCISION IS MADE UNCIRCUMCISION. THEREFORE IF
THE UNCIRCUMCISION KEEP THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF THE LAW, SHALL NOT HIS
UNCIRCUMCISION BE COUNTED FOR CIRCUMCISION? AND SHALL NOT UNCIRCUMCISION
WHICH IS BY NATURE, IF IT FULFIL THE LAW, JUDGE THEE, WHO BY THE LETTER AND
CIRCUMCISION DOST TRANSGRESS THE LAW?

FOR HE IS NOT A JEW, WHICH IS ONE OUTWARDLY; NEITHER IS THAT CIRCUMCISION,
WHICH IS OUTWARD IN THE FLESH: BUT HE IS A JEW, WHICH IS ONE INWARDLY; AND
CIRCUMCISION IS THAT OF THE HEART, IN THE SPIRIT, AND NOT IN THE LETTER; WHOSE
PRAISE IS NOT OF MEN, BUT OF GOD.

The Beginning of the Gospel

"For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness"

Romans 1:18

PAUL introduces his letter to the Romans by stating his desire to preach the gospel to them, *"the gospel of God... concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh; and declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead"*. He places his absolute confidence in it as being *"the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek"* on the grounds that *"therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith"*, and then he commences in chapter 1 and verse 18 to open up and expound the truths of this very gospel.

But where does he *start*? Where would *you* start? Most churches today would start with the love of God or the kindness of God to humanity. Or perhaps by offering people something they are missing in their lives, something to help them feel fulfilled. Not so Paul. He doesn't even mention the *love* of God until chapter 5, and that but in passing. So where *does* Paul start? Where? At the beginning!

But what *is* the beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ? Take a look at Mark 1:1-3 which tells us....

"The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God; As it is written in the prophets, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee. The voice of one crying in

the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight."

The gospel *begins* with a voice "*crying in the wilderness*", preparing the way for Christ. *That's* the beginning of the gospel. But what does that voice cry?

In Romans 1:18-20 the voice which prepares the way for Christ has the following declaration:

"...the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness; Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse: Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened."

One beginning: The wrath of God revealed

Yes, that's where the Gospel of God begins – with a declaration of the fact that *God's wrath* is revealed against all *ungodliness* and *unrighteousness* of men. It begins with a voice which prepares the way of the Lord by telling men *what they are by nature* – sinners – and that God's wrath is revealed against that sin.

This is where the gospel must begin. For the gospel reveals Jesus Christ the Saviour of *sinners*, it is the power of God unto *salvation*, and if so, the way to Christ must be prepared by *seeking out* sinners in *need* of salvation, by revealing to them their state before God and their need of the Saviour. For who needs salvation but those *who are lost*, those who are dead, those to whom God has sounded an *alarm*.... an alarm that His wrath is revealed against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men?

THE BEGINNING OF THE GOSPEL

Most of religion today is seeking to *convince* people to become Christians, to show them a 'better way'. But those sent of God to preach the gospel are not sent to 'twist people's arms' or to educate them about religion through 'courses', but to seek out the *lost*, to *preach* a message of *salvation* to them, to find those who are desperate, hungry for the truth, those whom the Spirit has convinced of sin, of righteousness and of the judgment to come – those who know that death and eternity awaits them – those who *need* to hear of the Saviour and the gospel of their salvation. Because until God shows us our need of salvation the message of a Saviour is meaningless. Sinners first need to hear that they are sinners!

For Jesus said "...I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Matthew 15:24).

"When Jesus heard it, he saith unto them, They that are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick: I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance", Mark 2:17.

Yes, the alarm needs to be sounded... and to this end, Paul, as it were, cries out in Romans from chapter 1:18 to chapter 3:20, and sounds forth an alarm, in order to *prove all men to be under sin...* and to warn of its eternal consequence (Romans 2:8-9).

Two classes of men

In these chapters Paul divides mankind into two classes of men, into which all men fall, either into the one class or into the other. They are either Jews or they are Gentiles. They are religious, or they are irreligious. They may be church-goers, or they may be party-goers. They may be devout, or an aimless lout. But whether they have the scriptures like the Jews of old and profess to follow God, or whether they be in the world, with no thought for God, living for themselves and for selfish gain or pleasure, Paul in this epistle shows that *all are alike* in this respect: *all* are dead in sin. Outside of Christ, whether religious or irreligious, Jew or Gentile, there is no difference – *all*

have sinned, *all* are guilty before God, *all* stand condemned before Him, *all* have turned their backs on their Maker, *all* in their ungodliness and unrighteousness have rejected the revelation of truth regarding God, so *all* are *without excuse*.

Three revelations of light

Why are all without excuse? Because all have had truth regarding God revealed to them in one way or another – whether they comprehend it or not. From Romans 1:20 to Romans 3:9 God the Holy Spirit points us to three clear revelations of light regarding the truth which God has made to man, to which mankind is accountable. Light which leaves men without excuse.

There is light in the *Creation*, light in the *Conscience* and light in the *Scriptures*.

Firstly, there is light in Creation. We read “... *that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse: Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened*” (Romans 1:19-20).

Secondly, there is light in the Conscience. Romans 2:14-15 tells us “...*when the Gentiles, which hath not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves: Which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another*”.

Both these revelations of light regarding God are made to all men, whether Jew or Gentile, religious or irreligious. All men have the witness of the creation, of the world around them, to the eternal

THE BEGINNING OF THE GOSPEL

power and Godhead of their Creator. And all men by nature have a conscience which bears witness to the truth, by which they have some understanding of right and wrong. Yet all men, by nature, look not upon these things. They ignore the light outside them, and they ignore the light within them, being blinded to both by the depths of their sin and depravity. This depravity is vividly described in the rest of chapter 1 which makes for sober reading regarding the state of man in sin – the state of you and me. Yet how contemporary is the picture painted therein.

But there is a third revelation of light which Paul points to and this is that found in the Scriptures. Romans 3:1-2 tells us, *“What advantage then hath the Jew? Or what profit is there of circumcision? Much every way: chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God”*. So the Jews had this advantage over the Gentiles of possessing the scriptures, yet they too were under sin. Indeed *because of this advantage they, like many who are religious today, so easily fell into the trap of thinking themselves better than others, of having more light, and judging others, yet in reality when that light remained outward, and never truly penetrated their hearts, they remained just as blind and just as sinful (see Romans 2:17-29). “For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly.... But he is a Jew which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God.”* And the law which God gave the Jews made them no better – no, it made things worse, simply condemning them, just as it does us, *“that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God” (Romans 3:19).*

So God has revealed light about Himself in the *Heavens*, in the *Heart* and in the *Holy Bible*. Yet who sees it? Who comprehends it? *“For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23).*

No wonder then that all men are without excuse before God. No wonder then that His wrath is revealed against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who resist (hold) the truth in unrighteousness. Why? Because despite three revelations of light to

mankind regarding the truth, man still turns away from the truth, from the light and from God.

Yes, despite these three revelations of light and despite the fact that today we have the benefit of the full written revelation of the gospel in the scriptures, nevertheless man's heart is *so* sinful, *so* darkened by nature, *so* hard that *none of this light penetrates*. It just washes over us! We may look, we may listen, we may read, yet all the while we see and hear *nothing*. Man by nature cannot, and he will not hearken. Mankind is *without understanding* and by nature *no man seeks after God*. There is no neutral response to God – we have *all gone out of the way*. As Romans 3:9-12 tells us:

“... for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin; As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no not one.”

We're all the same, unprofitable, under sin, and oblivious to the wrath of God, for all men are willfully ignorant of the judgment to come, for *“there is no fear of God before their eyes”*. Hard sayings perhaps, sayings which you may well turn away from, deny, or kick against, but that doesn't alter the truth of them. Truth which respects every one of us, as were are by nature. For the gospel addresses us *now* – it is immediate, direct, and demands our attention. Yet most, when told such things, would simply close a book like this and walk away. And *“will ye also go away?”* (John 6:67). Are you any different?

An inward revelation

No, man in the depth of his sin simply *cannot* and *will not* come unto God. Not unless, and *not until*, God the Spirit *opens* the heart and shines the light in! Not until God *reveals* the truth to us, not only outwardly, but *inwardly*. Until then we remain in darkness. You

THE BEGINNING OF THE GOSPEL

may hear the words of a preacher, or read the words on a page, but have you heard the *voice* of the Spirit of God sounding an alarm in your heart? Has *He* spoken to you inwardly? Have these things been revealed to you?

For when God, through the preaching of His gospel, opens the ears to hear and opens the eyes to see, when God the Spirit gives us light to see things as they really are, *then* we come to see just what we are before God by nature – just how *bad* we are! How *vile* we are, how *unrighteous* we are – and how “*the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men*”. And then, and not until then, we will look for, and cry out for, *mercy*.

But what an answer God has for needy sinners in the gospel! When shown our sin, when shown our state, when the alarm has been sounded and the way prepared, *then* we are brought to hear of the Saviour of sinners, even the Lord Jesus Christ, and just what He did upon the cross to save sinners. *Then* we are brought to the “*But now*” of Romans 3:21 and to the glorious revelation in the gospel of the righteousness of God by the faith of Jesus Christ.

But have *you* been brought there? Have you indeed heard the *beginning of the gospel*? Is this where the gospel *you* heard began? Have you heard that *voice* which prepares the way of the Lord?

Have you been shown that you’re a sinner in need of salvation... or in your wisdom have you *become a fool* (Romans 1:22)...?



THE
ENTRANCE
OF FAITH

III ROMANS

“For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God” Romans 3:23

ROMANS III

WHAT ADVANTAGE THEN HATH THE JEW? OR WHAT PROFIT IS THERE OF CIRCUMCISION? MUCH EVERY WAY: CHIEFLY, BECAUSE THAT UNTO THEM WERE COMMITTED THE ORACLES OF GOD. FOR WHAT IF SOME DID NOT BELIEVE? SHALL THEIR UNBELIEF MAKE THE FAITH OF GOD WITHOUT EFFECT? GOD FORBID: YEA, LET GOD BE TRUE, BUT EVERY MAN A LIAR; AS IT IS WRITTEN, THAT THOU MIGHTEST BE JUSTIFIED IN THY SAYINGS, AND MIGHTEST OVERCOME WHEN THOU ART JUDGED.

BUT IF OUR UNRIGHTEOUSNESS COMMEND THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD, WHAT SHALL WE SAY? IS GOD UNRIGHTEOUS WHO TAKETH VENGEANCE? (I SPEAK AS A MAN) GOD FORBID: FOR THEN HOW SHALL GOD JUDGE THE WORLD? FOR IF THE TRUTH OF GOD HATH MORE ABOUNDED THROUGH MY LIE UNTO HIS GLORY; WHY YET AM I ALSO JUDGED AS A SINNER? AND NOT RATHER, (AS WE BE SLANDEROUSLY REPORTED, AND AS SOME AFFIRM THAT WE SAY,) LET US DO EVIL, THAT GOOD MAY COME? WHOSE DAMNATION IS JUST.

WHAT THEN? ARE WE BETTER THAN THEY? NO, IN NO WISE: FOR WE HAVE BEFORE PROVED BOTH JEWS AND GENTILES, THAT THEY ARE ALL UNDER SIN; AS IT IS WRITTEN, THERE IS NONE RIGHTEOUS, NO, NOT ONE: THERE IS NONE THAT UNDERSTANDETH, THERE IS NONE THAT SEEKETH AFTER GOD. THEY ARE ALL GONE OUT OF THE WAY, THEY ARE TOGETHER BECOME UNPROFITABLE; THERE IS NONE THAT DOETH GOOD, NO, NOT ONE. THEIR THROAT IS AN OPEN SEPULCHRE; WITH THEIR TONGUES THEY HAVE USED DECEIT; THE POISON OF ASPS IS UNDER THEIR LIPS: WHOSE MOUTH IS FULL OF CURSING AND BITTERNESS: THEIR FEET ARE SWIFT TO SHED BLOOD: DESTRUCTION AND MISERY ARE IN THEIR WAYS: AND THE WAY OF PEACE HAVE THEY NOT KNOWN: THERE IS NO FEAR OF GOD BEFORE THEIR EYES.

NOW WE KNOW THAT WHAT THINGS SOEVER THE LAW SAITH, IT SAITH TO THEM WHO ARE UNDER THE LAW: THAT EVERY MOUTH MAY BE STOPPED, AND ALL THE WORLD MAY BECOME GUILTY BEFORE GOD. THEREFORE BY THE DEEDS OF THE LAW THERE SHALL NO FLESH BE JUSTIFIED IN HIS SIGHT: FOR BY THE LAW IS THE KNOWLEDGE OF SIN.

BUT NOW THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD WITHOUT THE LAW IS MANIFESTED, BEING WITNESSED BY THE LAW AND THE PROPHETS; EVEN THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD WHICH IS BY FAITH OF JESUS CHRIST UNTO ALL AND UPON ALL THEM THAT BELIEVE: FOR THERE IS NO DIFFERENCE: FOR ALL HAVE SINNED, AND COME SHORT OF THE GLORY OF GOD; BEING JUSTIFIED FREELY BY HIS GRACE THROUGH THE REDEMPTION THAT IS IN CHRIST JESUS: WHOM GOD HATH SET FORTH TO BE A PROPITIATION THROUGH FAITH IN HIS BLOOD, TO DECLARE HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS FOR THE REMISSION OF SINS THAT ARE PAST, THROUGH THE FORBEARANCE OF GOD; TO DECLARE, I SAY, AT THIS TIME HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS: THAT HE MIGHT BE JUST, AND THE JUSTIFIER OF HIM WHICH BELIEVETH IN JESUS.

WHERE IS BOASTING THEN? IT IS EXCLUDED. BY WHAT LAW? OF WORKS? NAY: BUT BY THE LAW OF FAITH. THEREFORE WE CONCLUDE THAT A MAN IS JUSTIFIED BY FAITH WITHOUT THE DEEDS OF THE LAW.

IS HE THE GOD OF THE JEWS ONLY? IS HE NOT ALSO OF THE GENTILES? YES, OF THE GENTILES ALSO: SEEING IT IS ONE GOD, WHICH SHALL JUSTIFY THE CIRCUMCISION BY FAITH, AND UNCIRCUMCISION THROUGH FAITH.

DO WE THEN MAKE VOID THE LAW THROUGH FAITH? GOD FORBID:
YEA, WE ESTABLISH THE LAW.

But Now

“But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference” Romans 3:21-22

THE man who has heard the sound of God’s alarm in the gospel against his sin, who has been awakened to his lost condition, having striven to come to God in his own strength, yet found it useless, finding the law of God to be beyond his keeping – only condemning even his righteousnesses as filthy rags before God – is, through this, by the work of the Holy Spirit, brought to know the conviction of his sin before God.

In such a state, feeling the wrath of God to be revealed against all his unrighteousness and ungodliness, knowing himself to be guilty before God, having been given a knowledge of his own sin by God’s holy law as impressed upon him inwardly by the Holy Ghost, such a wretched, convicted sinner may well be brought to cry out in desperation with Job of old: *“How shall man be just with God?”* (Job 9:2).

Well... how *shall* man be just with God?

How, when our sins condemn us? *How*, when the wrath of God is revealed against our sins?

How, when our every attempt to keep God’s law ends in utter failure?

How, when even our best deeds, our righteousnesses, are as filthy rags? (Isaiah 64:6)

ROMANS – THE GOSPEL OF GOD

How? How shall man be just with God? When God requires perfect righteousness? When our sins can only separate us from a holy God?

How?

This is the very question which Paul begins to answer with the glorious “*But now*” of Romans 3:21. That wonderful turning point in the revelation of the gospel in which Paul proceeds from Romans 3:21 through to chapter 5 to declare the good news of the gospel and the answer to man’s greatest need – to be made *just* before God!

“But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference”, Romans 3:21-22.

Paul opens the Epistle to the Romans by first introducing to us the glorious *Person* of Christ in Romans 1:1-4. Then, having painted, as it were, on a canvas the bad news of man’s condition before God from chapter 1:18 to chapter 3:20 Paul begins in Romans 3:21 to set against this backdrop the good news of the *work* of Christ in the gospel. Having shown what *man* has done in his rebellion against God... what you have done... what I have done... Paul now proceeds to show what *God has done* in Christ to save His people from their sins.

Here we see that work by which God justifies His people, how He redeems them, ransoms them. Here is that work of faith which brings in the righteousness of God, which quenches the wrath of God against the sins of His people. That work which propitiates, silences, puts out, that wrath... *completely!*

“For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God

BUT NOW

commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us", Romans 5:6-8.

"...If we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead: Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification", Romans 4:24-25.

Yes, man stands guilty before God, yes, the law condemns him, yes, the wrath of God is revealed against all unrighteousness, yes, man lacks the strength, the will, the desire to turn to God... yes... *But now!!*

But now.... Though all men have sinned in Adam, though all have fallen short of the glory of God, though all have gone astray, though all lack understanding, though none seeks after God, nevertheless now, *but now*, we see Another Man, the Second Man, the Last Adam, One who never sinned, One who lived in perfect righteousness, One who was just, One who walked by faith. One who being both God and man could reach from heaven to earth, from time to eternity, from God *to* man, from the heights of Glory to the depths of despair, from Light unapproachable to the darkest corners of the earth – to the lowest, to the meanest, to the weakest and the most vile, yea, to the *chief of sinners*, to reconcile such poor, lost, wretched creatures unto their God and Father, not just for a moment but for *everlasting*, not just for time but for *eternity!* Here we see Jesus Christ – the Son of God, the Saviour of sinners... Yes, *that* was then. *But now...*

But now... we see the righteousness of God manifested. The very righteousness of God in Himself. Not simply the righteousness that God demanded of man in order to continue his mortal existence in this world, that righteousness of the law, as commanded of Israel and delivered by Moses – *that* was righteousness under the law. But now, we see another righteousness altogether manifested – the *righteousness of God* as revealed in the gospel. *That righteousness*, and that revelation, by which the gospel becomes the power of God unto salvation (Romans 1:16-17). For without righteousness no man can

ROMANS – THE GOSPEL OF GOD

be just before God, no man can approach unto God, but here, here in the gospel, God brings in a righteousness acceptable not only to the demands of the law, as given by Moses, but acceptable to God Himself in His very Being, as One who dwells in light unapproachable. *But now*, the righteousness of God, *without the law*, is manifested, *“being witnessed by the law and the prophets; even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ”*. This righteousness was *witnessed* by the law and the prophets – they pointed to it, foretold of it, foreshadowed it – but not until the coming of Christ in the gospel, not until God revealed this righteousness in judgment at the cross to be imputed to all who believe on the Son, not until the *“But now”* of Romans 3:21 did it finally come to light, was it finally revealed, finally manifested in fulfilment of all that had been promised. *But now*, by the faith of Jesus Christ, the righteousness of God, Divine righteousness, *without the law, is manifested!*

What is this righteousness? What is the *“righteousness of God”*? Well, firstly, it is *“without the law”* or *“apart from the law”*. Romans 3:21 makes that clear. That is not to say that it is against the law, or contrary to the law, but that it is brought in on another footing, another basis, another principle altogether. This isn't the righteousness of the law, nor even the righteousness of Christ by the law, but it is the righteousness *of God without the law*. It is not merely righteousness demanded of men, but Divine Righteousness *given* to men! (*Hence scripture always uses the term ‘the righteousness of God’ in order to emphasise its divinity, ‘the righteousness of Christ’ being a phrase never actually found in Holy Writ.*) This righteousness was brought in *not* by the works of the law, but by *“the faith of Jesus Christ”* (3:21). This is not *“the righteousness of Christ with the law... Even the righteousness of Christ by the works of Jesus Christ”*, but *“the righteousness of God without the law... even the righteousness of God by faith of Jesus Christ”*. It is by faith, not by works, being referred to in Romans 10 as *“the righteousness of faith”* as contrasted with *“the righteousness of the law”*. Nor does this simply refer to how this righteousness is *received* by the faith of the believer, but it refers to how it is established or *brought in* to the account of the believer in

BUT NOW

the gospel – “*by faith of Jesus Christ*”, “*for therein*” (in the gospel) “*is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith*”.

But if this righteousness of God, manifested in the gospel, is described as “*without the law*” does that mean that it is contrary to the law? Not at all, for it was “*witnessed by the law*”, that law having been given to man by God, having set forth God’s holiness, justice and goodness. Both the law and the gospel have come from the same God, they both reveal His holy character and justice. It is simply that the righteousness of God as revealed by the faith of Jesus Christ in the gospel is so much greater, so much more glorious, so much more wide-reaching, than anything the law of Moses could ever reveal. This righteousness of God, as revealed by the faith of Christ, as exemplified by Christ Himself, is the full revelation of God’s righteousness *as He is in Himself*. It is that righteousness which we need in order to be just with God, in order to stand before Him in perfection, at peace, at one with God the Father. This is a righteousness which not only fulfils the law in every aspect but which completely transcends it, soaring up from man to the very character of God in His infinite Divinity... Think of the light of the sun: the law, as summarised by the Ten Commandments, was like having that light shining through the lattice of the window, through ten panes of glass, as it were. The light emanates from the sun but is obscured by the lattice, and the darkness of the walls around obscure the full light that shines through the lattice of the window. But stand outside, stand under the midday sun and what a contrast there is! How much brighter, how much more dazzling, how much more *glorious* is the light! (See 2 Corinthians 3:7-11.)

Well, the gospel, and the righteousness of God revealed in the gospel, is like the shining of the midday sun! With the law taken out of sight the full glory of God’s righteousness is seen in Christ in the gospel. The same God is behind both the law and the gospel, it is the same Sun from whom the light shines (for God does not change)... But now, what was shrouded under the law, what was

ROMANS – THE GOSPEL OF GOD

concealed, what was behind the veil, what was seen in types and shadows is now fully manifested, now made fully known in Christ. *But now...* the righteousness of God *without the law* is manifested... even the righteousness of God by faith of Jesus Christ:

“For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. No man hath seen God at any time, the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him”, John 1:17-18.

“Again, a new commandment I write unto you, which thing is true in him and in you: because the darkness is past, and the true light now shineth”, 1 John 2:8.

Romans 1:18 declares the revelation of the wrath of God against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of man. From 1:18 to 3:20 Paul proves all men, both Jews and Gentiles, to be under sin, he brings them in guilty before God. He shows that *“by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified”* in God’s sight, because *“there is none righteous, no, not one”*.

None righteous, no not one. Not you, not I, no one. There is none righteous. Not *in Adam*, no. But thank God for the *“But now”* of 3:21! For God has *brought in* righteousness for His people, by *Another Man!* *“Even the righteousness of God by faith of Jesus Christ”*.

And to what end? To deliver from unrighteousness! To deliver from the wrath to come! To justify the ungodly, not by *ignoring* their sins, but by *righteously judging* them in Another. *“To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus”* (Romans 3:26).

Yes, the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men...

But now... God has revealed His righteousness, by the faith of Jesus Christ, to propitiate His wrath against the sins of His people.

BUT NOW

To quench it, to answer it, to pacify it. God's justice rightly burns against all the sins of mankind, all its rebellion, all its hatred, all its enmity, and justice *must* be satisfied, it must be answered, wrath must be poured out, justice must be exacted upon every transgression, every breach of God's law, every deviation from God's righteousness. Having opened the door to the full fury of God's wrath against his own sin, mankind stands helpless under the revelation of the wrath of God, awaiting the coming of the Last Day and the meting out of judgment against every sin and every sinner who remains in unbelief. That Day fast approaches with relentless pace, and mankind in blind stupidity, sheer foolishness, shuts both its eyes and its ears to the dreadful truth of the Judgment to come.

Yet, those whom God has taught, those whom God has awakened, those whom God has convicted, those who sense the fury of God's wrath against their sin, cry out in desperation: "*How shall man be just with God?*" Yes, they cry out... for *mercy!*

...Have you? Have you really?

For here, in the gospel, is God's answer for such heart-broken, such contrite, sinners – "*I have found a ransom*", "*A price has been paid!*" By whom? Another Man. Here we hear of One who has stepped into the breach. Of one "*who was delivered for our offences*" (Romans 4:25), who, "*while we were yet sinners*", died for us who believe. For when they were yet enemies, God reconciled His people to Himself "*by the death of His Son*" (Romans 5:10).

God's wrath raged against the sins of His people. *But now* the righteousness of God is manifested, Christ has been set forth as "*a propitiation through faith in his blood*" (Romans 3:25), by which God's wrath is quenched, propitiated, by having been poured out, *in its entirety*, against *every sin, every transgression, of every one* of His people, upon the One who suffered and died in their stead, the One who redeemed them by His own blood, the One who justified them, the One who ransomed them, the One who owned their offences as His own, the One who took away their sins, blotting them out,

ROMANS – THE GOSPEL OF GOD

having judged them according to the very righteousness of God in His own body, that righteousness which He brought in through judgment to their account, as He looked by faith to His Father, whilst yet stricken, forsaken, and cast out as the Substitute of sinners, accursed on their behalf, nailed to a cross and lifted up above the earth to suffer unimaginable torment and anguish on behalf of those whom He loved. *This is how God's wrath was propitiated, this is how His righteousness was brought in for all who believe, and this is how God justified His people, "freely by grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus"!*

Yes *this* is how God manifested His righteousness, how He justified His people – through the death of Christ. All is at the cross, all is in Christ's death. United to Christ all God's people died with Him, their sins became His, and God judged every one in the Saviour according to His own righteousness, His own perfection – and those sins, and that sin, all being entirely blotted out and taken out of the way, the wrath of God from heaven having being silenced for ever against them, nothing remained, nothing was left to be seen, but the righteousness of God in Christ which all His people became in Him – as *justified* before God: "*For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him*" (2 Corinthians 5:21). From that very point that righteousness is "*unto all*" that believe (Romans 3:22), and "*upon all*", when, by the work of the Spirit, they are born again from on high, quickened from death to life, translated from darkness to light, and granted faith to trust in the One who washed them from their sins and made them the righteousness of God in Him. For all for whom Christ died *will* be brought to faith, the righteousness of God being both *unto all and upon all* them that believe – "*for there is no difference*". A people who were once unrighteous, deceived, fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, effeminate, thieves, covetous, drunkards, revilers, extortioners.

BUT NOW

*“And such were some of you”... **But now...** “ye are washed... ye are sanctified... ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God” (1 Corinthians 6:11).*

Oh, praise God for this “*But now*”, by which righteousness is brought in for those who were unrighteous, by which sinners are justified, sins are remitted, wrath is propitiated, forgiveness is made known, the dead are brought to life, and God and men are reconciled.... And *all* through the glorious work of Christ, who by faith saved those who are brought to faith in Him alone for salvation, the Saviour who *by grace* sought and saved those who sought Him not...

For, ***He’s done it all!!***

“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of ourselves: it is the gift of God”, Ephesians 2:8.

Yes, praise God for the “*But now*” of Romans 3:21 in the Gospel of God!

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men...

But now...

The Faith of Jesus Christ

“But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference” Romans 3:21-22

IN Romans 3:21 we read of the revelation or manifestation of the righteousness of God in the gospel – the glorious “*But now*” of Romans 3. This wonderful, foundational, truth of the gospel, that the sinner is justified by having the very righteousness of God imputed to him as a result of the death of Christ on his behalf, is expounded from Romans 3:21 to 3:26. In verse 22 we read of just *how* the righteousness of God is brought to light in the gospel.

“Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference...”

How was this righteousness manifested? How did God reveal His righteousness in the gospel? He revealed it by the “*faith of Jesus Christ*”. It was the faith of Christ which brought the righteousness of God to light in the gospel. A glorious truth – but one so often overlooked and neglected by many. This phrase “*by faith of Jesus Christ*” is very significant, and is one that we find repeated in several other passages of scripture in various forms. For example in Galatians 2:16, a passage which also refers to our justification through the work of God in Christ, we read the following:

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

But what *is* the “*faith of Jesus Christ*” and just how *did* that manifest the righteousness of God in the gospel?

Mistranslations considered

Before answering that question, sadly we need to take some time to brush aside the obscuring of this glorious truth in many modern translations of the Bible. Not all translations have rendered the phrase with the same accuracy as the Authorised Version (AV, or King James Version, KJV) of the Bible, and for this reason a degree of confusion has been caused regarding the truths brought out in these passages. Indeed rather than *revealing* the righteousness of God in the gospel through the faith of Jesus Christ, these *mistranslations* of the Bible have all but *hidden* it!

Most modern ‘translations’ of the Bible, including the New International Version (NIV) and the New King James Version (NKJV), have altered this vital phrase to read “*faith in Jesus Christ*” which gives a very different meaning to the verses. But *why* have the translators chosen to alter the passages in this way?

When the phrases are taken in isolation it is difficult, from merely examining the Greek grammar or syntax alone, to be entirely sure of the translation and this has perhaps led to some of the differences in translation. However when the context of the passages is considered it is quite clear that the Authorised Version of the Bible and its predecessors such as The Great Bible, or Tyndale’s Bible, have rendered the passage correctly. The Holy Spirit in these verses is speaking of the faith *of* Christ, *not* of our faith *in* Him.

But it is not really differences of understanding regarding the contextual meaning of the phrases in the Greek which have led to the modern mistranslations, but theological *interpretation*. This, more than anything else, has affected how these verses have been translated in most modern Bible ‘versions’. This, despite the overwhelming weight of evidence from the Greek resting entirely

THE FAITH OF JESUS CHRIST

on the side of translating the phrase as "*faith of Christ*". In the original Greek wording, for example, it may be contended that there is a certain ambiguity about the words which might lend themselves to be understood in more than one way. But such an understanding is *only* retained if the passage is translated using 'of'. The English phrase "*faith of Jesus Christ*" could be understood more than one way, for example as Christ's personal faith or faithfulness, or that faith we have which comes *from* Jesus Christ. However if translated "*faith in Jesus Christ*" only one understanding is allowed for – *our* faith in Jesus Christ. Hence those who have translated the passage in this way have forced upon it their own interpretational decision of what the phrase means which effectively rules out the reading of the passage as meaning the personal faith (or faithfulness) of Christ. In such an instance *interpretation* has come before the *translation* of the text, rather than interpreting the meaning of the text *after* translation.

This sets a dangerous translational precedent which is destructive to the truth which the Holy Spirit sets forth in these, the most doctrinal of passages. Few passages of scripture call for more careful, faithful, discerning and Spirit-led wisdom in translation than Romans 3:22 or Galatians 2:16. Do these modern translations which have altered the rendering of these passages, casting doubt upon their meaning, demonstrate such wisdom on the part of their translators? It would appear not.

The *accurate* and *faithful* translation of these passages is certainly to render them as the 'faith of' Christ, as it was always translated in the various English versions of the Bible up to the 19th century, including the Great Bible, the Geneva Bible, Tyndale's Bible, and the Authorised Version (KJV). It is the modern versions, influenced by erroneous theological thought (which places justification as conditional upon *our* faith, rather than being surely accomplished by God in Christ for all His people), which have switched to rendering 'of' as 'in'. But a translation should *translate* what the original says! Interpretation of the result should then follow, as guided by the Holy Spirit. But Bible *translations* should be just that –

translations of the words in the original language which the Holy Spirit wrote.

The original Greek from which the English is translated is the phrase '*Pistis Christou*', which is a genitive, and in the context, a *subjective* genitive, meaning that the faith spoken of is that belonging to the subject, even Jesus Christ. It is *His* faith which is in view here. The evidence for the wording being a subjective genitive, referring to faith belonging to, and personal to, Jesus Christ, is backed up by similar grammar used elsewhere in the New Testament. There are many other verses referring to things which are personal to Christ or to God (for example, the "*hand of God*", the "*face of Jesus Christ*", and so on) which are worded in *identical* grammar in the Greek as '*Pistis Christou*' (the Greek construction used in Romans 3:22 and Galatians 2:16, meaning "*faith of Christ*"). Few would question those translations but when it comes to "*faith of Jesus Christ*" doubt is cast upon it. Why? Because the theological leanings of a number of modern 'scholars' prevent them from comprehending just why these verses refer to Christ's personal faith. They think the writer *must* mean our faith in Christ. But in this they have stumbled, and rather than translating the text they have interpreted it, and obfuscated the truth from the readers of their mistranslations, and in so doing have shifted the focus away from that objective truth *in* the gospel to that which is subjective *in relation to it*. But the text *should* be translated "*faith of Jesus Christ*", for it is *by* the faith of Christ that the righteousness of God is revealed *in* the gospel.

Faith or faithfulness

So, having considered the correct translation of the passages themselves, let us begin to consider the meaning of the phrase itself. What is to be understood by the phrase in these two verses? Does "*faith of Jesus Christ*" refer to faith which comes *from* Christ, or to Christ's personal faith, or even to His faithfulness?

THE FAITH OF JESUS CHRIST

Firstly, Romans 3:22 is not referring to faith which comes *from* Christ, or that *we* have in relation to Him. Whenever the Apostle Paul wanted to refer to *our* faith or our believing he was very specific in the Greek he used. He knew perfectly well how to speak of our believing, or our faith in Christ, in contrast to the faith of Christ Himself. Compare in the AV/KJV verses such as Galatians 3:26, Ephesians 1:15, Colossians 1:4, or even the phrase “*we have believed in Jesus Christ*” in Galatians 2:16 in contrast to “*the faith of Jesus Christ*” in the very same verse. The underlying Greek *differs*, and it differs for a reason. When Paul writes “*faith of Jesus Christ*” he is not referring to our faith in Him, whether that faith originates from God, from Christ, or not. He is referring to Christ’s *own* faith in God.

What about the translation of the Greek word ‘*pistis*’? Does this refer to Christ’s *faith* or His *faithfulness*? The same Greek word can be translated into English with either meaning but whilst theological bias again leads some, who might concede that the AV has translated the passage correctly, to speak of Christ’s faithfulness in regard to Romans 3:22, the fact remains that virtually all English translations render the word as faith, just as they do when speaking of a believer’s faith. Not only this, but given that faithfulness has to do with obedience, with works, whereas faith has to do with belief, trust and submission, the contrast demonstrated in Galatians 2:16 between the *works* of the law and the *faith* of Jesus Christ points to the fact that it is not faithfulness but *faith* which is in view, which is being contrasted with *works*. The AV/KJV has translated the phrases correctly. Romans 3:22 refers to the “*faith of Jesus Christ*” – ‘*pistis*’ usually being translated as faith elsewhere in the New Testament.

The righteousness of God revealed

So if the correct translation of Romans 3:22 is, “*Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference*”, what does this phrase actually mean? Does it really mean that the righteousness of God is manifested by

ROMANS – THE GOSPEL OF GOD

the faith of Jesus Christ (Romans 3:21-22)? That we are justified *by* the faith of Jesus Christ (Galatians 2:16)?

Yes. That is precisely the meaning of the passages. It is the faith of Jesus Christ which brought to light the righteousness of God, by which we are justified. The righteousness of God was manifested, revealed, brought to light, *by* the faith of Jesus Christ.

But one may answer that we are justified by the *blood* of Christ, by His death on the cross. And that is quite true – we are. But Christ's death on the cross, His blood-shedding was a *work of faith*, an *act of faith*. It was the "*obedience of faith*". Not obedience to the law, but the obedience of faith. The law didn't demand that one lay down his life for another – but Christ's faith revealed such love for His people, that while they were yet sinners He laid down His life for them. It is this which we see in the gospel. It was by faith that He lived ("*The just shall live by faith*", *Romans 1:17*) and by faith that He died (*Hebrews 12:2*). Hence we are justified *by* the faith of Jesus Christ. By that substitutionary death which He died as an act of faith on behalf of those people whom He loved and gave Himself for (*Galatians 2:20*).

Likewise the righteousness of God is manifested by the faith of Jesus Christ, because it is *through* the manifestation of this righteousness that we are justified, made righteous, before God. Christ lived a perfect and sinless life. His life which He lived from conception and birth unto death was *characterised* by faith. He lived a life in constant communion with the Father, doing the will of the Father, not His, in perfect and willing submission. He completely *submitted* to the Father, *trusted* in Him for all things, *looked* to Him in all things, and *walked* before Him with His eyes fixed upon God. Christ was the "*Just One*" and "*the just shall live by faith*". Without faith it is impossible to please God (*Hebrews 11:6*), yet Jesus pleased His Father in all things that He did ("*This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased*", *Matthew 17:5*). Romans 14 tells us that "*what is not of faith is sin*". Clearly then, Christ, the Sinless One, lived by faith,

THE FAITH OF JESUS CHRIST

for He never once sinned. It is by faith that He pleased God, by faith that He lived, and by faith that He died.

When He died, Christ's faith looked to God to lay upon Him the sins of all His people, to make Him to be sin for them, and to judge those sins according to the righteousness of God in order to blot out all the sins, and all the sin, of His people, that they might become the righteousness of God in Christ. In so doing the righteousness of God was manifested and God the Father rewarded the faith of His Son by justifying His people, purifying them as His Bride, a Bride without blemish, fit for a King.

The righteousness of faith

Romans 10 contrasts two *types* of righteousness: the righteousness of the law (Romans 10:5), which is about 'doing' ("*Do this and live*"), and the righteousness of faith, which springs from believing ("*...If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved*", Romans 10:9). It is this 'righteousness of faith' which is revealed in the gospel – the "*righteousness of God by faith of Jesus Christ*". This righteousness *springs* from faith. Through it is the fulfilment of all the law's demands but it is characterised not by *legal* obedience but by the *obedience of faith*. Faith characterises it. And Christ revealed it in the gospel through His faith. For we are justified not "*by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ*" (Galatians 2:16). Hence in Paul's statement about the Gospel of Christ in Romans 1:16-17 he says:

"For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith."

What a summary of the gospel! It is the *power of God unto salvation*. Why? Because therein, *in the gospel*, is the righteousness of

ROMANS – THE GOSPEL OF GOD

God *revealed*. How is it revealed? From *faith* to *faith*. But what does that mean? Well, once the fact of Christ's own faith be recognised, this phrase "*from faith to faith*", which has puzzled many a commentator¹, becomes much plainer to understand. The righteousness of God is revealed *from* faith – but whose faith? It is revealed *to* faith – but what faith is this?

The meaning of Romans 1:17 is as follows. It means that the righteousness of God was revealed *from*, or *out of*, Christ's faith, *unto* our faith. *Christ* manifested the righteousness of God by His faith (Romans 3:22), and we come to see and *believe* in that righteousness (and that one great act of righteousness which Christ performed in laying down His life on the cross to justify many by His blood) *through faith*. God gives us faith to see the righteousness of God revealed *by* Christ's faith, *within* the gospel.

It is this revelation, this manifestation of the righteousness of God, which is described in Romans 3:21-22. For the righteousness of God is not simply revealed *by* the gospel to our faith *subjectively*, but it is actually revealed in the gospel *objectively*. It is that revelation, objectively in the gospel, by the faith of Christ, out of which the righteousness of God is revealed to our faith subjectively: "*from faith to faith*". Hence we can see the importance of the correct translation of these passages in the scriptures and how the mistranslations of modern versions undermine the truth here, because they seek to take that revelation of the righteousness of God which is objective in the gospel, and make it merely subjective to the faith of the believer. Yet the scriptures plainly state that the "*gospel of Christ is the power of God unto salvation*" because therein, in the gospel objectively, "*is the righteousness of God revealed*". Yes, this revelation is *in* the gospel. How? Firstly by Christ's life. His very life exhibited the righteousness of God. But secondly, in His death when He brought that righteousness to light in judgment against the sins of His people as He looked to His Father by faith whilst suffering upon the tree. *This* is what revealed the righteousness of God – the faith of Jesus Christ – and it is *this revelation* of righteousness in the gospel which God's people are brought by faith to believe in. Hence Paul writes that the

THE FAITH OF JESUS CHRIST

righteousness of God is revealed *“from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith”*.

This phrase, *“The just shall live by faith”*, is absolutely *central* to the gospel. It *characterises* it. It is at the *heart* of it. The just shall *live* by faith. *Christ lived by faith*. He justified us by His death, by His faith. His death was an act of His faith. And by it He justified His people, hence they too *live* by faith. By Christ’s glorious act of faith at the cross dead sinners are brought to life. That justifying work later to be brought home to these people in their experience, by the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit who gives them faith to believe it. Their lives then follow, as it were, in the footsteps of Christ, as those who live by faith. The *‘just ones’* who, like the *‘Just One’* before them, *live by faith*.

Who can question that Christ’s life was lived by faith? Or that He died as an act of faith? Psalm 22 describes His sufferings and the whole language of that psalm is of faith, of trust in God. Likewise from Hebrews 10:38 through to Hebrews 12:2 we read an exposition of the same phrase taken from Habakkuk 2:4, *“The just shall live by his faith”*. Hebrews 10:38 quotes that and the next chapter goes on to define faith, to show that *“without faith it is impossible to please God”*, and to enumerate many wonderful instances of lives lived by faith. What made the deeds of Noah, Abraham, Moses, Rahab and others pleasing to God, was that they sprang *from faith*. By faith!

Christ, our forerunner

That chapter brings us to Hebrews 12:2, where it reaches its focal point, its *summit*: Christ. Here the attention is centred on that great forerunner of faith, Jesus. It is not simply that He is the object, or end, of man’s faith, but He is the *“Just One”* who ran before us, living by faith. *“Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of [our] faith”*. ‘Our’ here has been inserted by the translators. Also ‘author’ and ‘finisher’ are merely two words used to translate Greek words which have much fuller meanings. A better, more descriptive,

ROMANS – THE GOSPEL OF GOD

translation might be, “*Looking unto Jesus the chief [or captain] and end [or object] of faith*”. We look to Jesus who is the ‘end’ or object of [our] faith, but He is also the *chief of faith*, the *captain* or forerunner of faith. He is the One who went before us, who lived by faith, whom we follow.

And what did Christ do by faith? We read in chapter 11 of what Noah did by faith, of what Abraham and others did ‘by faith’, but what main thing did Christ do ‘by faith’? We read “...*who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God*”.

That is what Christ did by faith – He *endured the cross*, despising the shame. Why? “*For the joy that was set before him*”. What joy? To justify all those whom the Father had given unto Him from before the foundation of the world. To be united in *resurrection life* with His bride, the church. To live for ever in eternal bliss with all those justified by His blood. That was His joy, His satisfaction. “*He shall see the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities*” (Isaiah 53:11).

In laying down His life for sinners Christ trusted His Father with complete trust, complete knowledge (“*by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many*”), and complete faith, counting Him faithful who had promised. He *believed* that God would lay all the sins of His chosen people upon His Son and that in Christ’s bearing them and taking their just punishment that those people would be really, truly, justified through His death. Christ had perfect faith in His Father and in that covenant they made before the foundation of the world. When in Gethsemane the Son of God was faced with the cup which He would soon drink, though such an awful prospect awaited Him, His faith did not shrink from it, but He willingly submitted to the Father’s will. And when, on the cross, He drank of that very cup, bore the sins of His people, and was beaten and bruised by the outpouring of God’s wrath against them, forsaken of Him in whose bosom He had dwelt, did Christ’s faith fail Him? No,

THE FAITH OF JESUS CHRIST

He endured to the bitter end. He had perfect faith, perfect trust, that on the third day God would raise Him from the dead, and on the third day, rise from the dead He did in triumphant victory having justified His people for ever! Yes, Christ's death was the most wonderful work of faith there has ever been. *Perfect faith, from the perfect man, the Last Adam!*

Justified by the faith of Christ

Finally, take another look at Galatians 2:16:

"Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified."

How is a man justified? By the works of the law? No. By the *faith of Jesus Christ*. Not by faith *in* Jesus Christ. *Our* faith doesn't justify us, it is *Christ's death* by which we are justified. Then *"by the faith of Jesus Christ"*. Why? Because His death was an act of that faith.

And what is the result of being justified by Christ's death, by His faith? The *result* is that *"we have believed in Jesus Christ"*. Our belief doesn't justify us, it is a *result* of our justification, inwrought by the Spirit. Our belief brings us to an experimental knowledge of our justification before God *subjectively* in which God *declares* a sentence of justification in our hearts, but it is God that justified us *objectively* in the Person of His Son, who shed His blood for His people. And when Christ shed His blood for that people the righteousness of God was *unto* all of them from that very moment, to be applied by the Spirit *upon* all of them when they believe, *"even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference"*. For we are justified, *not* by the works of the law, *but by the faith of Jesus Christ...*

ROMANS – THE GOSPEL OF GOD

“...who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.”

Oh, may God give us grace to both see the glory of His work in Christ, that work of faith by which He justified His people for ever, and believing, to walk by faith, looking unto Jesus, *“the author and finisher of faith”*.

Amen.

[¹ One common interpretation of the phrase, *“from faith to faith”*, in Romans 1:17 is that it refers to the believer’s faith which, it is said, goes from one measure of faith to another, greater, measure. The problem with such an interpretation, however, is that the subject of Romans 1:17 is *not* the believer or his faith, but the righteousness of God, and how that is revealed in the Gospel. It is the *revelation of the righteousness of God* which is *“from faith to faith”*, and, as has been shown in this chapter, this righteousness is revealed *from (by, or out of)* the faith of Jesus Christ *unto* the faith of the believer.]

All Have Sinned

"For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God" Romans 3:23

HERE is one of those verses in the Bible that you just can't run away from. It is addressed to us all.

It says *"For all have sinned"*.

"ALL have sinned". Everyone¹. That means you and me.

"But I'm not a sinner!" you say. *"Not like others anyway."*

"I'm not a criminal or anything like that", you say.

In fact compared to many people you probably consider yourself a pretty good, upright, honest member of the community.

But that's in your eyes, looking on the outside, comparing yourself with others.

But in God's eyes you're a sinner. *"All have sinned"*.

God looks on the hidden things of the heart. All those things you think and imagine and feel inside that you manage to hide from everyone else. But He sees it. Everything.

Do you know your own heart? That it is *"desperately wicked"* and *"deceitful above all things"* (Jeremiah 17:9)? That out of it proceeds *"evil continually"* (Genesis 6:5, Matthew 15:19)?

And do you know that you have broken God's law, the Ten Commandments? Not just some of it – all of it.

ROMANS – THE GOSPEL OF GOD

All men have stolen, committed murder, lusted, coveted, taken the Lord's name in vain, told lies, worshipped idols.

"Not I!" you cry, "I've never stolen anything".

Maybe not *outwardly* but you have inwardly – probably every day of your life. We have all had angry thoughts towards our neighbour, we've all lusted after possessions and people and power. We've all lied, even to ourselves.

But you were created to worship God, not to live for yourself. You have never loved God with all your heart and with all your mind. None of us has worshipped God with all our energies and all our time, perfectly. We all seek the things which please us, the things of this world.

How often do you think of God? How often do you thank Him for all He has given you, for life and health, friends and family?

Do you consider God's majesty? His holiness? His almighty power demonstrated by the way He created the world and all things in it just by His word?

Have you considered the size of the Universe? That God is greater than that – that He is everywhere and knows everything that is happening at any moment in time? He knows everything about you, everything that has ever happened and ever will happen. He is completely righteous and just. He does all that He says He will. He knows the innermost thoughts and intentions of every man and woman on earth. Nothing is hidden from Him.

Have you ever considered these things? Ever worshipped God as you should do?

No? Then you have sinned. And you are guilty before God, because you've failed to keep the law in its entirety.

ALL HAVE SINNED

*“Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God”,
Romans 3:19.*

You are a debtor before God. Your sins have mounted up a huge debt which you cannot repay!

Now do you see the hopeless state you find yourself in? Even if you attempt to keep the law all it does is condemn you – it shows just how sinful man is. How far short he falls.

“For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.”

Romans 3:20 reads, *“Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin.”*

But sin is not just the breaking of God’s law. It is like a disease which affects our very being. It entered into man when Adam fell by disobeying God in the Garden of Eden. And it affects everything that man does. He just *cannot* please God. The law shows us this sin within ourselves, and the utter impossibility of our meeting its demands, and satisfying God’s righteous requirements.

We are all guilty. We are all under the curse and condemnation of the law, unless God should deliver us.

“For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men...” Romans 1:18.

In fact although our consciences may show us that these things are true, that we are sinners and there is a judgment that awaits us, yet sin has such a grip on us that not only do we continue in it but we wilfully enjoy it. As Romans 1:32 tells us:

ROMANS – THE GOSPEL OF GOD

"Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them."

But God is not mocked. Continue in this way and the day of wrath will come sooner than you think.

And on that day all men will have to stand before God and give an account of themselves. And if they are found wanting then justice will be exercised and their sentence will be an eternity of separation from God. An eternity in Hell.

"The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; And shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.

Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear", Matthew 13:41-43.

Do *you* have ears to hear?

Righteousness

"But", you say, "Isn't God supposed to be a God of love? Can't he just forgive people their sins? Overlook them perhaps?"

Yes, God is a God of love. He is a merciful God and slow to anger. But He is also a righteous and a just God who cannot look upon sin. Sin must be dealt with – *justly*. The broken law demands a penalty which must be met, a price *must* be paid.

Is there no hope for anyone then? How can anyone stand before a holy God?

ALL HAVE SINNED

How can anyone be saved? How can anyone escape the wrath to come?

Only if they are righteous. *"Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven"* (Matthew 5:20). It's all a question of righteousness. God's law describes a righteousness for man, which if he was able to keep he would live. But he is utterly incapable of keeping it because of his sinful nature. No matter how hard we try to live a life pleasing to God, no matter how religious we try to be, we will always fail to come up to God's standards because everything we do is tainted by sin!

"Even our righteousnesses are as filthy rags."

"For ALL have sinned", says the verse.

Then how can anyone be righteous?

How? When all have sinned?

Through another! We need righteousness in another. We need the price of the law to be paid, a ransom to be made. God's justice to be satisfied. Sin to be washed away. We need our sinful nature to be dealt with, we need a new heart.

"Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me", cried David in Psalm 51, when he saw just how sinful he was before God.

Praise God He *has* made a way!

In Christ – the sinner's substitute – and in Him alone.

God sent His only begotten Son into the world to die in the place of sinners. To suffer the punishment that they deserve. To appease

ROMANS – THE GOSPEL OF GOD

God's wrath and provide a way for sinners to be just before a Holy God.

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life", John 3:16.

Oh what love this shows towards wretched, guilty sinners! That God should give His own Son to suffer in their place!

God in the person of His Son, co-equal with the Father, took upon Himself human flesh. Christ humbled Himself to the point of becoming a man. Born of a virgin He took human nature into union with His divine nature. He was completely human just as we are. He knew our state, what it felt like to hunger, to thirst, to be weary, to suffer, to be tempted as we are. But with this exception – He knew no sin. Completely sinless, perfect in every way, He was the only sacrifice acceptable unto God to pay the price of His people's sins.

No amount of sacrificial lambs or goats offered up by human priests could ever atone for sin, because they were unequal to those for whom they were offered and the priests who offered them were themselves tainted by sin. But Christ, the perfect Lamb of God from the foundation of the world, laid down His life on the cross once for all shedding His blood, the just for the unjust.

He was *"wounded for our transgressions"* (Isaiah 53:5). He was *"brought as a lamb to the slaughter"* (Isaiah 53:7).

When Jesus Christ the Son of God was crucified on the cross He laid down His life for His people. He died in the place of sinners to suffer for them. To actually take the punishment that was rightfully theirs – the Innocent died in the place of the guilty.

Christ came into this world not to save the righteous but sinners!

ALL HAVE SINNED

"For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him", Romans 5:6-9.

Christ died to pay the price of His people's sins, while they were yet sinners!

To take the punishment that was lawfully theirs. To suffer the curse of the law and deliver them from it. God poured out His wrath upon His only begotten Son. What agonies He suffered! The separation of the Son from His Father – the awful torments of God's just punishment of sin in His body. Oh, such love!

The Righteous died in the place of the unrighteous. Christ's blood was shed to wash sinners from their sins. To make them clean before God – to make them righteous!

Yes, righteous before God! People who are such sinners, so incapable of worshipping God as they should, *made righteous*, not through their own efforts or merits, but by the sacrifice of Christ on the cross and His blood shed for them. By being clothed with the robe of righteousness that God gives them through the shed blood of His beloved Son.

By this means God is just and the justifier of the ungodly. Sin has been dealt with – justly. Not overlooked, not ignored, but punished and removed by Christ.

Jesus was *"made sin, that we might be become the righteousness of God in him"*.

The righteousness of God! Not only are the sinner's sins punished in Him, and they receive forgiveness of sins through His blood, but they are made the *'righteousness of God'* in Him.

ROMANS – THE GOSPEL OF GOD

Romans 3:21-22 tells us:

"But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference".

God has brought in a righteousness for sinners, even the righteousness of God to all that believe on His Son. There is no other way to find forgiveness of sins or to escape the wrath to come and an eternity of separation from God in Hell but to turn from your sin and believe on God's Son the Lord Jesus Christ.

What love God has shown unto sinners! What grace He shows – what unmerited favour towards sinners that hate Him and are at enmity with Him.

Lost in your sin things may seem hopeless – how could God have mercy on you? The more you try to please Him the more into sin you fall.

But it isn't hopeless! God has brought in a full and free salvation through Jesus Christ the Lord. Through faith in His sacrifice on the cross for sinners such as you and I!

"Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound: That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord", Romans 5:20-21.

This is the Gospel of Christ. The Good News of Salvation through Him.

"And thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins", Matthew 1:21.

ALL HAVE SINNED

"When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished: and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost", John 19:30.

Yes, it is a finished work. Christ did all that was necessary to save His people – there is nothing more to do, but look to Him and believe. What love!

What a Saviour!

*And, "he rose again the third day according to the scriptures"
(1 Corinthians 15:4).*

Death had no power over Him – He rose again and is even now seated on the right hand of God the Father having made His enemies His footstool.

Praise God!

All but One

Now, do you remember the verse?

"For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God..."

All have sinned? All but one, Jesus Christ the Righteous.

Reader – are you a sinner? Are you still lost in your sins? If you don't know Christ then the Bible says that you are, and that you need to be right with a Holy God!

But has God *shown* you? Has He brought you to see that you are a sinner before Him? If you confess that you are, then repent of your sins and believe on Christ, who alone can make you just, and grant you eternal life. Plead for mercy! Seek Him while He may be found and turn to Him who alone can forgive you and set you free.

ROMANS – THE GOSPEL OF GOD

"For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee: behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation", 2 Corinthians 6:2.

[¹ It should be noted that the *immediate* context of Romans 3:23 is in reference to the *all* of verse 22, all that believe on Christ. *For God has manifested His righteousness unto and upon all that them believe, for all (of them) have sinned.* However, whilst that is true of the immediate context and is used to emphasise the fact that all for whom Christ died were sinners, it is nevertheless also true that Romans 3:23 is as applicable in the wider context of chapter 3 as it is in its immediate context. Chapter 1:18 through to 3:19 clearly demonstrates that all men, Jews and Gentiles, have sinned, as 3:10 tells us "*there is none righteous, no, not one*".]

What is Faith?

“As it is written, the just shall live by faith” Romans 1:17
“...The justifier of him which believeth in Jesus” Romans 3:26

TROUGHOUT the Epistle to the Romans a constant theme is reiterated: *“The just shall live by faith”* (Romans 1:17). Faith is central to the gospel and to salvation by that gospel.

In Romans 3:26 we read that God is the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus. But how *does* one believe in Jesus? Just what *is* faith?

Much confusion is caused by this question. Many think faith is just some belief in certain things, a belief which man can produce naturally, a response of *man’s will* to the gospel. Yet scripture teaches clearly that man by nature is *“dead in trespasses and sins”* (Ephesians 2:1), that he is spiritually blind and spiritually deaf, and that he cannot know the things of God except the Spirit of God reveal them unto him. *“The natural man receiveth not the things of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned”* (see 1 Corinthians 2:10-16). No, man by nature does *not* have faith – it is something he must be given, something that is received, something that is obtained (2 Peter 1:1). Scripture teaches us that faith is the gift of God (Ephesians 2:8), a fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22), which is given to God’s people, in order that they might believe the gospel preached unto them, and believe in Christ who is revealed by that gospel. Faith comes by the preaching of God’s word for *“how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? ... So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God”* (Romans 10:14,17).

ROMANS – THE GOSPEL OF GOD

In Hebrews 11:1 we are told that "*faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.*" It is that principle by which God's people live, for "*the just shall live by faith*", and without faith it is impossible to please God "*for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him*" (Hebrews 11:6). The faith of God's elect was exemplified by that faith by which the Just One, the Lord Jesus Christ, also lived. Whilst He looked to His Father by faith, whereas the child of God also looks to Christ by faith, nevertheless His was a life of absolute trust in, and inner communion with, God His Father.

Not only is faith something shared by God's people with Christ their Saviour, but faith itself cannot be divorced from that truth in which it believes. Faith believes, trusts, and rests in, the truth of the gospel, in *The Faith* itself. The two are inextricably linked. One cannot have true faith except one hears the gospel, and when God is pleased, by His Spirit, to *open the ears* to that gospel, faith is the result – faith which believes the truth... and the One who *is* Truth, even Jesus Christ the Lord.

But there are some who speak of faith as being a mere *mental assent* to the truths of the gospel. Yet true, saving faith, is far, far more than mere mental assent to the bare letter of truth. Whilst many do reject the truth, it is also true that many who are religious make mental assent to the gospel – at least in part – whilst having no real, personal revelation of the Son of God as *their* Saviour. They consent to the facts, but the truth declared by those facts has never been revealed to them inwardly as a reality in which they are personally concerned. A bare intellectual belief that Christ's blood was shed to wash away His people's sins, does not mean for certain that we are one of those for whom that blood was shed – one of those who are brought to comprehend its application and worth spiritually. We can *know* much, but still be *blind* (Romans 2:17-29). True faith is far more than mental assent. It is that which springs from a new life within, having been born again of the Spirit (John 3), that which lays hold upon the Son of God as revealed inwardly in the heart of the believer as his personal Saviour, that which not only

WHAT IS FAITH?

sees outwardly the blood shed to wash away sins, but knows the application of that blood sprinkled within, upon the heart and conscience. Yes, saving faith is a *reality*, not a mere mental assent. It is that by which we see and know, believe and trust, lay hold of and are united, inwardly and by revelation to the Son of God, who loved us and died for us, who believe.

"...it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace, to reveal his Son in me..." Galatians 1:15-16.

*"For by grace are ye saved, through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast",
Ephesians 2:8-9.*

IV ROMANS

“Abraham believed God” Romans 4:3

ROMANS IV

WHAT SHALL WE SAY THEN THAT ABRAHAM OUR FATHER, AS PERTAINING TO THE FLESH, HATH FOUND? FOR IF ABRAHAM WERE JUSTIFIED BY WORKS, HE HATH WHEREOF TO GLORY; BUT NOT BEFORE GOD. FOR WHAT SAITH THE SCRIPTURE? ABRAHAM BELIEVED GOD, AND IT WAS COUNTED UNTO HIM FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS.

NOW TO HIM THAT WORKETH IS THE REWARD NOT RECKONED OF GRACE, BUT OF DEBT.

BUT TO HIM THAT WORKETH NOT, BUT BELIEVETH ON HIM THAT JUSTIFIETH THE UNGODLY, HIS FAITH IS COUNTED FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS. EVEN AS DAVID ALSO DESCRIBETH THE BLESSEDNESS OF THE MAN, UNTO WHOM GOD IMPUTETH RIGHTEOUSNESS WITHOUT WORKS, SAYING, BLESSED ARE THEY WHOSE INIQUITIES ARE FORGIVEN, AND WHOSE SINS ARE COVERED. BLESSED IS THE MAN TO WHOM THE LORD WILL NOT IMPUTE SIN.

COMETH THIS BLESSEDNESS THEN UPON THE CIRCUMCISION ONLY, OR UPON THE UNCIRCUMCISION ALSO? FOR WE SAY THAT FAITH WAS RECKONED TO ABRAHAM FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS. HOW WAS IT THEN RECKONED? WHEN HE WAS IN CIRCUMCISION, OR IN UNCIRCUMCISION? NOT IN CIRCUMCISION, BUT IN UNCIRCUMCISION. AND HE RECEIVED THE SIGN OF CIRCUMCISION, A SEAL OF THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF THE FAITH WHICH HE HAD YET BEING UNCIRCUMCISED: THAT HE MIGHT BE THE FATHER OF ALL THEM THAT BELIEVE, THOUGH THEY BE NOT CIRCUMCISED; THAT RIGHTEOUSNESS MIGHT BE IMPUTED UNTO THEM ALSO: AND THE FATHER OF CIRCUMCISION TO THEM WHO ARE NOT OF THE CIRCUMCISION ONLY, BUT WHO ALSO WALK IN THE STEPS OF THAT FAITH OF OUR FATHER ABRAHAM, WHICH HE HAD BEING YET UNCIRCUMCISED.

FOR THE PROMISE, THAT HE SHOULD BE THE HEIR OF THE WORLD, WAS NOT TO ABRAHAM, OR TO HIS SEED, THROUGH THE LAW, BUT THROUGH THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF FAITH. FOR IF THEY WHICH ARE OF THE LAW BE HEIRS, FAITH IS MADE VOID, AND THE PROMISE MADE OF NONE EFFECT: BECAUSE THE LAW WORKETH WRATH: FOR WHERE NO LAW IS, THERE IS NO TRANSGRESSION.

THEREFORE IT IS OF FAITH, THAT IT MIGHT BE BY GRACE; TO THE END THE PROMISE MIGHT BE SURE TO ALL THE SEED; NOT TO THAT ONLY WHICH IS OF THE LAW, BUT TO THAT ALSO WHICH IS OF THE FAITH OF ABRAHAM; WHO IS THE FATHER OF US ALL, (AS IT IS WRITTEN, I HAVE MADE THEE A FATHER OF MANY NATIONS,) BEFORE HIM WHOM HE BELIEVED, EVEN GOD, WHO QUICKENETH THE DEAD, AND CALLETH THOSE THINGS WHICH BE NOT AS THOUGH THEY WERE. WHO AGAINST HOPE BELIEVED IN HOPE, THAT HE MIGHT BECOME THE FATHER OF MANY NATIONS, ACCORDING TO THAT WHICH WAS SPOKEN, SO SHALL THY SEED BE. AND BEING NOT WEAK IN FAITH, HE CONSIDERED NOT HIS OWN BODY NOW DEAD, WHEN HE WAS ABOUT AN HUNDRED YEARS OLD, NEITHER YET THE DEADNESS OF SARAH'S WOMB: HE STAGGERED NOT AT THE PROMISE OF GOD THROUGH UNBELIEF; BUT WAS STRONG IN FAITH, GIVING GLORY TO GOD; AND BEING FULLY PERSUADED THAT, WHAT HE HAD PROMISED, HE WAS ABLE ALSO TO PERFORM.

AND THEREFORE IT WAS IMPUTED TO HIM FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS.

NOW IT WAS NOT WRITTEN FOR HIS SAKE ALONE, THAT IT WAS IMPUTED TO HIM; BUT FOR US ALSO, TO WHOM IT SHALL BE IMPUTED, IF WE BELIEVE ON HIM THAT RAISED UP JESUS OUR LORD FROM THE DEAD; WHO WAS DELIVERED FOR OUR OFFENCES, AND WAS RAISED AGAIN FOR OUR JUSTIFICATION.

Abraham Believed God

“For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness” Romans 4:3

HAVING presented the work of God in justifying sinners “*freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus*”, Paul goes on at the close of chapter 3 to present three hypothetical questions which some may be inclined to ask in response to such doctrine and to such an emphasis upon faith in the work of God alone. With three brief, yet unequivocal answers Paul affirms the truth of justification by faith in reply to such doubting opposition.

*“Where is boasting then? **It is excluded.**”*

*“Is he the God of the Jews only? Is he not also of the Gentiles? **Yes, of the Gentiles also...**”*

*“Do we then make void the law through faith? **God forbid: yea, we establish the law.**”*

It is these three questions, and the answers to them, which Paul proceeds to open up, to enlarge upon, and to expound more fully, throughout chapter 4 of Romans. Using the life of Abraham as an example he illustrates the total contrast between justification sought by the works of the law, and the free grace of God by which God justifies undeserving sinners through faith. All grounds for boasting are set aside, the blessedness of sins forgiven and righteousness imputed are set before us, the scope and scale of God’s mercy to both Jews and Gentiles is demonstrated, and the law is shown to be established through the righteousness of faith given to all of the seed of promise, all those “*of the faith of Abraham*”.

Boasting excluded by the Law of Faith... (Romans 4:1-8)

Paul begins by asking, what did Abraham find? What was he taught (Romans 4:1)? What did God teach Abraham regarding salvation, regarding justification, that we also need to see before we will ever know the blessedness of sins forgiven?

Abraham was taught “*as pertaining to the flesh*”, that his own works, his own efforts in religion could do nothing to save him – absolutely nothing. They were but ‘*filthy rags*’ before God, the very best of them being tainted by sin. Such works, such ‘good deeds’ might appear worthwhile and commendable to other men, they might give Abraham something in which to glory in before man, “*but not before God*” (Romans 4:2). Before God Abraham stood as with all men as a sinner, as ungodly. Yet to be justified before God demands righteousness, but in the flesh, by our own efforts, neither Abraham nor we can produce such perfection.

Abraham discovered that he needed a righteousness provided for him and that justification *must* be through faith resting in that righteousness. Justification *must* be the work of God, it *must* be by grace – or else we’d forever remain in our sins. And if of grace then all glory *must* be to God, and not to man. Then where is boasting? It is *excluded*.

Notice in Romans 3:27 how Paul answers this question. Boasting is excluded by the *law of faith*. He refers here to the gospel, and that faith which is at the heart of the gospel, as a *law*, as a *principle*, in order to contrast it with the *law* of works. Paul does this to emphasise the contrast between faith and that which *characterises* the law – works. Hence the gospel itself is referred to as a law, but a law characterised by faith. Here is a law fulfilled not by working, but through *believing*! This is a law which brings in righteousness, not by works, but by faith – the “*righteousness of faith*”.

This righteousness is brought in by God to the account of His people. It is imputed to them. It is altogether outside of them and it

ABRAHAM BELIEVED GOD

owes nothing to their own merit or efforts. This righteousness was wrought by the faith of Christ and is received by the faith of the believer, as the gift of God. Hence all boasting is excluded – and with all the efforts and works of man set at nought – *this* is how God saved Abraham. Not by works, but by grace. Not through the law, but through faith. If Abraham was justified by works he would have had something to glory in, and salvation would simply be a reward for his works. *He* would have merited it, *he* would have earned it, *and he* would deserve it (Romans 4:4). But how *could he* when he was *ungodly*?

No, what Abraham *found*, what Abraham came to believe was that salvation is, and must be, by grace alone, that whilst in his sins, that whilst being ungodly, God justified him, his iniquities were forgiven and his sins covered (Romans 4:7), his faith being *counted* for righteousness (Romans 4:5). Now of course, this does not mean that Abraham's faith *itself* is righteousness, but that God counted it for righteousness, God imputed righteousness to Abraham, because of the righteousness of God in Christ which Abraham looked unto and rested in *by faith*. It was that righteousness which Christ brought in to the account of His people when He suffered and died in their place upon the tree, taking their sins as His own, suffering the outpouring of God's wrath against them, taking away sin, and covering His people with His precious blood shed for them. This was how Abraham was justified and *this* was what his faith rested in.

Having brought Abraham to such belief, having opened his eyes to the truth, to his own state before God and his need of having his sins forgiven, God then greatly blessed him. Abraham entered into that very same blessing of which David spoke and rejoiced in Psalm 32:

"Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit is no guile."

ROMANS – THE GOSPEL OF GOD

Oh the blessedness of sins forgiven! To be just before God – forgiven! To be counted righteous before a Holy God!

Yet, this is the very blessing which both Abraham and David knew and believed.

Do you know it? Has God shown *you* this blessing?

From those of that faith of our father Abraham... (Romans 4:9-12)

From Romans 4:9 through to 4:12 Paul deals with the question of just *whom* does God justify? Does this blessing come upon the Jews only or the Gentiles also? Those who are circumcised or those in uncircumcision?

The answer is emphatic. Not the Jews only, but the Gentiles also. Though this answer was perhaps astounding to the Jew – despite the testimony of the prophets to this blessing of the New Covenant (Hosea 2:23, Zechariah 10:9) – Paul goes on to prove this by showing that faith was reckoned to Abraham for righteousness, not *when* he was circumcised but *before*, whilst yet uncircumcised. Circumcision, seen by the Jews as representative of their law (though the law was delivered 430 years later), and of their special relationship as a nation with God, was in fact given to Abraham as a “*seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had yet being uncircumcised*”. Abraham was not justified by the works of the law, nor because of his natural birth, nor even by his obedience to the command of God regarding circumcision, but through *faith in the work of God*. It was God who justified him, through the death of His Son in Abraham’s place, a death which brought in that righteousness which God freely imputed to Abraham and to all his seed, who believe in the promise, and who are brought, like David, to know the blessedness of iniquities forgiven, or righteousness imputed.

ABRAHAM BELIEVED GOD

This seed, this people, are those of *the faith of Abraham*, both of Jews and Gentiles, he being the "*father of many nations*", a countless multitude. A people with this in common: they are *all* found in Christ, that One true Seed of Abraham, the firstborn of many sons, the One who through His death brought in the inheritance of promise, the blessing of Abraham, to all those who believe, of both Jews and Gentiles. As we read in Galatians 3:11-18:

"But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, The just shall live by faith. And the law is not of faith: but,

The man that doeth them shall live in them. Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree: That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.

Brethren, I speak after the manner of men; Though it be but a man's covenant, yet if it be confirmed, no man disannulleth, or addeth thereto. Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ.

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

What marks out such a people? They "*walk in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham, which he had yet being uncircumcised*" (Romans 4:12). They *believe God*, and it is counted unto them for righteousness (Romans 4:3).

Who establish the law by faith (Romans 4:13-25)

From verse 13 of chapter 4 Paul turns his attention to the third and final question raised at the end of chapter 3, *“Do we then make void the law through faith?”*

Oh, how important this is to answer! Having already dealt with such a disbelieving question in the firmest manner with the reply, *“God forbid: yea, we establish the law”*, Paul now seeks to demonstrate from the example of the promise made to Abraham, and the faith of Abraham, that faith does indeed establish the law.

In verse 13 Paul affirms the truth of the gospel by taking us right back to the first book of the Bible and reminding us of the promise God made to Abraham in Genesis 17, and that everlasting covenant of grace. There God promised to make Abraham a father of many nations, to establish a covenant with him and his seed, to be his God, and to give him the land wherein he was a stranger as an everlasting possession. It is this promise and its precursor in Genesis 15 which Abraham was given faith to believe in, faith which God counted unto *“him for righteousness”* (Genesis 15:6). Was this in circumcision? No, in uncircumcision, for it wasn't until after these promises were made that circumcision was instituted as a *“seal of the righteousness of faith which he had yet being uncircumcised”* (Romans 4:11).

Hence the promise was not *“through the law”*, circumcision, figurative of the law, yet having been instituted, *“but through the righteousness of faith”* (Romans 4:13). The promise, and the blessings of that promise, as fulfilled by Christ in the gospel, as the Seed of Abraham, came not by works, but by faith, not by law but by grace. But what was that promise? On the face of things it would seem to refer to the inheritance of the land of Canaan in which Abraham was a stranger, and to that physical nation of Israel which sprang from Abraham's loins. Yet all that was merely a figure, a shadow, of what the promise truly referred to. Physical Canaan never was, and never will be, the everlasting possession of Abraham or the Jews.

ABRAHAM BELIEVED GOD

But what it *pictures*, what it represents, will forever be the eternal inheritance of all those who are the true children of Abraham, the heirs of the promise. For what it represents is that eternal inheritance of the world to come of which Abraham and his seed would be heirs, not “*through the law, but through the righteousness of faith*” (Romans 14:13), and not in time, but in eternity, in resurrection glory! A world in which all God’s people, purchased by the blood of His Son, risen again in newness of life in Him, raised incorruptible having put on incorruption in the resurrection to come, with glorious spiritual bodies, will ever live in righteousness in the new heavens and the new earth! (See 1 Corinthians 15, 2 Peter 3:13, Revelation 21:1.) *This* is the inheritance spoken of here, *this* is what will be brought in when Christ returns for His people, and *this* is the promise made to Abraham of which he was heir. By works? No, by faith!

For Abraham believed God, knowing that God would bring in this inheritance through death. In this Abraham was taught in the trial of being asked to offer up Isaac, the son whom God had promised him. Abraham obeyed his Lord, believing not only that God was able to raise up Isaac from the dead, but knowing that this figure pointed to One who was to come, far down through the ages, who would be raised again from the dead in order to bring in the inheritance promised to His people. For an inheritance is always brought in by death, and it is by the death of the promised Seed that the promise of the world to come is brought in to all found in Him. *This* was what Abraham’s faith believed, and this faith is what God counted for righteousness. (See Hebrews 11:8-19.)

This is the promise made to Abraham, and if by faith, then not by law. But does that make the law void? God forbid – it *establishes* the law. Yea, it establishes the law by the death of Christ, who took upon Himself the full penalty and demands of the law against His people, suffering the wrath which they deserved, dying the death which they should die, being made a curse for them, to deliver them from the curse, from judgment, from captivity, from sin. By such a death Christ brought His people through the rivers of death into

ROMANS – THE GOSPEL OF GOD

everlasting life the other side of death, from this side of Jordan into the promised land, from time into eternity, and from the bondage and rule of the law (as being the other side of death and out of its reach) into the life and liberty of the gospel – from the reign of death into the reign of grace. *This* established the law, satisfying its every demand, fulfilling its every penalty, and bringing in everlasting righteousness for all the seed of promise – and *nothing* else does. And this is what faith lays hold upon – justification by the blood of Christ.

Does faith make void the law? In verse 14 Paul turns the tables on his hypothetical questioner of chapter 3:31. *Far* from faith making the law void the very *opposite* is true. Whereas faith, and the righteousness brought in by faith, both fulfils and establishes the law (fulfilling every promise to which it pointed in type and figure, and establishing that righteousness which it demanded, to be imputed to all those who believe) those who would turn to the works of the law to establish their own righteousness do in fact make faith void and the promise of none effect! Far from bringing forth righteousness from those found under its rule the “*law worketh wrath*”, it condemns the sins of those under its rule and places them under a sentence of death. Far from being a ‘rule of life’ the law shows itself to be a “*ministration of death*”, and a “*killing letter*”. The law owes nothing to faith, it doesn’t demand it, nor depend upon it (Galatians 3:12). The law demands works from all those found under its rule, works which they have neither the means, nor the ability to render. Far from bringing in the promise, the truth is, as Galatians 2:21 tells us, that “*if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain*” – indeed, “*faith is made void, and the promise made of none effect.*”

But Abraham was taught otherwise. He *knew* that the promise could only come by faith, only by the work of God on his behalf, only by grace. He knew that righteousness could not be attained by his own strength, for he lacked any strength by nature, being dead in trespasses and sins. He knew that righteousness must be brought in by God, must be put to his account – imputed to him – while yet

ABRAHAM BELIEVED GOD

in his sins and that the inheritance could only come through the death of another. Twice over God taught Abraham the need for resurrection. Having promised Abraham and Sarah a child, that child was only brought forth at the command of God, when both Abraham and Sarah were both 'dead' naturally speaking, when Sarah was way past the age of child-bearing (Romans 4:19). Yet, when at such an age, past all natural hope, when faith was tested to the limit, then, and only then, God rewarded the faith of Abraham, *"who against hope believed in hope, that he might become the father of many nations"* (Romans 4:18) and God gave him the child He had promised. Yet again, God taught Abraham about the inheritance to come in the resurrection, when He commanded him to offer up Isaac. And as we have seen Abraham believed God, being *"fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was also able to perform"* (Romans 4:21), counting Him *"able to raise [Isaac] up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure"* (Hebrews 11:19). A figure of what? Of the raising up from the dead of Jesus our Lord,

"Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification", Romans 4:25.

This is what Abraham believed, which God counted unto him for righteousness, having brought in righteousness by the faith of Jesus Christ to be imputed to all who believe, that righteousness of faith which both established and fulfilled the law.

And this is what every child of God, every child of Abraham, rests in by faith: "For we do not make void the law through faith. God forbid: yea, we establish the law."

V ROMANS

“That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord” Romans 5:21

ROMANS V

THEREFORE BEING JUSTIFIED BY FAITH, WE HAVE PEACE WITH GOD THROUGH OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST: BY WHOM ALSO WE HAVE ACCESS BY FAITH INTO THIS GRACE WHEREIN WE STAND, AND REJOICE IN HOPE OF THE GLORY OF GOD. AND NOT ONLY SO, BUT WE GLORY IN TRIBULATIONS ALSO: KNOWING THAT TRIBULATION WORKETH PATIENCE; AND PATIENCE, EXPERIENCE; AND EXPERIENCE, HOPE: AND HOPE MAKETH NOT ASHAMED; BECAUSE THE LOVE OF GOD IS SHED ABROAD IN OUR HEARTS BY THE HOLY GHOST WHICH IS GIVEN UNTO US.

FOR WHEN WE WERE YET WITHOUT STRENGTH, IN DUE TIME CHRIST DIED FOR THE UNGODLY. FOR SCARCELY FOR A RIGHTEOUS MAN WILL ONE DIE: YET PERADVENTURE FOR A GOOD MAN SOME WOULD EVEN DARE TO DIE. BUT GOD COMMENDETH HIS LOVE TOWARD US, IN THAT, WHILE WE WERE YET SINNERS, CHRIST DIED FOR US.

MUCH MORE THEN, BEING NOW JUSTIFIED BY HIS BLOOD, WE SHALL BE SAVED FROM WRATH THROUGH HIM. FOR IF, WHEN WE WERE ENEMIES, WE WERE RECONCILED TO GOD BY THE DEATH OF HIS SON, MUCH MORE, BEING RECONCILED, WE SHALL BE SAVED BY HIS LIFE. AND NOT ONLY SO, BUT WE ALSO JOY IN GOD THROUGH OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST, BY WHOM WE HAVE NOW RECEIVED THE ATONEMENT.

WHEREFORE, AS BY ONE MAN SIN ENTERED INTO THE WORLD, AND DEATH BY SIN; AND SO DEATH PASSED UPON ALL MEN, FOR THAT ALL HAVE SINNED: (FOR UNTIL THE LAW SIN WAS IN THE WORLD: BUT SIN IS NOT IMPUTED WHEN THERE IS NO LAW. NEVERTHELESS DEATH REIGNED FROM ADAM TO MOSES, EVEN OVER THEM THAT HAD NOT SINNED AFTER THE SIMILITUDE OF ADAM'S TRANSGRESSION, WHO IS THE FIGURE OF HIM THAT WAS TO COME. BUT NOT AS THE OFFENCE, SO ALSO IS THE FREE GIFT. FOR IF THROUGH THE OFFENCE OF ONE MANY BE DEAD, MUCH MORE THE GRACE OF GOD, AND THE GIFT BY GRACE, WHICH IS BY ONE MAN, JESUS CHRIST, HATH ABOUNDED UNTO MANY. AND NOT AS IT WAS BY ONE THAT SINNED, SO IS THE GIFT: FOR THE JUDGMENT WAS BY ONE TO CONDEMNATION, BUT THE FREE GIFT IS OF MANY OFFENCES UNTO JUSTIFICATION. FOR IF BY ONE MAN'S OFFENCE DEATH REIGNED BY ONE; MUCH MORE THEY WHICH RECEIVE ABUNDANCE OF GRACE AND OF THE GIFT OF RIGHTEOUSNESS SHALL REIGN IN LIFE BY ONE, JESUS CHRIST.)

THEREFORE AS BY THE OFFENCE OF ONE JUDGMENT CAME UPON ALL MEN TO CONDEMNATION; EVEN SO BY THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF ONE THE FREE GIFT CAME UPON ALL MEN UNTO JUSTIFICATION OF LIFE. FOR AS BY ONE MAN'S DISOBEDIENCE MANY WERE MADE SINNERS, SO BY THE OBDIENCE OF ONE SHALL MANY BE MADE RIGHTEOUS. MOREOVER THE LAW ENTERED, THAT THE OFFENCE MIGHT ABOUND. BUT WHERE SIN ABOUNDED, GRACE DID MUCH MORE ABOUND: THAT AS SIN HATH REIGNED UNTO DEATH, EVEN SO MIGHT GRACE REIGN THROUGH RIGHTEOUSNESS UNTO ETERNAL LIFE BY JESUS CHRIST OUR LORD.

Reconciled to God by the Death of His Son

“For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life. And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement [substitution]” Romans 5:10-11

PEACE with God. Peace. This is the wonderful place into which is brought every fallen, ungodly sinner, who is justified by Christ. Having set before us God’s justification of sinners in the previous two chapters, Paul opens chapter 5 by declaring some of the tremendous fruits of that justification. Peace with God, access by faith, the hope of glory: *“Therefore being justified by faith we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ: By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God” (Romans 5:1-2).*

Through such a work of God for, and in, them God’s people are enabled to glory in tribulations, which produce patience, and which in turn produces experience and hope, *“and hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us”*. Here for the first time in Romans we read of that love, that priceless love, that precious, eternal, overwhelming, love of God, by which He is pleased to save sinners. *“For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:6-8).*

ROMANS – THE GOSPEL OF GOD

Yes, that's when Christ died for His people. When they were yet sinners, without strength, ungodly. When they were enemies of God, at enmity with God, gone out of the way, with mouths full of cursing and bitterness, feet swift to shed blood, with destruction and misery in their ways, having no fear of God before their eyes (Romans 3:10-18). That's when – *when they were sinners*.

“And the way of peace have they not known...” Romans 3:17.

But Christ died for them. God justified them. And being justified they *now*, by faith, have peace with God. And, *“much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life. And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement [substitution]”* (Romans 5:9-11).

When God justified His people by the blood of Christ He brought them to peace with Him. The wrath of God against their sin being quenched, justice was satisfied, the enmity was taken out of the way, and peace reigned. Christ, the great High Priest of God's people, offered up His own body as a sacrifice for sin, and having died, He rose again, ascended into glory, and entered into the holy place, sprinkling His own blood upon the mercy seat – the propitiatory – by which all was answered, all the wrath of God against His people's sins was quenched, all was at peace, eternal redemption was obtained – and *all* in Christ were reconciled to God (Leviticus 16:15, Hebrews 4:14, 6:20, 7:27, 9:12, 9:24, 10:12). Here in chapter 5 of Romans Paul opens up the very ground of this reconciliation: the *atonement* – or substitution.

The great exchange

Here is one of the greatest truths at the heart of the gospel – substitution. Here is that substitutionary work of Jesus Christ, in

SUBSTITUTION – RECONCILED TO GOD

which He stood in the place of His people and suffered under the judgment of God against their sin, in order that they would become the righteousness of God in Him. This substitutionary work is what Paul is considering in Romans 5 verses 10-21, the truth of which is summarised succinctly elsewhere in 2 Corinthians 5:21 with these words:

“For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.”

This is a truly glorious truth – that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the perfect, impeccable, spotless Lamb of God, the One who knew no sin, went willingly to the cross where God the Father laid upon the Sin-bearer the sins of all His people, and made Him to be sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. How? By His suffering under the outpouring of God’s wrath against that sin, until all that sin was completely blotted out and taken out of the way – leaving nothing but the righteousness of God in Christ, which His people are made to be *in Him*.

This substitutionary work is what Martin Luther described as the ‘Great Exchange’, in which Christ took the place of sinners, that they might take His, and be reconciled to God. In fact the word translated as *reconciled* in Romans 5:10, or as *atonement* in 5:11 has as its root the Greek word *katallage* which essentially means a *thorough exchange*, or substitution. Reconciliation is the *effect* of such an exchange but the main emphasis of the word *katallage* in the Greek is upon the *cause* which produces that effect. Sinners are reconciled to God *by the thorough exchange* of Christ with them in which *He* was made to be sin, that *they* should become the righteousness of God in Him.

United with His people in death, all the changes were in the Saviour: He took on His people’s state, that they might be made into His state – righteousness. He who knew no sin, was made to be sin. God judged that sin in His own Son by the outpouring of His wrath, that His people should be *“saved from wrath through him”* (Romans

5:9). Having “*condemned sin in the flesh*” (Romans 8:3), sin was no more to be seen, and death could not hold the Saviour, who rose again from the grave in perfect righteousness, and His people in Him. *He* was the One who suffered, *He* was the One who died, yet, as a result, *His people* are delivered from darkness into light, from death into life, from the bondage of sin, into the liberty of eternal life and everlasting righteousness in Christ. Yes, *He* died, that *they* should live. What a deliverance!

The life brought in as a result of Christ’s death is seen in the latter part of verse 10, “*For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.*” Having been reconciled to God by the death of his Son, being justified by his blood, God’s people are raised again from the dead in resurrection life in Christ, death having no more hold over them, their sins having been blotted out. Their being “*saved by his life*” – as seen in verse 10 – amplifies the truth of Romans 5:9 which declares that being “*justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him*”, for having taken sin away and having conquered death, Christ, now being risen from the dead, “*ever liveth to make intercession*” for His people (Hebrews 7:25). He points to His own blood by which He justified them – the *very* blood He sprinkled upon the mercy seat of God to propitiate God’s wrath against their sins. Oh, what an Advocate they have in the presence of God the Father (1 John 2:1) – what a Saviour, *in whom* is *eternal* life!

“For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord”, Romans 6:23.

Sin and sins

But notice for a moment the *twofold* work of Christ in substitution. Not *only* did He bear the *sins* of His people (1 Peter 2:24), those sinful deeds which they have done, which spring forth from the fallen nature of their sinful hearts, but He was also made to be *sin*

SUBSTITUTION – RECONCILED TO GOD

itself. This is not what they have *done*, but what they *are* – for *they* were crucified in Him (Galatians 2:20) and what *they* are by nature is *sin*. Sin is that which entered into man when Adam fell in the garden, by which death entered the world as a result (Romans 5:12). It is that pollution, which since the fall of Adam has corrupted man's very nature, that spirit of wanton abandonment and total lawlessness¹, that depravity to which man is in bondage. It is *this* which Christ took away in His substitutionary work as set forth in Romans 5 where Christ's obedience, in dying in the place of His people that they might be made righteous, is contrasted with Adam's disobedience, in which sin entered the world and many were made sinners (Romans 5:12,19). Yes, not only did Christ suffer for the *sins* of His people but He was also made to be *sin*, that God in judgment might destroy the very cause of those sins, *sin itself*, in His people's Substitute upon the tree. Hence we see, in Christ's *body broken*, the condemnation of sin upon the cross, and in His *blood shed* the washing away of those sins which came forth from that sin which dwells in the depravity of man's fallen heart (Mark 7:21,22). But thank God that He judged not only the effects, the sins, but the cause – sin itself.

"Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin",
Romans 6:6.

"For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh..." Romans 8:3.

Oh! What depths, what lengths to which the Saviour went to save His people from their sins and deliver them from the bondage of sin itself. What He suffered for those *so undeserving*, that they might know so great a salvation!

Yet, despite the tremendous glory in this truth, despite the fact that the preaching of this message, the preaching of the cross, is the power of God to them that believe (1 Corinthians 1:18), it is

ROMANS – THE GOSPEL OF GOD

nevertheless to them that perish, “foolishness”. To many it is a stumbling block, and an offence. But that which is offensive to the natural man, is the power of God to those who believe.

Whilst Christ suffered under the judgment of God as He bore His people’s sins in His own body on the tree, as He was made to be sin, it *must be stressed* that He *never once sinned Himself*, He never once thought an evil thought, He never once did anything for which He would Himself have to pay the price. All was done in the place of His people as their Substitute, all the sins He bore were *their* sins, yet whilst bearing those sins, whilst being made sin, He nevertheless *never sinned Himself*, as it is written “*He did no sin*” (1 Peter 2:22). Yet, despite this, the scriptures are also plain to state that Christ was nevertheless “*made [to be] sin*”. Not that *He sinned*, notice, but that He was *made sin*. It is a question of what was *done to* Christ, not *by* Him. God made Him to be sin, yet Christ never sinned.

Some theologians have sought to explain this mystery, that Christ, *who knew no sin*, could be *made sin*, and yet *never Himself sin*, by stating that the sins of God’s people could only have been imputed to Christ. That they were only *reckoned* to Him, legally put to His account and laid to His charge. But the scriptures never once use the word imputation with regard to this matter. They are very clear – Christ *bore* the sins of His people in “*His own body on the tree*” (1 Peter 2:24), and in their place, in a thorough exchange, He was “*made ... to be sin*” (2 Corinthians 5:21). The scriptures are presented to us, not to be explained away logically, with the natural intellect, but to be believed spiritually, with God-given faith, as bowing to the revelation of God in the scriptures.

No, the scriptures never use the term imputation with regard to Christ’s sin-bearing. He bore sins and He was made sin. How then did He commit no sin? Well, though a mystery that we may never fully comprehend, we can nevertheless state that though Christ was very man by nature, He was also very God, both in nature and in personality, and as God, as a *Divine Person*, He could not sin. A mystery to the natural mind, perhaps, but true nonetheless.

SUBSTITUTION – RECONCILED TO GOD

Offensive to carnal wisdom, perhaps, but a matter for rejoicing to those whom Christ has delivered from sin, those who are brought by God to submit to the revelation of His gospel in the scriptures.

Christ never once sinned – that could not be. Yet, though that must be stressed, at the same time we must not take away from the magnitude of what Christ really suffered for His people at the cross in order to save them. Whilst it may be true that the sins of God’s people *were* imputed to Christ, in that they were laid to His charge as a consequence of His bearing them, nevertheless imputation is *not* taught in the scriptures as the *means* by which He bore sins or was made sin. Sins were imputed to Christ simply *because* He really bore them *in His own body* on the tree and because He really was ‘*made sin*’. Just as Christ really died upon the cross, despite being the eternal God in whom is eternal life (1 John 1:2), likewise He was also really made to be sin in His manhood, as the very cause for which He died, whilst at the same time remaining to be the God who “*is light, in whom is no darkness at all*” (1 John 1:5). For in order that His people should truly become what Christ is, by means of His substitution, He had to truly become what they are, by a thorough exchange, in order to truly condemn their sin in His flesh, that they might be made “*the righteousness of God in Him*”.

This is a glorious, a deep, an unfathomable truth, but one to which we can only bow in awe and wonder that Christ, the Saviour of sinners, should willingly stoop to such suffering, to such a death, out of love for His own. Yet despite the length and depth to which He went to save His people, in taking their sins as His own, and suffering as a man in the place of men, as the just for the unjust, under the outpouring of God’s wrath against them, nevertheless the glorious Saviour *never once* sinned Himself, *never once* ceased to love His Father, *never once* ceased to trust Him, and *never once* turned from the task for which He came – *to save His people from their sins!* Indeed it is from the depths of His sufferings that we see Christ’s faith in God the Father so wonderfully expressed in the precious words He uttered at the cross. As Luke 23:46 testifies, “*And when*

Jesus had cried with a loud voice, he said, Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit: and having said thus, he gave up the ghost”.

The two Adams

Romans 5 sets forth this substitutionary work in which Christ, the Last Adam, took the place of His people who sprang from the first Adam, by contrasting the two Adams and their work. By one man (Adam) sin entered into the world, and death by sin. But the Last Adam, by the righteous act of laying down His life in the place of His people (the ‘one righteousness’ of Romans 5:18) saved them from wrath, justified them by His blood (5:9), and delivered them from death unto life (5:18) – making those who were sinners righteous (5:19), that they should be *reconciled* to God by Christ’s death (5:10). Oh how the love of God is seen in such a glorious work! *“But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.”*

Throughout this passage it is important to see how Paul contrasts the two Adams and their posterity in them. He speaks of Adam and of Christ as the heads of two groups of people. What is true of all those men who are in the first Adam, is contrasted with what is true of all those men who are in the last Adam. All in Adam are contrasted with all in Christ (*“For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive”*, 1 Corinthians 15:22). Yet whilst all mankind is the posterity of the first Adam, not all mankind is the posterity of Christ, as made clear in many passages of scripture (for example Romans 9:6-13). This is important to notice, and explains why Paul refers to *many* being made righteous in verse 19 – for not *all* are made righteous, though *all in Christ*, all His posterity, are.

But what is true of all mankind, without exception, is that all are in Adam, all have sinned and, as a result, death has passed upon all men (Romans 5:12). Having presented this stark and solemn fact, Paul then passes on to a parenthesis from verse 13 to 17, the purpose of which is to illustrate how both Adam and Christ stood as representatives of their people, their posterity. Whilst not all have

done what Adam did, in the same manner, nevertheless as their representative his act of disobedience affected them all. Likewise, whilst Christ's posterity have not done what He did, as their representative His act of obedience in laying down His life for the sheep, affected them all. Paul shows in verses 13 and 14 that it is not the presence of the law which determines whether one sins, for even when there was no law (from Adam to Moses) death still reigned, and it reigned because sin was still in mankind and governed his actions. Unlike Adam, who disobeyed a command given to him by God, and unlike those under the law who transgressed against its commands, those from Adam to Moses sinned not against an outward command (and hence not *"after the similitude of Adam's transgression"*), nevertheless they still sinned. Sin was still in them, death still reigned over them, they sought not God, they turned from Him and lived according to their own fallen lusts and pleasures, denying that revelation of God's truth which God has declared in the creation and in their own conscience (Romans 1:19-22, 2:10-16, 3:9-18). So whether under law, or not under law, sin still reigned, and death by sin. The law did nothing to prevent it. Indeed when the law was given, it is said to have *"entered, that the offence might abound"* (Romans 5:20).

Yet Adam was but a figure of Christ, of *"him that was to come"* (Romans 5:14). What is portrayed by Adam's disobedience and the consequences for all *his* posterity, is a figure, a picture, of what would be brought in by Christ's obedience for all *His* posterity. *"For if through the offence of one many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many. And not as it was by one that sinned, so is the gift: for the judgment was by one to condemnation, but the free gift is of many offences unto justification. For if by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ"* (Romans 5:15-17).

Oh! What a tremendous contrast between the work of Adam and the work of Christ. By one act of disobedience Adam plunged himself and all his posterity into condemnation, into death and

ROMANS – THE GOSPEL OF GOD

destruction. But through the gift of grace, by Jesus Christ, all His posterity, though they have committed many offences, are nevertheless justified, receiving an abundance of grace and the gift of righteousness, and reign in life in Jesus Christ!

Having closed the parenthesis Paul shows the contrast between Adam and Christ in verses 18 and 19 by setting before us the one offence of Adam by which he disobeyed – *he refused to hearken to* – God’s command in the garden and plunged himself and his offspring into condemnation, and the one act of righteousness by which Christ *hearkened submissively* in the obedience of faith to the will of His Father, by laying down his life for His own that they should know “*justification of life*” (Romans 5:18) by the shedding of His blood (5:9). Hence “*by one man’s disobedience*” (in the garden) “*many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one*” (upon the cross, 5:10) “*shall many be made righteous*”, for the fruit of the tree of Adam’s disobedience, of which he ate, brought in *death*, but the fruit of the tree of Christ’s obedience, when He drank the cup of God’s wrath to conquer death, was everlasting *life*.

This is how God justified the ungodly, and this is the whole context of chapter 5 – the death of Christ. Christ’s offspring are “*justified by his blood*” (Romans 5:9). He justified them by His obedience “*unto death*” (Philippians 2:8), in laying down His life as a substitute in their place, suffering the death they deserved, that they might be made “*the righteousness of God in Him*”. And where did the law come in? Was righteousness wrought by the law? No, for “*if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain*” (Galatians 2:21). No, Christ’s death justified His people, through the sacrifice of their substitute in their place, through *this* obedience². For:

“Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree: That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith”, Galatians 3:13-14.

SUBSTITUTION – RECONCILED TO GOD

“Wherefore then serveth the law? It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator. Now a mediator is not a mediator of one, but God is one. Is the law then against the promises of God? God forbid: for if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law. But the Scripture have concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe”, Galatians 3:19-22.

Hence we see that righteousness came not by the law, but by the death of Christ, that obedience by which He delivered His people from the law and its condemnation, for the law was added, it *“entered, that the offence might abound”... “But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound: That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.”*

Praise God for that substitute of sinners, for that offering for sin, that ransom for many, for the One who paid the redemption price, even our Lord Jesus Christ. And praise God that where sin abounded, grace did much more abound!

But, my reader, what do *you* know about this grace? Has the Spirit of God made its abounding known to you in *your* heart? Are you in Christ, or in Adam? Are you justified or condemned? Is Christ your substitute, have *you* been reconciled unto God by the death of His Son?

“For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. For if, when we were enemies, we were

ROMANS – THE GOSPEL OF GOD

reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life. And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement.

...Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned: ... Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous", Romans 5:6-12, 18-19.

[¹ 1 John 3:4, "*Sin is the transgression of the law*" is oft-quoted as a definition of sin. However this passage is not well translated in the King James Version of the Bible, and as it stands gives too limited a scope to what sin really is. The passage, literally translated from the Greek, would better read, "*sin is lawlessness*". Whilst this may appear similar at first, it is in fact much more wide-ranging. Sin, taken to its full meaning, is complete lawlessness. Not just a transgression of the law given at Sinai, but wilful disregard of any and every law or commandment, an entire unwillingness to be bound by any rule or any authority. Sin, in essence, is simply sheer rebellion against one's Maker – enmity towards God and His sovereign rule over us.

² There is a commonly-held understanding, popularised by certain of the Puritans, particularly John Owen, that the righteousness by which a sinner is justified before God – that righteousness which is imputed to him – was wrought by Christ's obedience to the law throughout His life upon the earth, in addition to His death. This is referred to as His '*active obedience*' whilst His death upon the cross is termed His '*passive obedience*'. Such a scheme however, is both erroneous and without scriptural support, and whilst it is recognised that many good men, both past and present, have been persuaded of this view, nevertheless popularity cannot be the test of orthodoxy – we must weigh everything in the light of God's word. The truth is,

SUBSTITUTION – RECONCILED TO GOD

the scriptures *always* place justifying righteousness as being wrought out upon the cross, not by the works of the law. The justification of sinners is plainly taught in Romans 3. If the concept of justification by vicarious law-keeping were taught in any passage of scripture, it is this passage, above all, where one would expect to find it. Yet there is not a word of it in the chapter. On the contrary, we are told that the “*righteousness of God without the law is manifested*” and that “*by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified*”.

Unable to find support in Romans chapter 3 the proponents of this scheme turn to chapter 5. The “*obedience*” of Romans 5:19 is often cited in support of this teaching, with the claim that this refers to Christ’s obedience to the precepts of the law. But this is to wrest the verse out of its context. The context of Romans 5 is the *death of Christ* (see Romans 5:8), and the obedience referred to is the *obedience of faith*. In fact the Greek (*hupakoe*) translated as *obedience* here has the root meaning of *hearing aright, of hearkening submissively*. Faith *hears*, faith *believes* and faith *acts* in submission to the will of God – and the obedience of faith referred to in Romans 5:19 is that one act of righteousness (or one *accomplished righteousness, dikaiomatos*, Romans 5:18) by which Christ justified His people through laying down His life for them. Hence they are said to be “*justified by his blood*” (Romans 5:9), and are “*reconciled to God by the death of his Son*” (Romans 5:10).

Neither can the phrase, “*we shall be saved by his life*”, found in the latter part of Romans 5:10, be used in support of vicarious law-keeping, as this refers not to Christ’s deeds as a man under the law, but to that eternal life in Him as a divine being. It refers to His resurrection life, following His death, by which His people are raised from the dead, and in which He, as their great High Priest and Advocate, intercedes on their behalf before God the Father, they being “*justified by his blood*” and thence “*saved from wrath through him*” (Romans 5:9).

Righteousness was not *wrought* by Christ’s obedience to the law. Rather, His obedience showed forth that He *was* righteous. Out of His righteousness sprang forth obedience. The law measured Him and found no fault in Him. Jeremiah 33:16 tells us that *the LORD* is our righteousness. Hence justifying righteousness should not be thought of as what Christ has *done*, but what He *is as God*. We are made to be the *righteousness of God in Him*. For if the *LORD* – Jehovah – is our righteousness then this righteousness is *divine*, and hence not the righteousness of Christ under the law as a man, but the *righteousness of God in Christ* (see, for example, 2 Peter 1:1). However this righteousness, as imputed to the believer, is not abstract, it is not God’s attribute or quality of righteousness considered in isolation, as it is in God Himself, but it is as it is personally made to be ours in Christ – we being in Christ, having our sins judged according to that righteousness, that perfection, in Him. Justifying righteousness is *personal*. We are made to be it in Christ. It is as personally ours as Christ is ours. Simply put, justifying righteousness is the righteousness of God made to be ours personally, by imputation, through the death of Christ by whom our sins are remitted.

ROMANS – THE GOSPEL OF GOD

So righteousness was not wrought by Christ's obedience *to the law*, for He was already righteous, but the righteousness of God was made to be His people's through Christ's obedience *to God* in giving His life for them – for when Christ laid down His life vicariously *for His people*, bearing their sins and being made sin for them, righteousness *was* wrought, in the sense that those who were *not* righteous were *made to be righteous*, for their sin being judged, the righteousness of God in Christ was then put to their account. Christ suffered for that people who had their sins blotted out in Him, sins which were judged by the very righteousness of God, and being judged according to that righteousness, God was *just* to declare that people *not guilty*, to declare them as righteous, *justified*, in Christ. Hence the righteousness of God was manifested by the death of Christ for His people, through which, being united to Christ, they are made to be the righteousness of God in Him (2 Corinthians 5:21).

This must be so, for if justifying righteousness were wrought by the works of the law then Romans 3:20 & 3:28, and Galatians 2:16 & 3:21-22, would all be overturned, which declare plainly that no flesh shall be justified by the deeds of the law. Likewise if Christ kept the law vicariously for His people through His lifetime (if that were even legally possible, *which it is not*) then there would be no need of His death, they *already* being accounted as righteous in Him by this scheme *before* He died. Indeed, as the law demands *either* righteousness from those under its rule, *or* the penalty of death, but *not* both, justifying righteousness must have been wrought through the *death* of the Substitute for those who failed to keep God's law. "*For if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain*" (Galatians 2:21).]

Grace Reigns

“That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord” Romans 5:21

THIS verse sets before us, in stark contrast, two reigns – two rules, two dominions, two powers – and the effects of their reign: the one unto death and the other unto eternal life.

The contrast could not be more vivid. The consequences could not be more opposed. Their importance cannot be overstated.

One reign is unto death, but the other is unto life – *eternal* life.

The first is the reign of sin. What a reign this has over men, and how devastating the consequence – death! How far reaching are the effects of sin, how vast is the kingdom over which sin has reigned, how many are its citizens! As we read in Romans 5:12:

“Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned...”

Yes, all have sinned. There is not one of us who has escaped the reign and the dominion of sin. It entered the world by one man, Adam, when he turned from God his Maker in disobedience and rebellion, and has been passed down to all his posterity ever since. We are all born with the same sinful, rebellious, selfish, wilful and disobedient nature into which Adam fell and by which the dreadful consequence of sin entered the world – death: *“and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned”*. We can no more escape the consequence of sin – death – than we can escape or ignore the cause – our sin – and its permeating effects upon all we do and say.

ROMANS – THE GOSPEL OF GOD

Sin reigns, and mankind finds himself captive to this reign. Not only do we find ourselves captive to a decaying and death-filled world, not only do we see the effects of death in our bodies as we age, and suffer illness, weariness, pain, tiredness, sorrow and misery as the days of our lives pass by towards their inevitable conclusion, but we also find ourselves captive to a spiritual death. We find ourselves unable and unwilling to approach God. We have no desire for Him. Sin leads us in another direction. The true communion which man, in Adam, had with his Maker was shattered when he turned his back upon God. The LORD God once walked with Adam in the garden, but when sin entered the world God cast Adam out from His presence and a great gulf was fixed between man and God. That gulf was caused by sin and by its result – death.

When Adam chose to turn his back upon the Tree of Life which was in the midst of the garden and eat instead from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil – by the eating of which he desired to become as a god (Genesis 3:5) – he chose a terrible pathway unto death. By choosing to put himself under another reign from God's, by choosing to place himself under another dominion, mankind became a captive to it. Man in his lust for power desired to reign himself, but in his folly, his own sin took reign over him and he fell captive to it. Sin's lusts, desires, motives, intentions and resolves all drive man in a certain direction – away from God; away from the only One in whom is life; away from Jesus Christ, who to know is life eternal; away from God and into death, for *"sin hath reigned unto death"*.

What a reign sin has over us. How captive we are under it. But how captivated we are *by it!* Not only has sin reigned over us but we have lovingly embraced its reign! Not only are we unable to turn from sin to God, but we are also unwilling. We choose to go this way. *"As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God"* (Romans 3:10-11). Not one of us can claim innocence for like our father Adam we have willingly embraced the fall, we have said of Jesus Christ, the

GRACE REIGNS

Son of God, “*We will not have this man to reign over us*”, and in our pride and lust for power we have sought to place ourselves upon the throne. We *will* reign, won’t we? Don’t our natural hearts speak that way? But in such foolish desire our sin takes hold of us and keeps us captive. Sin reigns... unto death.

But praise God that Romans 5:21 doesn’t end with just this one reign! Praise God that there is another reign whose power is so much greater and whose results are so gloriously different! Praise God that this verse has an “*even so*” in the middle!

“...*even so* might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord”, Romans 5:21.

Even so. Even so despite the reign of sin. Despite its power and its awful consequences. Even so, though mankind has willingly embraced sin. Even so, though mankind willingly sinned and brought death upon himself. Even so, though mankind has chosen this reign of sin and deserves nothing better.

“*Even so*”. Even so, might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.

Though God would be just to leave man to himself; though God could justly destroy His creation and the rebellious creatures who turned against Him, nevertheless, *even so*, God has chosen to be *gracious*. He is a God who delights in showing mercy. A God who is longsuffering. A God who is love. A God who *saves*. A God who graciously sent His Son to save His people from their sins.

For there is a reign greater than that of sin: the reign of grace. What a contrast we see in Romans 5:21. Sin reigned unto death, but grace reigns unto *eternal life*.

The reign of sin was a reign of man’s rebellion and disobedience towards his God, which brought in death. But the reign of grace is that of God showing His unmerited favour towards man, in spite of

ROMANS – THE GOSPEL OF GOD

his rebellion, in order to give him eternal life freely in Jesus Christ. The one is of man and the other is of God. The one brings death but the other brings life. The former was earned, merited by man's actions, but the latter is unearned, unmerited, it is a free gift from God to man for no other reason than God's mercy and loving-kindness to those whom He chose to have mercy upon. The one is chosen by man through his free will but the other is granted freely by God through His Sovereignty. The one abounds under the law which demands of man and condemns his offences, but the other abounds much more being freely given to repentant sinners and forgiving their offences. Oh, what a contrast we see in these two reigns!

We see here that however great the reign of sin might be, the reign of grace is greater! However powerful a force sin might be, it is nothing compared with grace. However strong a grip sin might have upon man, it cannot stand before the invincible power of God's grace in saving sinners. For we read that *"Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound"* (Romans 5:20), and that although through the offence of one (Adam) many are dead, *"much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many"* (Romans 5:15) and *"...if by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ"* (Romans 5:17).

The reign, the power, of sin, however great is nothing compared to the power of God's grace. When God sets his grace upon a sinner nothing stands in its way. When grace reigns all other dominion is cast aside. *"For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace"* (Romans 6:14).

In fact the only way that man *can* be delivered from the reign of sin over him is *by God's grace*. There is no other way. Sin is within man, it rules him, it motivates him, *it reigns over him*. Only by an act of God's grace in delivering man from his sin, in taking that sin

away, in blotting it out so that sin is no more, can man be free of its dominion.

No reformation of character or manners can achieve such a deliverance. No works or effort that man can make to live more uprightly can deliver him from the absolute tyranny of sin under which he finds himself. The very best deeds of mankind, the most noble exploits, the most charitable actions he can bring himself to do are still tainted by that sin which he finds within himself. He is ruled by it. *"For even our righteousnesses are as filthy rags"* (Isaiah 64:6). That's right, even our righteousnesses. Our best deeds are marred by sin.

Some would turn to the law of God in an attempt to subdue sin and live a life pleasing to God. They think that if they can attain to its requirements they will find favour with God. But they couldn't be more wrong because when sinful man puts himself under that law, far from subduing sin the law inflames it! Far from it leading man to life it simply shows man the vileness of his own heart, it stirs up sin within and so it condemns him. As we read, *"Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound"* (Romans 5:20). Not subdue, notice, but *abound*. That is why God gave the law, to show man his sin. That the offence might abound, that man might be condemned and that he might be constrained to flee unto that one Deliverer from sin and death, even Jesus Christ and Him Crucified. The law might set forth a standard of righteousness which God expects of man and demands of man, but experimentally when man puts himself under that law, the knowledge he acquires, in experience, is not one of righteousness but of sin. *"Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin"* (Romans 3:20). This experience of sin actually abounding under the law is what Paul knew and wrote about in Romans 7: *"For I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died. And the commandment, which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death. For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me."*

ROMANS – THE GOSPEL OF GOD

There is nothing wrong with God's law. The problem lies with the sin within us and the effect of that law upon sin. The law *"is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good. Was then that which is good made death unto me? God forbid. But sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good; that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful"* (Romans 7:12-13). Yes, as Romans 5:20 shows, when the law entered the offence abounded. The law provided no deliverance from sin – it made it worse, in order to show us our sin.

"But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound..."
Romans 5:20.

But praise God that there *is* a deliverance from sin. There is another reign, a greater reign: the reign of grace! And how wonderful that where sin abounds – in those shown their sinfulness by God through the application of His law demonstrating to them their sin and inability to deliver themselves from it and its reign – that *grace much more abounds!* There is no sin too great, no sinner too sinful, for grace to overcome – for where sin abounded, grace did much more abound!

Oh, grace reigns – and what a reign! What a power grace is. How great is its kingdom, even the kingdom of heaven. How many are its citizens! But grace and its reign can no more be considered apart from the One who grants them any more than sin and its reign can be considered apart from the one by whom they entered the world. Sin entered by one man – Adam, but the grace of God comes by one Man – even Jesus Christ the Lord. It is this fact that makes grace so glorious and its reign so triumphant. The first man is earthy and brought in sin and death, but the Second Man, the Last Adam, is heavenly – a quickening spirit – and He brought in righteousness and everlasting life. Christ, the Son of God, is both man and God, both human and divine. As God He is sovereign over all, He is the King of Kings, the Lord of Lords. Hence His grace reigns for it is the grace of a King, the grace of a sovereign. It is *Sovereign Grace* and as a King Christ gives it to whom He will. *"I will have mercy on whom I*

GRACE REIGNS

will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion" (Romans 9:15). Oh! To be a recipient of such grace. Oh! To be under its reign!

Yes, grace reigns, but it does so...

...Through righteousness

Grace reigns through *righteousness*. Grace does not reign in isolation. God's mercy towards man is not at the expense of His justice. No, grace reigns *through* righteousness and God's grace is seen in His righteousness, in His justice. Without righteousness, without justice, there could be no reign of grace for the reign of sin must be overcome. Sin must be dealt with in order for God to be just and the justifier of the ungodly. Grace reigns, yes, but it reigns *through righteousness*.

Righteousness and the revelation of God's righteousness are at the very heart of the gospel. They are what give the gospel its power. Hence Paul writes, *"I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation..." (Romans 1:16). Why? "For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith..."* Yes, it is the revelation of God's righteousness in the gospel which gives it its power. Righteousness is that through which God judges the sin of His people in Christ their Saviour and delivers them from its reign and its power. It is through righteousness, by the revelation of God's justice (righteousness) in Christ's redemption that God justifies His people freely by grace.

"Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus", Romans 3:24-26.

ROMANS – THE GOSPEL OF GOD

In the gospel God has revealed His righteousness by judging and destroying sin and its reign over God's people in their Substitute, Jesus Christ, as He suffered and died in their place in order to deliver them from sin, death and condemnation and make them righteous before God in Him. Hence, God justified His people *"freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus"*.

God did this in His Son, Christ Jesus. Only one Man could die in the place of fallen sinners to redeem them from the reign of sin, and that man was Jesus Christ. Only He could deliver His people from sin because only He was *without sin*. Christ was perfect, righteous and holy. As God who took upon Himself human nature in perfect union with His divine person, as One who was made in all points like unto us, yet without sin, as the Incarnate God, Jesus Christ was the perfect sacrifice acceptable unto God in the place of sinners. God declared His righteousness by judging sin in His own Son upon the cross, in the One who was *"made to be sin for us, who knew no sin: that we might be made the righteousness of God in him"* (2 Corinthians 5:21).

Christ knew no sin. For more than thirty years He lived and walked in this world as a man born under the law and He lived in perfection. He never sinned, He never disobeyed God the Father, He never disbelieved the Father, He never ceased to trust the Father, He never ceased to worship God with all His heart, mind and soul, He never sinned – He *knew no sin*. Christ was made under the law in order to redeem those who were under the law. The law tested Him in all points, the full rigour of God's law and justice tested Him to the limit and found nothing in Him to condemn. He was perfect. Having magnified that law and made it honourable Christ then willingly submitted Himself to death upon the cross in the place of His people. Though perfect, though innocent, though without a single fault or cause of condemnation, Christ submitted Himself to the will of His Father and gave Himself up to be taken by the hands of wicked men and nailed to a cross to suffer and die in the place of transgressors.

But what happened when Jesus Christ was nailed to that cross and lifted up to die, what happened when the light of the sun was darkened at the ninth hour, was a mystery which was hid from the natural eye. What happened during those hours of darkness as Christ suffered in the place of His people was a tremendous transaction between God the Father and His Son which no natural man could comprehend. This was no ordinary death. No ordinary suffering. When Christ suffered upon the tree it wasn't the natural pain and suffering which slew Him, but the supernatural outpouring of the wrath of God upon Him and what He had become vicariously in the place of His people. At the cross Christ and His people were united together in death. As Eve was taken out of Adam's side while he slept, so in Christ's death, His bride – His Church – was united to Him and brought forth from His side washed in the precious blood of Christ which justified her and cleansed her from her sins.

At the cross Christ became one with His bride, united to her, being made what she was – sin. Her sin became His. Her transgressions became His as He bore them in His own body on the tree. And in response the wrath of God the Father poured down from the vaults of heaven upon Christ the sacrifice to judge sin in Him, to consume it, to destroy it, to blot it out. As Christ endured the cross, for the joy that was set before Him – as He looked by faith to His Father in hope of the glorious resurrection in righteousness with His people – He endured the full penalty of God's righteousness, God's unflinching justice, against all the sin and transgressions of His people. He *endured* it. He endured the hours of torment, the hours of unspeakable suffering. Why? *"For the joy that was set before Him"* (Hebrews 12:2). At the last, Christ would see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied (Isaiah 53:11).

Through death Christ justified His people, freely by grace. For grace is not cheap. It comes at a price. Grace reigns, God justifies His people freely *to them* by grace, but it comes at a *cost to Him*. It comes through righteousness. Christ gave His life for His own. *That*

ROMANS – THE GOSPEL OF GOD

was the cost. But why did He do this? Because He loved them. As we read:

“But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him”, Romans 5:8-9.

Yes, Christ *“loved the church, and gave himself for it”* (Ephesians 5:25). When Christ died for those He loved He placed Himself under the full justice of God. In so doing the righteousness of God was revealed in the gospel and God judged the sin of His people according to His own righteousness. Not just according to the righteousness of the law, but according to the very righteousness of God Himself, to justify to life not just for this world, but for the next, for all eternity; to reconcile a people to God, to bring them unto Himself. *“But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference”* (Romans 3:21-22). It was this way, and this way only that God could justify His people in blotting out their sins and delivering them from the reign of sin. It was this way that the reign of sin was conquered and the reign of grace could triumph. Grace reigns, yes. But it is *through righteousness*.

At the cross God justified His people, freely by grace. His love was set upon a people who didn't deserve it, a rebellious people, sold under sin, a people under the reign of sin and death. Yet at the cross God manifested His righteousness through the faith of Jesus Christ in order to destroy sin and its reign and deliver that people. God showed grace to a people who sought Him not, and that grace came at such a price – it cost the Saviour. He gave Himself for His own (Galatians 2:20). Grace is God's free gift to His people, but it came at a great price to Him. It came through righteousness exacted upon the Saviour as He stood in the place of His people, united to them in order to bring them through judgment unto everlasting life, carried through by His faith in the Father's promise. At the cross God's mercy and truth met together. At the cross righteousness and

peace kissed each other. What a meeting place! What a transaction. What a reconciliation between God and man was made when Christ laid down His life that His people might live, when Christ was made sin that His people might be made the righteousness of God in Him, that they might have peace with God!

“Mercy and truth are met together, righteousness and peace have kissed each other”, Psalm 85:10.

Through the obedience of Christ, the obedience of faith, in giving Himself for His people, they are justified in Him, delivered from all condemnation, washed from every sin by Christ’s blood, justified freely by His grace. God in righteousness judged the sins of all His people in the Saviour, blotting them out through the shed blood, and, not only that, but He judged sin itself, that sinful nature His people inherited from Adam, by destroying it in Christ’s body on the tree, totally consuming it under His fiery wrath and indignation and taking it out of sight, so making that people perfect in Christ. In this way God could be just and the justifier of all those who believe in Jesus. In this way He could show His people mercy and grant forgiveness. In this way He could save His people from their sins by His grace. In this way He could deliver them from sin itself, Romans 6:6. In this way grace reigns – *through righteousness*. It is a victorious reign, a triumphant reign, a reign which overcomes all others, even that of sin and death which Christ conquered through *His* death as he took sin away and, having done so, rose again on the third day with everlasting life, victorious over all His foes. Nothing, not even death, could stand in the way of grace and its reign by Jesus Christ.

Yes, grace reigns, and it reigns through righteousness...

...unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord

Grace has an end in view, a triumphant end – even eternal life. Whilst sin brought in misery and death, grace brings *eternal life* in Jesus Christ. What a glorious thing this is, what a hope is set before

ROMANS – THE GOSPEL OF GOD

the believer, what an end is in view – eternal life. Everlasting life. Life without end. Life free from death, free from misery, free from sorrow, free from suffering, and free from the reign of sin. Yes, *eternal life*.

And how is this life brought in? By Jesus Christ our Lord. Grace reigns unto eternal life by Jesus Christ, because He *is* eternal life! As John testifies of Christ, the Word of God, the Word of life in 1 John 1:2: *“For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us”*. To know Christ, is to know life, to have Christ is to have life, for Christ is eternal life. This is what grace brings – everlasting life in Christ Jesus.

“And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life. These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God”, 1 John 5:12-13.

To have eternal life is to have Christ. To have Christ is to be in Christ. If we are in Christ we are made the righteousness of God in Him (2 Corinthians 5:21) for we are justified by grace in Him, and if justified then *justified unto life* (Romans 5:18). And if all this be true of us then we are under a new reign, the *reign of grace*, having been delivered from the reign of sin and death. Oh what a deliverance! What amazing grace that brings it. But at what a price! Grace reigns through righteousness. To save His people Christ died in their place, He endured the cross, despising the shame (Hebrews 12:2). Why? *“For the joy set before him”*. What joy is this? To be glorified in the salvation of sinners. To be one with His people, His bride, united together in righteousness, in everlasting life, in eternal life around the throne of God. What joy! For grace reigns *“through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord”!*

GRACE REIGNS

Who are those who have eternal life? John tells us: "*He that hath the Son hath life*". And who has the Son? Those "*that believe on the name of the Son of God*" (1 John 5:13). Such are those who are "*justified freely by his grace*" (Romans 3:24), those which "*believeth in Jesus*" (Romans 3:26).

And just who *are* those who believe in Jesus? All those whom God chose in Christ before the foundation of the world to be saved by Him (Ephesians 1:3-12). All those upon whom God set His electing love, all the "*election of grace*" (Romans 11:5).

Adam through his disobedience brought sin, death and condemnation to all his posterity, but Christ, the Last Adam, through His obedience brought righteousness and justification of life to all *His posterity, the election of grace* (Romans 5:18)! For where sin abounded, grace did much more abound: "*That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord*" (Romans 5:21).

Now, let us ask ourselves the question: which reign are *we* under? The reign of sin, or the reign of grace? Which do we love – sin or grace? What motivates us? What rules our life? What governs our thoughts and actions? Where are we heading?

Do we know grace and its reign over us? Has it been bestowed upon us? Are we recipients of it? Not *claimants* of mercy but *recipients*? Have we cried out to God for mercy, for grace, having been shown by God the Holy Spirit our desperate need of it, being full of sin and death, being held captive by nature under another reign? Do we know the reign of grace in our hearts? Does it reign over all our life, from start to finish? Do we know the *Sovereign King* who grants it? Are we citizens of His kingdom? Do we know Jesus Christ as Lord?

Can we say from our hearts with Paul, "*even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord*" ...?

ROMANS – THE GOSPEL OF GOD

Oh, to be able to join with Paul in saying, *“I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, **who loved me, and gave himself for me**”* (Galatians 2:20).

May God bless His word to His glory,

Amen.



THE
FIGHT OF
FAITH

VI ROMANS

“What shall we say then?” Romans 6:1

ROMANS VI

WHAT SHALL WE SAY THEN? SHALL WE CONTINUE IN SIN, THAT GRACE MAY ABOUND?
GOD FORBID. HOW SHALL WE, THAT ARE DEAD TO SIN, LIVE ANY LONGER THEREIN?

KNOW YE NOT, THAT SO MANY OF US AS WERE BAPTIZED INTO JESUS CHRIST WERE BAPTIZED INTO HIS DEATH? THEREFORE WE ARE BURIED WITH HIM BY BAPTISM INTO DEATH: THAT LIKE AS CHRIST WAS RAISED UP FROM THE DEAD BY THE GLORY OF THE FATHER, EVEN SO WE ALSO SHOULD WALK IN NEWNESS OF LIFE. FOR IF WE HAVE BEEN PLANTED TOGETHER IN THE LIKENESS OF HIS DEATH, WE SHALL BE ALSO IN THE LIKENESS OF HIS RESURRECTION: KNOWING THIS, THAT OUR OLD MAN IS CRUCIFIED WITH HIM, THAT THE BODY OF SIN MIGHT BE DESTROYED, THAT HENCEFORTH WE SHOULD NOT SERVE SIN. FOR HE THAT IS DEAD IS FREED FROM SIN.

NOW IF WE BE DEAD WITH CHRIST, WE BELIEVE THAT WE SHALL ALSO LIVE WITH HIM: KNOWING THAT CHRIST BEING RAISED FROM THE DEAD DIETH NO MORE; DEATH HATH NO MORE DOMINION OVER HIM. FOR IN THAT HE DIED, HE DIED UNTO SIN ONCE: BUT IN THAT HE LIVETH, HE LIVETH UNTO GOD. LIKewise RECKON YE ALSO YOURSELVES TO BE DEAD INDEED UNTO SIN, BUT ALIVE UNTO GOD THROUGH JESUS CHRIST OUR LORD.

LET NOT SIN THEREFORE REIGN IN YOUR MORTAL BODY, THAT YE SHOULD OBEY IT IN THE LUSTS THEREOF. NEITHER YIELD YE YOUR MEMBERS AS INSTRUMENTS OF UNRIGHTEOUSNESS UNTO SIN: BUT YIELD YOURSELVES UNTO GOD, AS THOSE THAT ARE ALIVE FROM THE DEAD, AND YOUR MEMBERS AS INSTRUMENTS OF RIGHTEOUSNESS UNTO GOD. FOR SIN SHALL NOT HAVE DOMINION OVER YOU:
FOR YE ARE NOT UNDER THE LAW, BUT UNDER GRACE.

WHAT THEN? SHALL WE SIN, BECAUSE WE ARE NOT UNDER THE LAW, BUT UNDER GRACE? GOD FORBID. KNOW YE NOT, THAT TO WHOM YE YIELD YOURSELVES SERVANTS TO OBEY, HIS SERVANTS YE ARE TO WHOM YE OBEY; WHETHER OF SIN UNTO DEATH, OR OF OBEDIENCE UNTO RIGHTEOUSNESS? BUT GOD BE THANKED, THAT YE WERE THE SERVANTS OF SIN, BUT YE HAVE OBEYED FROM THE HEART THAT FORM OF DOCTRINE WHICH WAS DELIVERED YOU. BEING THEN MADE FREE FROM SIN, YE BECAME THE SERVANTS OF RIGHTEOUSNESS.

I SPEAK AFTER THE MANNER OF MEN BECAUSE OF THE INFIRMITY OF YOUR FLESH: FOR AS YE HAVE YIELDED YOUR MEMBERS SERVANTS TO UNCLEANNESS AND TO INIQUITY UNTO INIQUITY; EVEN SO NOW YIELD YOUR MEMBERS SERVANTS TO RIGHTEOUSNESS UNTO HOLINESS. FOR WHEN YE WERE THE SERVANTS OF SIN, YE WERE FREE FROM RIGHTEOUSNESS. WHAT FRUIT HAD YE THEN IN THOSE THINGS WHEREOF YE ARE NOW ASHAMED? FOR THE END OF THOSE THINGS IS DEATH. BUT NOW BEING MADE FREE FROM SIN, AND BECOME SERVANTS TO GOD, YE HAVE YOUR FRUIT UNTO HOLINESS, AND THE END EVERLASTING LIFE. FOR THE WAGES OF SIN IS DEATH; BUT THE GIFT OF GOD IS ETERNAL LIFE THROUGH JESUS CHRIST OUR LORD.

What Shall We Say Then?

“What shall we say then?” Romans 6:1

PAUL, having set forth the doctrine of Christ in the gospel from chapters 1 to 5 in Romans, then begins to show its consequences in the next three chapters. He commences by asking a question: *What shall we say then?* In the light of all that has been written, given what has just been declared, what is the consequence? *What shall we say then?*

One towering consequence of the work of God in Christ as presented in the preceding chapters is the gift of *faith*. What God purposed, and the Son performed, the Spirit must apply, and He applies it to all those whom God justified in Christ at the cross, by bringing them under the sound of the gospel, by bringing them to hear the message, the word of their salvation, by which they are convicted of sin, quickened unto life by the Spirit of God, converted, brought to repentance, and granted faith both to believe and to rest in Christ alone for salvation. For all whom the Father chose, and the Son redeemed, will surely be born again by the Spirit, having hope in God alone, which hope finds its assurance in faith.

But faith will be tried, faith will be tested, and it is the battles which faith must fight, and in which faith is victorious, which concern Paul from chapter 6 to chapter 8. Here we see how sin is overcome by righteousness, how death is swallowed up by life, how the law is fulfilled by grace, and how the Spirit mortifies the deeds of the flesh. Here are presented great foes, great mountains to be climbed, great armies to defeat – yet faith overcomes all, faith defeats all, for *Christ’s victory* ensures *faith’s victory*. It is because of the triumphant work of God in Christ upon the cross, that the fight

of faith (1 Timothy 6:12) will be victorious, and it is *this* which gives the believer such hope.

This is emphasised repeatedly throughout these three chapters. Paul presents us with each enemy, each foe, each opponent, which must be overcome for the believer to know salvation, and in each case he shows us in the work of Christ how all the opposition has been answered. Here is faith's triumph, faith's hope, for "*It is God that justifieth*", so "*Who is he that condemneth?*" Yes, God's people in Christ are shown to be "*more than conquerors*" because of the One whose faith brought in the victory, and from whose love they shall never, ever, be separated!

In chapter 6 Paul's attention is centred upon that great enemy – sin, and its inevitable consequence – death. Here he shows how faith reckons the believer to be dead to sin, but alive unto God (Romans 6:11) because of the death of Christ for him, the believer having died with Christ and risen with Him (as pictured by baptism), his old man being crucified that sin might be destroyed and that he might be freed from its dominion, no longer being under law, but under grace (6:14), walking in "*newness of life*" (6:4), being made a servant of righteousness, having "*fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life*".

In chapter 7 the Christian's deliverance from the law and its condemnation is set before us, as illustrated by the example of marriage, believers having died to their old husband, the law, by the body of Christ, that they should be married to another, "*even to him that is raised from the dead*". As a result of being delivered from sin, death and the strength of sin (the law), Paul proceeds in chapter 8 to show how the child of God is delivered from all condemnation, being freed from the law of sin and death by the "*Spirit of life in Christ Jesus*". It is this life in the Spirit, this *new birth* from on high, which is made sure to all God's seed through the sovereign work of God the Spirit in quickening them unto eternal life in Christ Jesus, by which their eyes are opened to see spiritual things, their ears now hear the voice of the Son of God, their understanding is

WHAT SHALL WE SAY THEN?

enlightened, they are delivered from darkness into light, from death into life, from sin into righteousness and from time into eternity. Without such a work man remains in darkness, dead to spiritual things, fallen in sin, condemned under the law, captive under sin's power, having a mind which is "*enmity against God*" (Romans 8:7).

Jesus tells us in John's Gospel that, "*Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God*" (John 3:3), and how true that is. No matter how much one may study, no matter how much of the scriptures may be read, no matter how much doctrine may be imbibed in the letter, except God quickens us unto eternal life by His Spirit, we remain natural, carnal, darkened by sin, blinded to the truth. How *vital* then is the new birth. How vital is faith. It cannot be emphasised enough: "*Ye must be born again*" (John 3:7).

Have you been? Has God given you faith to overcome every enemy of your soul in Christ, or have those enemies overcome you in the deadness of your unbelief?

But what hope there is in this new birth – what victory faith brings! For all whom God justified in Christ are surely born again by His Spirit, are surely brought to faith, having the Spirit of God dwelling in them, the Spirit of Christ – "*Christ in you*" (Romans 8:10) – by whom they mortify the deeds of the flesh, and are led by the Spirit of God, as being the "*sons of God*" (8:14). It is this spirit of sonship which Paul considers in the rest of the chapter: its communion with God the Father, its comfort and assurance in the work of God, its victory in Christ, and its absolute and eternally inseparable union with the love of God in Christ Jesus. Oh what a salvation! What a hope!

"O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ",
1 Corinthians 15:55-57.

In conclusion, having dealt with the victory of sin by righteousness, of death by life, of law by grace, and of the flesh by the Spirit, Paul returns to his opening question from chapter 6:1 by repeating in chapter 8:31, *“What shall we say then to these things?”*

Well, what *shall* we say then to these things? What shall *faith* say to these things?

“If God be for us, who can be against us? He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things? Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God’s elect? It is God that justifieth.

Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.

Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord”, Romans 8:31-39.

Shall We Continue in Sin?

"...Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?" Romans 6:1

"...As it is written, the just shall live by faith" Romans 1:17

THE Apostle Paul in the Epistle to the Romans asks the question, *"Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?"* The answer he gives is *"God forbid."* He asks this question because there were those who, upon hearing the teaching of the gospel – that sinners are saved by grace alone and not by their obedience to God's law – concluded that if so that must leave the child of God free to sin. But Paul denies this emphatically – *"God forbid."* Salvation by grace alone through faith does not lead to lives which remain in sin.

Some conclude from this answer that Paul is reiterating the importance of the Christian striving to keep the law of God. They say that if the Christian must not live a life of sin, which is seen in breaking the Ten Commandments, then he must have that "Moral Law" (The Ten Commandments delivered to Moses on Mount Sinai) as a "Rule of Life". That the law, although not a means by which he might be saved, and although no longer cursing him if he fails to keep it (because Christ has already been cursed by the law in the believer's place), nevertheless instructs him in how to live a righteous life and is therefore useful as advice or guidance on how to live before God – it is the believer's "rule of life", they say.

However this is to confuse what Paul is arguing for and to overturn what he has been saying from Romans chapters 3 to 5. Paul is teaching that God saves sinners by the gospel by means of grace and that they then continue to live by God's grace on a principle of faith. Their rule is not the law, but faith. Only by faith can the demands of the law be fulfilled.

ROMANS – THE GOSPEL OF GOD

But how can this be? If the believer does not set himself to reading the Ten Commandments and attempting to model his life upon them, how can he live a life which fulfils them? How can he avoid breaking these commandments?

Well, the simple answer to that is “through Christ”. The gospel is all about Christ, about who He is, what He has done, and about the believer’s relationship to Him and his union with Him. The believer lives not by looking to the law but by “*looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith*” (Hebrews 12:2). He lives by faith looking unto Christ, being led by the Spirit by union with Christ who is “*all in all*”.

The believer is “*dead to the law*”, his flesh is crucified, the rule of law over him has gone – not because the law is altered or “*abrogated*” but because the flesh has died to it and the believer is risen again in Christ the other side of death. He is a new creation, he has a new life within born of the Spirit. This is called the new man of grace. This new life in Christ is governed by a new law, or rule. This is the law of faith, or put another way, faith is his rule of life, for “*the just shall live by faith*”. Life could not come by the law, it only condemned. Because of the sin which is in the flesh the law became a “*ministration of death*”, a “*killing letter*” to men – it was certainly no ‘rule of life’! No, the law condemned the believer to death, it carried out its final sentence on him in Christ, and having died in Christ he is now dead to the law. It has no more to say to those who are dead to it.

But the just shall **live** by faith. They are justified by faith; by faith they receive the gift of eternal life. This life is ruled by the principle of faith. Romans chapter five talks of the “*reign of grace*”. Grace reigns through righteousness and that is the righteousness of faith as revealed in the gospel. Thus the gospel in revealing the righteousness of God *without law*, and in justifying sinners by grace through faith, reveals all the believer needs to receive life from God and to walk before Him in righteousness. The gospel and not the law therefore is the believer’s rule of life.

SHALL WE CONTINUE IN SIN?

But how does the child of God know right from wrong if he isn't ruled by the law, one may ask? How does he know what the right thing to do in any given situation is? The same way that Christ did. Not simply by turning to some lifeless commands written on stone (or paper) but by communion with God by faith. Christ lived by constantly seeking His father's will in prayer. The believer also lives by communing with God in prayer, by looking unto Christ by faith, by seeking the Spirit's leading. Yes, he reads the Bible, and the whole of the Bible is useful for instruction in righteousness, but it is by the Spirit's guidance in the Bible, by His opening it up to him, His applying words from it to him on a daily basis that he learns of God's will for him, not in a dry, fixed, unchangeable manner, but in a living way, suited to the changing providences of his life.

"But now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter", Romans 7:6.

The new man of grace which is born in the believer is born of God, he is righteous like God is righteous. In the new man believers are *"made partakers of the divine nature"* (2 Peter 1:4), and this nature in itself knows instinctively what is righteous. Believers still have the flesh, the old man within them which is completely sinful, but the new man is righteous. The law was made for man in the flesh, not in the spirit. The law was given to condemn the sinner in the flesh, to show up his sin and to make him flee unto Christ for salvation. But when that man has been washed in the blood of the Lamb, the flesh has been crucified with Christ at the cross. In the eyes of God all that remains is the new man of grace because God looks at the believer in Christ who has taken away sin in the body of flesh which has been crucified. 1 Timothy 1:9 tells us, *"Knowing this, that the law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and for sinners..."* If so, then the believer is not under the law, it wasn't made for him, and it isn't his rule of life. No, he walks by a new 'law', the *"law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus"* (Romans 8:2), for he walks not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. As a just man he lives by faith.

ROMANS – THE GOSPEL OF GOD

"For I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God. I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me. I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law then, Christ is dead in vain", Galatians 2:19-21.

But can't a Christian walk by faith and still use the law as advice, one might ask? Surely what it says is good? Yes, everything it says is holy, just and good. But it isn't just advice – *it's law!* – and it can't be used as a guide or a rule of life. Why not? Because although the believer has a new life born of the Spirit, and although the flesh is reckoned to be crucified with Christ, nevertheless until the believer actually dies physically he still has the flesh dwelling within. The law is addressed to that flesh, but although it demands righteousness from it, in practice all it does is flare up sin in the flesh. The more it demands from the flesh, the more the flesh sins. So although what the law demands is good and spiritual, reaching even unto the thoughts and intentions of the heart within, the effect upon man is to produce more sin, to stir up evil thoughts within. The law always retains its curse and if a man strives to live by the law then he only brings the curse upon himself again. He is a debtor to do the *whole* law, but he can't truly fulfil *any of it!* No, the only way to fulfil the righteousness of the law is to die to it, to be delivered from it, and to live by faith looking unto Christ *alone*.

"For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace", Romans 6:14.

The law demands works from man who cannot perform them. He fails to fulfil the law because of his sinful flesh. Faith however rests in the finished work of Christ who has fulfilled the law's demands in every way. Christ has delivered the believer from the curse and the rule of the law to live in a new and living way – to live by faith. Faith submits to Christ, trusts in Him, obeys Him, walks by the Spirit who leads into all truth regarding Christ. The Lord Jesus Christ is the object of the believer's faith, not the law. He

SHALL WE CONTINUE IN SIN?

is married to Christ and is now dead to the law. *"Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God"* (Romans 7:4). The more the child of God looks to Christ, his husband, the more the new man of grace within him grows in grace and the more the old sinful flesh is subdued and mortified. By walking by faith the child of God finds a principle of life which actually results in the righteousness of the law being fulfilled and sin no longer having the dominion which it once had in his life. This is a life lived entirely by faith, not in man's strength but in the Spirit, by grace alone. The work is all of God. Oh, what amazing grace there is in the Gospel of Christ! How it is the *"power of God unto salvation"*!

May all God's people ever turn from the works of the law, from the arm of the flesh, from all boasting in self and their own works, to rest by faith in the finished work of Christ, looking unto Him alone, who has delivered them from the power of sin, death, and Hell, to give them newness of life in Him, that they might have eternal life, the divine nature, who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit, in the reign of grace!

"There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit", Romans 8:1-5.

"But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world. For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing,

ROMANS – THE GOSPEL OF GOD

*nor uncircumcision, but a new creature. **And as many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God**", Galatians 6:14-16.*

VIII ROMANS

*“Wherefore my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law
by the body of Christ” Romans 7:4*

ROMANS VII

KNOW YE NOT, BRETHREN, (FOR I SPEAK TO THEM THAT KNOW THE LAW,) HOW THAT THE LAW HATH DOMINION OVER A MAN AS LONG AS HE LIVETH? FOR THE WOMAN WHICH HATH AN HUSBAND IS BOUND BY THE LAW TO HER HUSBAND SO LONG AS HE LIVETH; BUT IF THE HUSBAND BE DEAD, SHE IS LOOSED FROM THE LAW OF HER HUSBAND. SO THEN IF, WHILE HER HUSBAND LIVETH, SHE BE MARRIED TO ANOTHER MAN, SHE SHALL BE CALLED AN ADULTERESS: BUT IF HER HUSBAND BE DEAD, SHE IS FREE FROM THAT LAW; SO THAT SHE IS NO ADULTERESS, THOUGH SHE BE MARRIED TO ANOTHER MAN.

WHEREFORE, MY BRETHREN, YE ALSO ARE BECOME DEAD TO THE LAW BY THE BODY OF CHRIST; THAT YE SHOULD BE MARRIED TO ANOTHER, EVEN TO HIM WHO IS RAISED FROM THE DEAD, THAT WE SHOULD BRING FORTH FRUIT UNTO GOD. FOR WHEN WE WERE IN THE FLESH, THE MOTIONS OF SINS, WHICH WERE BY THE LAW, DID WORK IN OUR MEMBERS TO BRING FORTH FRUIT UNTO DEATH. BUT NOW WE ARE DELIVERED FROM THE LAW, THAT BEING DEAD WHEREIN WE WERE HELD; THAT WE SHOULD SERVE IN NEWNESS OF SPIRIT, AND NOT IN THE OLDNESS OF THE LETTER.

WHAT SHALL WE SAY THEN? IS THE LAW SIN? GOD FORBID. NAY, I HAD NOT KNOWN SIN, BUT BY THE LAW: FOR I HAD NOT KNOWN LUST, EXCEPT THE LAW HAD SAID, THOU SHALT NOT COVET. BUT SIN, TAKING OCCASION BY THE COMMANDMENT, WROUGHT IN ME ALL MANNER OF CONCUPISCENCE. FOR WITHOUT THE LAW SIN WAS DEAD. FOR I WAS ALIVE WITHOUT THE LAW ONCE: BUT WHEN THE COMMANDMENT CAME, SIN REVIVED, AND I DIED. AND THE COMMANDMENT, WHICH WAS ORDAINED TO LIFE, I FOUND TO BE UNTO DEATH. FOR SIN, TAKING OCCASION BY THE COMMANDMENT, DECEIVED ME, AND BY IT SLEW ME. WHEREFORE THE LAW IS HOLY, AND THE COMMANDMENT HOLY, AND JUST, AND GOOD.

WAS THEN THAT WHICH IS GOOD MADE DEATH UNTO ME? GOD FORBID. BUT SIN, THAT IT MIGHT APPEAR SIN, WORKING DEATH IN ME BY THAT WHICH IS GOOD; THAT SIN BY THE COMMANDMENT MIGHT BECOME EXCEEDING SINFUL. FOR WE KNOW THAT THE LAW IS SPIRITUAL: BUT I AM CARNAL, SOLD UNDER SIN. FOR THAT WHICH I DO I ALLOW NOT: FOR WHAT I WOULD, THAT DO I NOT; BUT WHAT I HATE, THAT DO I. IF THEN I DO THAT WHICH I WOULD NOT, I CONSENT UNTO THE LAW THAT IT IS GOOD.

NOW THEN IT IS NO MORE I THAT DO IT, BUT SIN THAT DWELLETH IN ME. FOR I KNOW THAT IN ME (THAT IS, IN MY FLESH,) DWELLETH NO GOOD THING: FOR TO WILL IS PRESENT WITH ME; BUT HOW TO PERFORM THAT WHICH IS GOOD I FIND NOT. FOR THE GOOD THAT I WOULD I DO NOT: BUT THE EVIL WHICH I WOULD NOT, THAT I DO. NOW IF I DO THAT I WOULD NOT, IT IS NO MORE I THAT DO IT, BUT SIN THAT DWELLETH IN ME. I FIND THEN A LAW, THAT, WHEN I WOULD DO GOOD, EVIL IS PRESENT WITH ME. FOR I DELIGHT IN THE LAW OF GOD AFTER THE INWARD MAN: BUT I SEE ANOTHER LAW IN MY MEMBERS, WARRING AGAINST THE LAW OF MY MIND, AND BRINGING ME INTO CAPTIVITY TO THE LAW OF SIN WHICH IS IN MY MEMBERS.

O WRETCHED MAN THAT I AM! WHO SHALL DELIVER ME FROM THE BODY OF THIS DEATH? I THANK GOD THROUGH JESUS CHRIST OUR LORD. SO THEN WITH THE MIND I MYSELF SERVE THE LAW OF GOD; BUT WITH THE FLESH THE LAW OF SIN.

Delivered From the Law

“But now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter” Romans 7:6

IN chapter 7 of Romans Paul teaches the believer’s deliverance from the law, and the effect of the law experimentally upon the awakened child of God. The believer’s relationship to the law, and his lawful deliverance from it in Christ, is a subject which many fail to comprehend clearly and yet it is of such vital importance, being so central to the work of Christ in saving His people.

In order to be delivered from sin and its consequence – *death* – we *must* also be delivered from the “*strength of sin*” – which is the *law* (1 Corinthians 15:6). It is our deliverance from the law by the death of Christ which Paul, having begun to set before us in chapter 6, now expands upon in chapter 7. In Romans 6 Paul considers the believer’s death and resurrection with Christ, the consequence of which is that, having had his old man crucified with Christ and being risen with Christ the other side of death, he is no longer under the law, but under grace (Romans 6:14).

At the beginning of chapter 7 Paul develops this truth further through the use of an analogy with marriage. Having died to our old husband, the law, Paul shows that we are now married to another, even Jesus Christ, that we “*should bring forth fruit unto God*” (Romans 7:4). He then demonstrates the inability of the law to bring forth any fruit other than that unto death in the believer, and the believer’s absolute need of deliverance from its rule and dominion. In so doing Paul magnifies the law as being good and just in itself, but shows that the fault lies not in the law but in the fallen flesh of mankind – in the *sin* that dwells within us. Hence the apostle

ROMANS – THE GOSPEL OF GOD

presents the *reason* why we need to be delivered from the law – that whenever the flesh is placed under the rule of the law the result is simply that sin is “*revived*” (Romans 7:9) and the flesh brings forth “*fruit unto death*” (7:5). But praise God that Christ *has* delivered us from the law (7:6), that He has delivered us “*from the body of this death*” (7:24), and to what end? That we should “*serve in newness of the spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter*”, that we “*should bring forth fruit unto God*” – yes *fruit!* Fruit that lasts, fruit that is of the Spirit, fruit that is pleasing unto God, fruit that the law could never envision (Romans 6:21), but which the gospel actually brings forth! (Romans 6:22)

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law”, Galatians 5:22-23.

“Being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God”, Philippians 1:11.

Yes, Paul rejoiced in his deliverance from the law in Christ, for by such a deliverance he came to know peace with God knowing that “*there is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit*” (Romans 8:1). He knew deliverance from the dominion of sin, being under grace, and became a recipient of that gift of God, eternal life, springing from that “*fruit unto holiness*” which God wrought by His Spirit. But can *you* rejoice in this? Has God delivered *you* from the dominion of sin and the strength of sin? Have you been brought to tread the pathway of Paul through chapter 7, discovering the depths of your own depravity in the flesh when the law of God was applied to your conscience, condemning your every attempt to keep it?

Have you been brought to cry out with Paul, “*O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?*”?

If you *have* – and every true child of God *will* – then you’ll find the answer in one place, and one place only... in the death of Christ

DELIVERED FROM THE LAW

and His deliverance of His people from all that condemned them. Do you know that deliverance, or do you find yourself still striving to keep a law you can never keep?

Many never know this deliverance from legal bondage – and many a ‘teacher’ gladly keeps God’s people under what they call a ‘rule of life’ but which God calls “*the ministration of condemnation*” (2 Corinthians 3:9). Despite the clarity of God’s word in the seventh chapter of Romans confusion abounds amongst many professing Christians regarding their position with regard to the law. So in order to expound this subject more fully we shall deal with a number of the questions which commonly arise with regard to this.

Many modern, so-called ‘Reformed’, writers teach a lot about the law being the believer’s ‘rule of life’, and the emphasis of their teaching is very much on “*doing*”, on the practical duties of the believer’s walk – one example being the following, which paraphrases what some have to say about the subject.

“I’m going to discipline myself to godliness. I’m going to work at it. I’m going to engage in sustained daily effort in doing God’s will and obeying God’s requirements. I’m going to deny self and crucify self every day. I’m going to put to death the old life patterns of the old man. I’m going to say ‘no’ to self and say ‘yes’ to Christ every day. As I do these things I will be developing godly habits. I will not give up but I will persist in doing right. I will do what the Scriptures say regardless of how I feel. I will live a commandment-motivated life of holiness oriented towards godliness.”

The modern ‘Reformed’ position claims that salvation is all of grace (without works or law) but when it comes to ‘*sanctification*’ – by which they mean the believer’s walk – the tendency is to bring in the law (as with the above quote – which gives a good illustration of the thinking).

Three questions

So let us consider some questions which I have been asked before regarding this:

1. Firstly, what is the actual place for the law as given in Exodus 20 for the true New Testament believer?

2. Secondly, in Ephesians 5 and 6 Paul exhorts believers to good Christian conduct. But in Ephesians 6:1-3 he says: "Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honour thy father and mother; (which is the first commandment with promise;) That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth." Why does Paul make a direct appeal to the Law (Exodus 20:12) as he now writes in the New Testament times? What's more, a number of these children could well be believers.

3. And thirdly, the works of the law are essentially "doing" things, and whilst it may be understood that these works are not meritorious as far as salvation is concerned, nevertheless allied to 2) above, when we come to the last part of nearly all of Paul's epistles we find a whole catalogue of commandments (or precepts). If the believer is bound by these precepts, then is there not a sense in which his rule of conduct is the precept? If so, how does this differ to the law as a rule of life? A particular reference might be 1 Thessalonians 5: "Rejoice evermore, Pray without ceasing. In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you. Quench not the Spirit. Despise not prophesyings" ... and so on.

In answering these questions let's make some brief comments to begin with... Yes, the teaching that '*the law is the believer's rule of life*' is predominant amongst those who call themselves 'Reformed'. It is the '*third use*' of the law, they say. However the Reformers themselves had differing understandings of the law, for example Luther's teaching is quite different to Calvin's on this (in many

DELIVERED FROM THE LAW

ways Luther being clearer on such matters than Calvin), so we have to ask what gives these modern men the right to take the title 'Reformed' to themselves? As a title it doesn't even give a clear idea of their teaching as the Reformers had a wide range of different ideas about various things – so *'which'* Reformer are they following? If their teaching be examined it is more akin to the Puritans than the Reformers, and even then only a certain section of the Puritans who were themselves diverse in their teaching.

Consider the paraphrase given above. Whilst some of the sentiments are in the right place it nevertheless should remind us of the self-confident promise of obedience which the children of Israel made in Exodus 24:3, "*All the words which the LORD hath said will we do*". Well, how long did that promise last? Whilst Moses was *still in the mount* they rose up to play and fell into all manner of sin...

...and that's the *whole point* of the law. *It finds out man's sin* – it brings it to the surface. For, "*By the law is the knowledge of sin*" (Romans 3:20). Not the knowledge of righteousness, note, but *the knowledge of sin*. The law was given to show man his sin, to expose it, to bring him in guilty before God. And it didn't take long with the children of Israel.

Frankly, would not any true child of God shudder to utter words such as, "*I will do what the Scriptures say... I will live a commandment-motivated life... I'm going to discipline myself to godliness*" with *such self confidence*? Why? Because they know from bitter experience that they can't last but one hour in such a pathway! As soon as they proudly say, "*All the words which the LORD hath said I will do*", they fall into sin in an instant, and their very words condemn them. For sin isn't just what is done outwardly, but it is all the inward thoughts, motives, desires and feelings which we can hide from others but which are painfully apparent to ourselves when God the Holy Spirit makes us aware of what is within, taking the veil away from our heart and eyes (2 Corinthians 3:14-18). In our ignorance and the darkness and deadness of the flesh we might not have known these things, but a

ROMANS – THE GOSPEL OF GOD

quicken child of God *knows* what proceeds from his heart and he finds the law to be a *killing letter* and nothing more. Oh, yes, it might prescribe conduct which is excellent, and *for that he loves it*, but he finds no ability in himself to keep it – as we see in Romans 7 – hence he cries out for One to deliver him from this body of sin and death... *and in the gospel he finds such a Deliverer!*

But, as mentioned in the questions presented above, what might we make of the precepts and exhortations which are to be found in the New Testament? Does their existence not argue for a continuation of the law in some fashion? The simple answer is *No*. Why not? Because the law is *more* than simply precepts. The fact that both law and gospel may have precepts does not mean that they are essentially similar, but in ‘different packaging’. They are, in fact, diametrically opposed both in nature and character. Their whole principles are totally diverse, so that gospel precepts are on a completely different footing and basis to those found in the law.

The law is founded entirely upon the basis of works, with a motivation of self-righteousness and fear of the law’s penalty, making demands of man regarding what *he must do*. Whereas the gospel reveals God’s grace to man and is characterised by *faith* and *love* – which is the believer’s motivation towards obedience to Christ, as *led by the Spirit*, outworking that which God has wrought in the heart – because the gospel declares what *God has done* and *God does* – *for, and in, His people*.

The law says ‘*do and live*’. The gospel says ‘*live and do*’. Man *can’t* do under the law, so he dies. But man is made alive by the gospel so he ‘*does*’. The gospel does not do away with all ‘*doing*’ but it makes men alive and gives them not only the ability to do but also the will (for it is God who worketh in us “*both to will and to do of His good pleasure*”, *Philippians 2:13*); so that anything it exhorts, it also provides grace and ability to do, hence Christ’s yoke is no burden and His commandments are not grievous. It is by the gospel, as delivered from the law, that fruit is brought “*forth unto God*” (*Romans 7:4*).

DELIVERED FROM THE LAW

But, these modern 'Reformed' scholars tell us, that that's the whole point. Christ gives us life in the gospel and then sends us *back to Moses* to 'sanctify' us, as we now have the ability to do what Moses commanded in the law. But in this they greatly err (*What! Is Christ subservient to Moses?*). Yes, they err, because the law is *not* simply a set of precepts, or exhortations, similar to those found in the New Testament epistles which we can now 'set ourselves to doing'. The law is *law!* A law is a set of commandments with penalties attached on failure of doing. If you go back to the commandment "*Thou shalt not covet*", then when you *do* covet, you will find yourself back under its penalty. "*But*", some say, "*its penalty has been met in Christ, so we are freed from its curse*". Yes, we are, but that is because we are *also* freed from its precept – we are "*dead to the law*", "*not under the law*", "*delivered from the law*". As far as the law is concerned we are dead men, whom it can no longer penalise, but whom it can *also* no longer command.

Law is *law* – it stands as a whole. You can't separate the penalty from the commandments. They are forever joined together. If we have been freed from the one then we must have also been freed from the other. Likewise if we put ourselves *back* under the one (the commandment) then we also put ourselves back under the other when we fail to keep the commandment, hence the curse is back upon us. When Galatians tells us that Christ has freed us from the curse of the law it does not mean that the curse has been 'detached' from the law – it means we are freed from the law entirely, both curse *and* commandment.

Three answers

So, to return to our questions...

1. *What place does the law as given in Exodus 20 have for the believer?*

The law stands as that which once condemned the believer, from which he has been forever delivered. It gave him a knowledge of

ROMANS – THE GOSPEL OF GOD

sin, whilst also demonstrating the holiness and goodness of God. It demonstrates to him the justice of God and points in measure to the gospel and what Christ did in delivering him from the law's penalty. But as to his actual relationship to the law *now*, the believer is *dead* to it. It has exacted its penalty upon him, in Christ, and with Christ he has died. The law has no more to say to a dead man (which the believer is in the sight of the law, though now risen and alive in Christ, the other side of death). It is neither his rule, nor his guide. It cannot be used as 'guidance' for it is still *law* – to take its commands, but ignore its penalty is to use it unlawfully, not knowing what one says or affirms, for the law is not made for a righteous man, which is what the believer is in Christ. See 1 Timothy 1:5-11. We simply can't get past passages such as Galatians 2:19, 2 Corinthians 3, Romans 6:14, Romans 7:1-6 and so on, in relation to this. The common 'Reformed' arguments about these passages either referring only to justification (and not sanctification), or referring to the 'judicial' or 'ceremonial' parts of the law, and not the Ten Commandments, are, to be plain, just sheer sophistry. They don't hold water. They make a mockery of these texts which are plain, simple English stating plain truth – we *are* dead to the law, that we might serve God (*now*, in our walk, in what many call our 'sanctification'). We *cannot* serve God whilst still alive to the law, whatever the legalist might argue. The fact is that all who go to the law in their self-will break it continually, and they can only have any sense of having kept it if their eyes are blinded to their real state, and the totally depravity of their hearts. Hence they demean God's holy law by bringing it down to their own meagre, sinful, fleshly level. Not only that but they treat it unlawfully by using it as 'advice', severing it from its curse, and dividing it into three by rejecting the ceremonial and judicial 'parts' and retaining what they call the 'moral' part – the Ten Commandments. This is not to use the law lawfully, but is to treat it with contempt, to be 'anti-law', or against the law, hence *this* is Antinomianism, properly so called.

However, the law *is* part of the overall teaching of scripture, and in the sense that all scripture is profitable to us in various ways it

therefore still has its use. But scripture *must* be divided rightly, and not all scripture applies to all men at all times. Few 'Reformed' writers would claim that the dietary laws of the Old Testament apply to New Testament believers – they have no problem whatsoever in seeing that (*yet the fact is that the Bible never divides the Ten Commandments from the rest of the law, including the 'judicial' and 'ceremonial' aspects – the whole stands as one – the Law of Moses – and we are either under all of it, or under none of it – indeed the Gentiles were never under the law in the sense that the Jew was, and yet were, and are still accountable to God as shown in Romans 2*). These writers also clearly see that the Old Testament priesthood and sacrificial system has gone. Is all that teaching regarding those things in the Old Testament of no use to us now then? No, it is of *much* use as it sets forth the gospel in type and figure. So, too, does Exodus 20, in that it shows forth God's holiness and justice, it gives a knowledge of sin (most especially when applied by the Spirit as Paul found in Romans 7, when "*the commandment came*"), it shows what Christ delivered us from. But we, being delivered, are now no more under those Ten Commandments than we are under the dietary or judicial parts of the law. They have no power to condemn us. For, "*who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us*" (Romans 8:33-34).

2. *Why does Paul make a direct appeal to the Law in Ephesians 6?*

Regarding our second question consider Ephesians 6. Yes, Paul refers here to Exodus 20:12, and in fact elsewhere in the New Testament a number of the other commandments are quoted. I think we can make some conclusions from this. First of all, we might ask that given that the New Testament does in fact quote most of the commandments why do most 'Reformed' writers have such a problem with those who might state that the gospel, not the law, is the believer's 'rule of life'? Why do they not just agree with that statement, given that nine of the commandments can be found recorded in the New Testament also? Why not? Because deep down

ROMANS – THE GOSPEL OF GOD

they have a legal spirit which gravitates towards law and not gospel (and in addition they also cling to the Sabbath commandment which is not repeated as such in the New Testament). The fact is, we can only conclude, that they don't really rejoice in the deliverance we have from the law, because the law has not really been applied to their conscience before being brought to Christ, hence they don't know the liberty of the child of God in Christ. Those who know what it is to be *slain* by the law are glad to be *freed* from it.

But why does the New Testament repeat these commands in various places then (for example Romans 13:8-10)? Well, there is a difference between 'right and wrong' and law. The law as stated before is *law* – it has commandments with penalties attached, which cannot be divorced from it. However right and wrong exist *apart* from law, because 'right' concerns the very character of God with whom we have to do, who is just, holy and righteous. It is wrong to worship other gods, whether the law says it or not. Before the law was ever given at Sinai, it was still wrong to worship idols. Thus our deliverance from the law does not make us free to serve idols – no, it delivers us from a law which dictates one thing, but actually causes us to do the opposite. Our nature in the flesh, when commanded not to do something ends up doing the opposite, and the law then condemns us. That is the nature of the law and the effect it has upon our flesh, so we *need* to be delivered from it.

But that doesn't alter the fact that it is still right to worship the one true God, and it is right, whilst in this world, for example, to honour our parents. *(Nevertheless such a command, and in fact several of the Ten Commandments, tend to regard our conduct whilst in this world – whereas when we enter heaven they won't have the same role, as there we won't be given in marriage and we won't have children, for example. So such commands are types and shadows in that they point us to what is spiritual, that we are God's children, that we are Christ's bride and so on.)* Hence Paul, in context, refers back to the commandments because what they say is still "holy", "just" and "good" (Romans 7:12) and as believers we certainly don't seek to break them. No, through the gospel we actually fulfill them, because the gospel gives us faith,

DELIVERED FROM THE LAW

which works by love, and love is the fulfilling of the law. It is in *this* context that Paul quotes most of the commandments in Romans 13 – *not* to enforce the commandments, or to put the believer back under them, but to illustrate that the love wrought by God through the gospel actually *fulfills* the law.

Nevertheless, despite there being exhortations and precepts in the New Testament, there is a world of difference between the exhortatory nature of the epistles, and the cold, commanding, nature of the law. So... to address our third question...

3. *When we come to the last part of nearly all of Paul's epistles we find a whole catalogue of commandments (or precepts). If the believer is bound by these precepts, then is there not a sense in which his rule of conduct is the precept? If so, how does this differ to the law as a rule of life?*

In the epistles there are many exhortations and precepts. However there is a great difference between the nature of these –and the context in which they are given – and the law. Whereas the law uttered a commandment and exacted a penalty of death if broken, the gospel presents a message of life and then encourages and exhorts the believer with that life to walk in a way which is in accord with his natural desire and inclination *in the new man*. The new man of grace knows to do right, he loves to do right, he loves to follow the Lord and show love to the brethren. The exhortations in the epistles simply address this new man of grace and encourage him in such a pathway, and exhort to mortify the flesh, for the flesh always wars against the Spirit. As with Christ's commandments – His yoke – such exhortations are not grievous, they are not a burden, but are gladly taken up by the child of God. As the gospel is not 'Antinomian' (against the law), some of these exhortations will be in accord with that set forth in the law, and that love encouraged and exhorted in the gospel will in fact fulfill the law, because as the faith of the believer is drawn out, that faith worketh by love (Galatians 5:6) and love fulfills the law (not by looking to the law, but by just living out that life of faith and love, doing what is natural to it, as exhorted in the epistles).

ROMANS – THE GOSPEL OF GOD

We must keep in mind the difference between the earthly man in the flesh, and the new, heavenly man of grace in the Spirit. As believers we were once entirely in the flesh, the offspring of Adam, dead in trespasses and sin, but now those of us who believe have been crucified with Christ, and have risen again from the dead, having a new life in Him, being His offspring, of the Last Adam, the Second Man – the *heavenly* man. The law respected earthly man in the flesh and his conduct in *this world*. The gospel brings men into newness of life in Christ and it respects their heavenly nature in Him, their walk in the Spirit and their being led out of this world unto the new heaven and new earth. Hence the gospel regards heavenly things, not earthly things (Colossians 3). Indeed we are spoken of as being seated in heavenly places *now* (Ephesians 2:6). Then what does a command not to covet our neighbour's house or wife have to do with *that*? What does a command to keep the Sabbath day holy have to do with a realm where we dwell in righteousness in an endless day, an eternal Sabbath? How could such a command be broken in such a state and in such a realm? (*In reality the command is broken spiritually now by ceasing to rest in Christ alone and returning to work at keeping the law...*)

So, the gospel, rightly seen, respects our new man of grace who is heavenly. It tells us to reckon ourselves dead to this world, to mortify the deeds of the flesh. We are to think of ourselves in Christ in heaven, as citizens of heaven (*see note), to have our gaze set there, not on earthly things. Whereas to use the law as a rule of life is to be taken up with earthly things. It is to be earthly minded – *but Christ has brought us into newness of life, in His gospel!* Yes, the gospel has exhortations, for we are still in this world, and we do still have the flesh. But the exhortations are always given in a context. What is that context? It is the Doctrine of Christ – the Gospel. They follow on from the doctrinal parts of the epistles which set forth Christ and His work. Only after having set the believer's gaze upon Christ do the apostles then exhort the new man of grace to follow Christ by walking in various ways. This is very different to the law, which has nothing to do with faith, for the "*law is not of faith*", and it simply says "*Thou shalt*" or "*Thou shalt not*". The gospel first declares Christ,

DELIVERED FROM THE LAW

conveys life, and then directs that life. For we walk not by sight (looking upon earthly things) but by faith (looking unto heavenly things).

Certainly the gospel precepts respect our conduct and could therefore be described as a rule of conduct – in fact the gospel as a whole *will* govern our conduct. We could even say that the whole word of God is a rule of conduct, because ultimately Christ is our ‘rule of life’, as set forth in the gospel, and as set forth in all the scriptures, for He *is* our life (see also Galatians 6:13-16 for mention of ‘*this rule*’). But to say that the law, in particular, is our rule of life is to go to that very part of the word of God which would *condemn* us – how foolish! (2 Corinthians 3). But, yes, the gospel precepts do direct us, because the Spirit does not work in a vacuum. Galatians 5 tells us that if we are led by the Spirit we are not under the law. But the Spirit does not direct us *apart* from the word of God – He uses that word and applies it to us on a daily basis. Rather than having us mechanically going to a fixed set of rules (such as the Ten Commandments), seeking to obey them by our own will-power, the believer is directed by the Spirit in a living way and given grace to walk in that way. The believer submissively follows the Spirit’s leading, and each day the Spirit leads him in the scriptures, applying one passage one day, another passage another day and directing his pathway in a living way, appropriate for the time and circumstance he finds himself in.

Ultimately this is a pathway of faith – faith which works by love. This is the nature of the gospel and the pathway in which the believer walks. It is very different from a pathway of works, or of a legalistic mind.

However, it is not good enough to say simply “*the gospel is my rule of life, not the law*”, because many bring a legal spirit *into* the gospel. They simply turn gospel precepts into legal commands, strive to perform them in their own strength (and hence ignore the leadings of the Spirit and ultimately grieve Him), and effectively condemn others if they don’t walk as the gospel directs. But we are

ROMANS – THE GOSPEL OF GOD

not to use the gospel in such a judgmental fashion, nor are we to set to follow its precepts in our own strength. We must never lose sight of the fact that the gospel is on an entirely different principle to the law – it is about *faith!* And this faith is not of ourselves, “*it is the gift of God*” (Ephesians 2:8). For “*the just shall live by faith*” (Romans 1:17). Neither must we lose sight of the central truth of the gospel to which such God-given faith is directed – “*Christ and Him crucified*”. Only when the eye of faith is continually set upon Christ, does a sheep then follow its Shepherd. And when exhorted to look to Him alone, the exhortations to mortify the deeds of the flesh, or control the tongue, or flee fornication, or rejoice evermore, are gladly received and performed.

We made mention of 1 Thessalonians 5: “*rejoice evermore*”, “*pray without ceasing*”, “*in every thing give thanks*”. Well, such exhortations demonstrate what we have just been considering. The believer, whose eye is set upon Christ, will gladly “*rejoice evermore*” for he sees Christ, his reason for rejoicing; he will gladly “*pray without ceasing*” for he is looking to Christ from whence his help comes; he will happily “*give thanks*”, for he sees the One to whom he is thankful; he will “*despise not prophesyings*” for he loves to hear of Christ; and he will “*grieve not the Spirit*” for the Spirit leads him to Christ whom he loves and to whom he gladly goes.

So, in summary: the law is about works and respects this world. But the gospel is about faith, concerning Christ, and respects the world to come. *The just shall live by faith*, and the precepts of the gospel are not grievous to faith, because faith works by love, and as James rightly tells us (James 1:17), faith without works is dead, being in reality a mere profession of faith, but true, living faith always produces fruit, it always produces the works of faith, as led by the Spirit. For, “*If ye be led by the Spirit, ye are not under the law*” (Galatians 5:18).

[* Someone had the following to say on this subject which is worth repeating here: “*I remember reading of a believer being accused of depreciating the law because he maintained that he was not under it. His reply was that the law of, say Australia, was a good law, and just, but he was not under it because he was a citizen of England. Likewise he acknowledged*”

DELIVERED FROM THE LAW

that the Sinaiatic law was a good law, and just, but he was not under it as he was a citizen of Zion.”]

Delight in the law of God after the inward man

But let us consider some further questions which may arise on this matter.

What, for example, does Paul mean when he says in Romans 7:22, "For I delight in the law of God after the inward man" and also in Romans 7:25, "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin"?

Why did he say that with his mind he served the law of God? If the law has nothing to do with the believer, then why did Paul "delight in the law of God after the inward man"?

Well, firstly it must be noted that these verses come at the end of Romans 7 and they must be read in the context of the whole chapter. The context, as we've seen, being that Paul is demonstrating that we *are "dead to the law by the body of Christ"* (Romans 7:4) that we should be married to another – even to Christ – that we should bring forth fruit unto God. Clearly we could not bring forth fruit unto God until we died to our old 'husband', the law.

In expounding that truth Paul seeks to show just why we needed to be delivered from the law. He goes on throughout the chapter to show the effects that the law had upon his flesh. He demonstrates that the *"motions of sin, which were by the law, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death"*. Thus, whilst the law demanded that which was good, nevertheless, because of our sinful flesh it actually caused us to sin and bring forth fruit unto death.

But does that mean that the law is bad? That it is flawed, or sinful? No! As we noted, Paul goes on to show that the fault lies not

ROMANS – THE GOSPEL OF GOD

with the law itself but with our sinful flesh. *"What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid."...."Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good"*. No, the law itself is good. The fault lies with sin in our flesh: *"But sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good, that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful"* (Romans 7:13). Hence the need is not for the law itself to be abrogated, for the law itself is good, but for us to be delivered from the law, because the fault lies in us, in our sinful flesh – therefore *we* need to have died to the law.

So, having demonstrated in verses 4-6 that we *have* died to the law, that we might be married to Christ to bring forth fruit, Paul then shows that this was necessary, not because the law itself was a bad thing, but because the effect it had upon our flesh was to bring forth sin unto death. Paul shows the law itself to be good. But from verse 14 to 21 Paul shows the effect that the law has upon him as a believer. Whilst he has a new man of grace which wishes to serve God, nevertheless he still has the flesh which sins, so he finds that though he *wishes* to do good, the effect of the commandment when it comes to him is to *cause* him to sin (7:19). Verses 22 and 25 simply reinforce the contrast between the desire of Paul in the new man of grace (to serve God and walk righteously) and the outworking of sin in his flesh under the commandments of the law. Paul delights in the law of God after the inward man (*of course he does – the law is good, in that what it commands is good, and the inward man loves what is good*), but there is another law in his members, in his flesh, which causes him to sin (7:23). Verse 25 shows that his mind would serve the law of God, it would do what it demands because the law is *'holy', 'just'* and *'good'*, but the flesh serves the law of sin.

We see the contrast here between what is served. The one is the law of sin, the other is the law of God. What Paul is showing is that his mind does not serve sin. It serves God. As the law of God teaches against sin his mind as a believer must agree with the law of God. But this is not because he is under the law, serving it as his rule of life, but because he is under grace, with the gospel as his rule of life. Gospel, or evangelical, righteousness exceeds the

DELIVERED FROM THE LAW

righteousness of the law (Matthew 5:19) and hence the law is fulfilled by one who walks in the gospel, by grace (Romans 8:4).

So does the statement in Romans 7:25 that Paul with the mind serves the law of God mean that the law is his rule of life? No, it cannot, because Paul has clearly shown in Romans 7:4-6 that he has been delivered from the law, and that he has a *new 'husband'*. Then why does he state in verse 25 that his mind serves it? Simply to show that the law itself (in terms of what it commands) is not the problem, but his *flesh is*. Whilst the believer is no longer "*in the flesh, but in the Spirit*" (Romans 8:9) he nevertheless still has sin in his flesh (and will do until he enters heaven's glory), and the law will always have the same effect on it, so that whilst his believing mind might say that the law is good and would wish to walk accordingly, the flesh rebels and causes him to fall into sin and under the law's condemnation. The believer's only hope is to be delivered from this body of death and to be delivered from the law, and it is only *through* such a deliverance that the believer *can* be said to be no longer "*in the flesh, but in the Spirit*". And that is *just* what Christ in the gospel does – He delivers us, from sin, from death and from the law.

In Romans chapter 7 Paul is showing that we *are* dead to the law, we *are* delivered from it, but *not* because the law itself is bad, but because the flesh is sinful. Thus he shows that the law is good, just and holy, and that he delights in the law of God after the inward man. But such delighting in the truth of it, in the righteousness of it, does not in any way alter the fact that Paul needed to be delivered from its bondage – he *needed* to be married to another, even to Christ, he *needed* to be delivered from the rule of the law and brought into union with Christ, and under His rule, whom he now serves, not in the letter (as under the law), but in the Spirit (as in the gospel). "*For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh; that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit*" (Romans 8:3-4). It is our being *delivered* from the law by having died to it in

ROMANS – THE GOSPEL OF GOD

Christ that causes us to *fulfill* the law. We walk in a way which brings forth righteous conduct fulfilling what the law requires, but not *by* the law, by being under its rule, but *by the Spirit*, by being under Christ's yoke in the gospel, by walking by faith – for faith works by love, and *love* is the fulfilling of the law.

(And whilst Paul may indeed have delighted in the law of God after the inward man, he certainly delighted much more in the gospel as is abundantly evident elsewhere – for example, Romans 1:16-17, 8:12-18, 8:38-39, 12:33 etc – for the gospel concerns heavenly things, not earthly; the glory in the gospel far exceeds the glory seen in the law as Paul clearly demonstrates in 2 Corinthians 3, and the gospel actually fulfilled all that which the law could only demand, and far, far, more than that!)

Christ is the end of the law

But, it may be asked, does not the Christ Himself uphold the law? For example in Matthew 5:17-19 Jesus states, *"Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled. Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven."* Here Christ says that *"whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven."* Do and teach what? Does not the whole context contrast *"the law and the prophets"*, i.e the law as given by Moses?

Here we have a passage commonly used by those who would put the believer back under the law. So let us consider this question. Does Christ uphold the law? *Certainly* Christ upholds the law! He was made under it, He magnified it and made it honourable. And so would we – the fact that we are delivered from the law by death does not in any way *alter* the law, *abrogate* the law, or take away from it. The law continues to stand in all its glory, rectitude,

DELIVERED FROM THE LAW

immutability and justice. All that it commands is unalterable. But, praise God, all that it commands has been answered and fulfilled in the death of Christ for us, who believe on Him. It is our having *died in Christ* to the law that delivers us from its rule. Christ never destroyed the law nor altered the law, but that does not mean that the believer remains under it. No, Christ *fulfilled* the law, He answered its every charge against us, and legally *delivered us* from it. In the gospel *all has been fulfilled*. "*For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth*" (Romans 10:4).

In Christ the believer is delivered from the law, from its curse, and from its commandment and is brought into the "*law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus*" (Romans 8:2) which made him free from the law of sin and death. The Spirit of life in Christ Jesus, by which the believer walks in the gospel (which *is* the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus), causes him to fulfill the righteousness of the law (Romans 8:4) and hence he does not seek to break the commandments, but does them and indeed he teaches them. But the fact that he does and teaches them does not mean that he does what the commandments of the law demand *by* the law, nor does it mean that he teaches the law *to be the believer's rule of life*. No, it means that he does what the law demands, only by walking in the gospel and gospel righteousness – by the Spirit – for the gospel brings in an everlasting righteousness of a character and nature far exceeding anything that the law ever demanded or required. Gospel, or evangelical, righteousness is not 'less than' nor contrary to the law, but it exceeds what the law demands, hence any under the gospel as their 'rule of life' will do what the law demands, not *by* the law, but by the Spirit through the gospel. Believers *love* the law of God for they see the holiness, justice and goodness of God in it, and they see the perfect fulfillment of it in Christ. They "*delight in the law of God after the inward man*" for they know it is good, but they rejoice *much more* that Christ has delivered them "*from this body of death*" (Romans 7:24) to walk no more after the flesh, as under the law, but after the Spirit, as under the gospel – the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus.

ROMANS – THE GOSPEL OF GOD

Believers don't cease to do what the law commands, for the gospel causes them to walk in a way which fulfills the law, and neither do they cease to teach the law but they *do* teach the *right use* of the law. They teach that "*by the law is the knowledge of sin*" (Romans 3:20) and that by "*the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified*" in God's sight. They teach that the commandment of the law is right, that the "*law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just and good*" (Romans 7:12), but they also teach that sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceives us and slays us (Romans 7:11), and that in order to keep the commandments, to fulfill the law, we *must* be delivered from it (Romans 7:6) and delivered from this body of death (7:24), that we must become dead to the law that we might bring forth fruit unto God (7:4). Believers know, from bitter experience, like Paul in Romans 7, that whilst under the law, whilst bound by it, whilst alive to it in any way, shape, or form, their flesh will simply bring forth sin, their members will bring forth fruit unto death (7:5). But they see in the gospel a deliverance from sin, from the flesh, from the law and its rule and condemnation – they see a deliverance in Christ, who died for them, and in whom they died, and in whom they rise again having the Spirit of life in Him. This brings forth fruit unto God, this fulfills the righteousness of the law (Romans 8:4), and *nothing else can*.

The believer is dead to the law that he might live unto God (Galatians 2:19). He walks under a new rule, the rule of a new creation in Christ, the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus. This causes him to walk in evangelical righteousness which far exceeds that demanded by the law. It is this righteousness which Christ expounds in Matthew 5-7 where He continually contrasts what the law says (not what the scribes *said about* the law, notice, but what the law *actually says*) with what *He* says in the gospel – "*But I say unto you...*" Yes, the gospel brings in a righteousness which not only fulfills the law's demands, but far exceeds it, hence Christ can say in Matthew 5:20, "*That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.*" Under the gospel Christ's sheep *have* such a righteousness – gospel righteousness, evangelical righteousness, the

DELIVERED FROM THE LAW

righteousness of God by faith of Jesus Christ, which soars above anything the law ever demanded ("see note below). But also, unlike the law, this isn't a righteousness demanded of men which they cannot perform, but a righteousness wrought by God – *the righteousness of God by faith of Jesus Christ* – and *given* to men by God, *by His grace!* It is *this* righteousness which God both imputes to His people and brings forth in them by His Spirit as they walk by faith looking unto Jesus their Saviour. It is called the "*righteousness of faith*", not the righteousness of the law (Romans 10:5-6) and such righteousness is seen by confession of the Lord Jesus and belief in the heart that God raised Him from the dead. Such faith is a believing unto righteousness and a confessing unto salvation (10:10). "*For the just shall live by faith*" – dead to the law, but alive unto God and married to Christ, "*even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God.*" And it is this very righteousness of God which is revealed in the gospel and which gives the gospel its power to save...

... "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith", Romans 1:16-17.

Amen.

[* It is a failure to recognise the distinction between the righteousness of God as revealed in the gospel and the righteousness of the law, which characterises the thinking of many who fail to see the truth of the believer's deliverance from the law. Some theologians speak of the Ten Commandments as being a 'transcript of the Divine nature'. Some even go as far as to describe it as 'the express image of God's person'. Yet scripture never refers to the law in this way – in fact it is Christ who is referred to as the express image of God's person in Hebrews 1:3. However those who consider that the Mosaic law is a transcript of the Divine nature cannot envision deliverance from the law because they have essentially made the law itself synonymous with God Himself – which scripture never does (yes, the law reveals God's holiness and justice, but the full revelation of God's righteousness and His character is found in Christ in the gospel). But the law to these people is everywhere,

ROMANS – THE GOSPEL OF GOD

it is inescapable. Hence even the other side of death, in heavenly glory they can only see the believer as still bound by the law, for he is still under God's authority. Yet scripture actually teaches a distinction between the righteousness of the law, which was given for earthly man whilst in this world, and the righteousness of God as revealed by the faith of Christ in the gospel, which concerns the new man of grace in Christ – a heavenly righteousness for a heavenly kingdom. The believer is delivered from the law but has the righteousness of God in Christ. He is under the law of faith, the law of Christ, the law of liberty and the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus. What laws are these? They are those laws which in the New Covenant God puts in the mind of His people and writes upon their hearts (Hebrews 8:10). They are, indeed, the gospel, which gives faith, love, liberty and everlasting life in Christ Jesus to all those chosen in Him unto salvation.]

VIII ROMANS

*“There is therefore now no condemnation to them
which are in Christ Jesus” Romans 8:1*

ROMANS VIII

THERE IS THEREFORE NOW NO CONDEMNATION TO THEM WHICH ARE IN CHRIST JESUS, WHO WALK NOT AFTER THE FLESH, BUT AFTER THE SPIRIT. FOR THE LAW OF THE SPIRIT OF LIFE IN CHRIST JESUS HATH MADE ME FREE FROM THE LAW OF SIN AND DEATH. FOR WHAT THE LAW COULD NOT DO, IN THAT IT WAS WEAK THROUGH THE FLESH, GOD SENDING HIS OWN SON IN THE LIKENESS OF SINFUL FLESH, AND FOR SIN, CONDEMNED SIN IN THE FLESH: THAT THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF THE LAW MIGHT BE FULFILLED IN US, WHO WALK NOT AFTER THE FLESH, BUT AFTER THE SPIRIT.

FOR THEY THAT ARE AFTER THE FLESH DO MIND THE THINGS OF THE FLESH; BUT THEY THAT ARE AFTER THE SPIRIT THE THINGS OF THE SPIRIT. FOR TO BE CARNALLY MINDED IS DEATH; BUT TO BE SPIRITUALLY MINDED IS LIFE AND PEACE. BECAUSE THE CARNAL MIND IS ENMITY AGAINST GOD: FOR IT IS NOT SUBJECT TO THE LAW OF GOD, NEITHER INDEED CAN BE. SO THEN THEY THAT ARE IN THE FLESH CANNOT PLEASE GOD. BUT YE ARE NOT IN THE FLESH, BUT IN THE SPIRIT, IF SO BE THAT THE SPIRIT OF GOD DWELL IN YOU. NOW IF ANY MAN HAVE NOT THE SPIRIT OF CHRIST, HE IS NONE OF HIS. AND IF CHRIST BE IN YOU, THE BODY IS DEAD BECAUSE OF SIN; BUT THE SPIRIT IS LIFE BECAUSE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS.

BUT IF THE SPIRIT OF HIM THAT RAISED UP JESUS FROM THE DEAD DWELL IN YOU, HE THAT RAISED UP CHRIST FROM THE DEAD SHALL ALSO QUICKEN YOUR MORTAL BODIES BY HIS SPIRIT THAT DWELLETH IN YOU. THEREFORE, BRETHREN, WE ARE DEBTORS, NOT TO THE FLESH, TO LIVE AFTER THE FLESH. FOR IF YE LIVE AFTER THE FLESH, YE SHALL DIE: BUT IF YE THROUGH THE SPIRIT DO MORTIFY THE DEEDS OF THE BODY, YE SHALL LIVE. FOR AS MANY AS ARE LED BY THE SPIRIT OF GOD, THEY ARE THE SONS OF GOD.

FOR YE HAVE NOT RECEIVED THE SPIRIT OF BONDAGE AGAIN TO FEAR; BUT YE HAVE RECEIVED THE SPIRIT OF ADOPTION, WHEREBY WE CRY, ABBA, FATHER. THE SPIRIT ITSELF BEARETH WITNESS WITH OUR SPIRIT, THAT WE ARE THE CHILDREN OF GOD: AND IF CHILDREN, THEN HEIRS; HEIRS OF GOD, AND JOINT-HEIRS WITH CHRIST; IF SO BE THAT WE SUFFER WITH HIM, THAT WE MAY BE ALSO GLORIFIED TOGETHER.

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. FOR THE EARNEST EXPECTATION OF THE CREATURE WAITETH FOR THE MANIFESTATION OF THE SONS OF GOD. FOR THE CREATURE WAS MADE SUBJECT TO VANITY, NOT WILLINGLY, BUT BY REASON OF HIM WHO HATH SUBJECTED THE SAME IN HOPE, BECAUSE THE CREATURE ITSELF ALSO SHALL BE DELIVERED FROM THE BONDAGE OF CORRUPTION INTO THE GLORIOUS LIBERTY OF THE CHILDREN OF GOD. FOR WE KNOW THAT THE WHOLE CREATION GROANETH AND TRAVAILETH IN PAIN TOGETHER UNTIL NOW.

AND NOT ONLY THEY, BUT OURSELVES ALSO, WHICH HAVE THE FIRSTFRUITS OF THE SPIRIT, EVEN WE OURSELVES GROAN WITHIN OURSELVES, WAITING FOR THE ADOPTION,

TO WIT, THE REDEMPTION OF OUR BODY. FOR WE ARE SAVED BY HOPE: BUT HOPE THAT IS SEEN IS NOT HOPE: FOR WHAT A MAN SEETH, WHY DOTHE HE YET HOPE FOR? BUT IF WE HOPE FOR THAT WE SEE NOT, THEN DO WE WITH PATIENCE WAIT FOR IT.

LIKEWISE THE SPIRIT ALSO HELPETH OUR INFIRMITIES: FOR WE KNOW NOT WHAT WE SHOULD PRAY FOR AS WE OUGHT: BUT THE SPIRIT ITSELF MAKETH INTERCESSION FOR US WITH GROANINGS WHICH CANNOT BE UTTERED. AND HE THAT SEARCHETH THE HEARTS KNOWETH WHAT IS THE MIND OF THE SPIRIT, BECAUSE HE MAKETH INTERCESSION FOR THE SAINTS ACCORDING TO THE WILL OF GOD.

AND WE KNOW THAT ALL THINGS WORK TOGETHER FOR GOOD TO THEM THAT LOVE GOD, TO THEM WHO ARE THE CALLED ACCORDING TO HIS PURPOSE. FOR WHOM HE DID FOREKNOW, HE ALSO DID PREDESTINATE TO BE CONFORMED TO THE IMAGE OF HIS SON, THAT HE MIGHT BE THE FIRSTBORN AMONG MANY BRETHREN. MOREOVER WHOM HE DID PREDESTINATE, THEM HE ALSO CALLED: AND WHOM HE CALLED, THEM HE ALSO JUSTIFIED: AND WHOM HE JUSTIFIED, THEM HE ALSO GLORIFIED.

WHAT SHALL WE THEN SAY TO THESE THINGS? IF GOD BE FOR US, WHO CAN BE AGAINST US? HE THAT SPARED NOT HIS OWN SON, BUT DELIVERED HIM UP FOR US ALL, HOW SHALL HE NOT WITH HIM ALSO FREELY GIVE US ALL THINGS?

WHO SHALL LAY ANY THING TO THE CHARGE OF GOD'S ELECT? IT IS GOD THAT JUSTIFIETH. WHO IS HE THAT CONDEMNETH? IT IS CHRIST THAT DIED, YEA RATHER, THAT IS RISEN AGAIN, WHO IS EVEN AT THE RIGHT HAND OF GOD, WHO ALSO MAKETH INTERCESSION FOR US. WHO SHALL SEPARATE US FROM THE LOVE OF CHRIST? SHALL TRIBULATION, OR DISTRESS, OR PERSECUTION, OR FAMINE, OR NAKEDNESS, OR PERIL, OR SWORD? AS IT IS WRITTEN, FOR THY SAKE WE ARE KILLED ALL THE DAY LONG; WE ARE ACCOUNTED AS SHEEP FOR THE SLAUGHTER. NAY, IN ALL THESE THINGS WE ARE MORE THAN CONQUERORS THROUGH HIM THAT LOVED US.

FOR I AM PERSUADED, THAT NEITHER DEATH, NOR LIFE, NOR ANGELS, NOR PRINCIPALITIES, NOR POWERS, NOR THINGS PRESENT, NOR THINGS TO COME, NOR HEIGHT, NOR DEPTH, NOR ANY OTHER CREATURE, SHALL BE ABLE TO SEPARATE US FROM THE LOVE OF GOD, WHICH IS IN CHRIST JESUS OUR LORD.

Sons of God – More Than Conquerors

“There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit” Romans 8:1

SO opens the eighth chapter of Romans – one of the most glorious and assuring passages of scripture for the believer. Here faith’s victory over all its foes is assured because of Him in whom God’s people dwell, He in whom they are “*more than conquerors*” – the Lord Jesus Christ.

Notice that this deliverance from condemnation is to those who are *in* Christ Jesus – and none other. Having first shown in chapter 3 that those whom God saves are those who *believe* (see 3:22), Paul now begins to show just *who* believe – they are those who are *in Christ* – those who are called the *sons of God*.

But how is one *in* Christ? And *when* does that person come to faith in Christ? And how does faith conquer its enemies?

To answer such questions we must first recognise that the salvation of a sinner begins *long* before he looks to Christ by faith, long before he hears of God’s work in Christ in the gospel, long before he is convicted of sin or brought to hear the alarm of God sounding in his heart warning him to flee the wrath to come. And it owes nothing to his decision to ‘accept Jesus’ or to make himself acceptable before God by something he does – for what can men who are “*dead in trespasses and sins*” do to make themselves acceptable to God? And what decision or act of the will can a *corpse* make to bring himself out of the grave? Absolutely none!

Then if a sinner be saved – and sinners *are* saved – it will begin not with *their* will, but with *God’s*, and not in their time, but in

ROMANS – THE GOSPEL OF GOD

God's. And God's work of salvation in saving sinners begins *long* before they come to faith, long before they are even born, and long before even the Son of God came into the world to lay down His life for others.

As we read through Romans it becomes clear that before a dead sinner is ever given faith to believe in Christ and to know Him as his Saviour, there is a prior work of God which can be traced back to long before the word of the gospel is made known unto a man, long before that man is born, long before the world was even created. Long before time even came into existence!

For that work *begins* in *eternity* when God purposed to save a people, and purposed to save them in His Son. *That's* where salvation lies – in the eternal *purpose* of God, in the eternal covenant of God between Father and Son, by which God chose a people in Christ "*before the foundation of the world*" (Ephesians 1:4), a people whom He predestinated "*unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved*" (Ephesians 1:5-6). It is this people whom Christ, in time, redeemed through His blood, to bring forgiveness of sins, to whom God then makes known "*the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself*".

It is this eternal purpose, this divine election which Paul opens up in the ninth chapter of Romans. It is this which led to the work of Christ in laying down His life for the sheep (John 10:15) in order that their sin might be judged in righteousness that God might be "*just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus*", as demonstrated in the earlier chapters of Romans. And it is this which leads to the experimental work of God in bringing a sinner to Christ by which he is convicted of sin, quickened unto life, converted, brought to repentance and *finally* lays hold upon Christ with God-given *faith*.

So we see an order here, in the work of God in saving sinners, beginning with God's eternal decree, magnified in the work of God

in offering up His Son as a substitutionary sacrifice for sinners, and culminating in the experimental work of God the Spirit in the lifetime of a believer as he is brought from darkness unto light, from death into everlasting life.

In Romans Paul presents these truths by somewhat reversing their order so as to trace the light, as it were, back to its source. Beginning with faith and faith's object in the earlier chapters he traces back to faith's origin – the divine election and decree of God in chapter 9. Having presented the objective work of God in the gospel from chapters 3 to 5, Paul demonstrates the effects in chapters 6 to 8. Here, in the eighth chapter we see the effects of those essential elements of the work of God in all those ultimately brought to faith in Christ – conversion and repentance which spring forth from *sonship*.

The entire context of Romans 8 is *sonship* – of being *in* Christ, and *born* of God. All the assurance, all the comfort, all the blessings, all the victory, is assured to those, and *only* those, who are *in* Christ – the *sons* of God. Once again, as we see throughout Romans, the contrast is presented between those in Christ – both Jew and Gentile, made of twain into one new man (Ephesians 2:15) – and those outside; those of the Last Adam, and those of the first, those loved like Jacob, and those hated like Esau, those in the Spirit, and those in the flesh. Two Men, Two Seeds, Two Pathways.... One unto death... but one unto eternal life.

Yes... eternal *life*. Eternal life to all in Christ, all who are delivered from death by Him, all delivered from sin and the law, all delivered from all condemnation, all those upon whom God's love is set, all those who are made "*more the conquerors*" in Him – and *all* who can *never* be separated from God's love!

But what marks these out? What distinguishes them? Here in chapter 8 Paul tells us that....

They have a new *life*

ROMANS – THE GOSPEL OF GOD

They have *turned* from darkness unto light
They have a new *mind* (having previously been given over
to a reprobate mind - Romans 1:28)

And they walk *by faith*, in the Spirit, being heavenly
minded.

Given these things it may be asked – from whence does it all
spring? Answer – From heaven! By revelation! All these things
spring from the same source, and that source is the *light of God...*
and that light is conveyed by the *gospel!*

So let us briefly consider these things, these *essential* things, which
take place in the salvation of every one of God's people and by
which they are marked out as God's children.

Sons of God

Firstly, we will never come to see the truth of God's work in saving
sinners, we will never experience the consequence of Christ's work
upon the cross in dying for the ungodly, those without strength
(Romans 5:6), until the Spirit of God quickens us unto life.

We *must* be born again.

It is this new birth and this new life in which Paul rejoices around
the start of Romans 8 where he "*thanks God through Jesus Christ our
Lord*" (Romans 7:25) for delivering him from the body of death, from
the corruption of indwelling sin in his flesh (7:18), from "*the law of
sin and death*" (8:2), by the "*law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus*".

That was that in which Paul found deliverance – *the Spirit of life in
Christ Jesus*. God, having condemned Paul's sin in the flesh of His
own Son (8:3), Christ having died for sin, and having risen again
from the grave with newness of life, Paul too rose again in Him,
and, as a result, was born again of the Spirit, quickened unto eternal

life, and given *“the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus”*. But until then, until the Spirit applied the effects of Christ’s work to Paul in his own experience, he was just as others – he was *dead* in sin.

By nature we *are* dead. Dead spiritually. Dead *“in trespasses and sins”* (Ephesians 2:1). Dead to all true awareness of God – of His existence, of His power, of His majesty, of His grace, of His love, of His long-suffering. We’re *dead*.

Fallen in Adam, shapen in iniquity, conceived in sin (Psalm 51:5), we have from the womb gone astray, speaking lies. We are, by nature, born blind to the truth. We don’t see it, we can’t hear it, we don’t understand it, we don’t love it and we won’t have it. We love sin, we love ourselves, we love this present evil age. To the things of God and the things of eternity we are entirely oblivious and wilfully unaware. We are dead.

But does religion make things better? Did Paul’s religion make him better? Had he not been brought up a Jew, a Pharisee, *“of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews”* (Philippians 3:5)? Was he not zealous, did he not know the scriptures, was he not careful to keep the letter of God’s law? Did this religion lead him into truth – did it lead him to God?

It did not! Though a Jew, though an Hebrew, though a Pharisee, though of the tribe of Benjamin, Paul, Saul as he was then, was utterly blind to the truth concerning Jesus Christ. All his learning in the scriptures, all his zeal in his religion, all his natural intellect and efforts, left him as blind as ever, as dead as ever. In his zeal he *opposed* the truth, he opposed God’s Son... In his zeal he *persecuted* the church...

That’s where religion in the letter, in the flesh, gets you. Nowhere. Full of knowledge, full of pride, full of zeal... but still full of death and corruption. Blind to the truth, deaf to the word of life, and dead in trespasses and sins. As Paul later wrote, *“what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ”* (Philippians 3:7). For

ROMANS – THE GOSPEL OF GOD

when God revealed the truth to Paul he was brought to write, *“I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith: That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead”* (Philippians 3:8-11).

Religion, or no religion, by nature we are *dead*. Completely dead. And can the dead hear? Can they see? Can they believe? Can they stand up and ‘follow Jesus’?

Not at all. Not unless, and not until, they should first *rise* from the dead. Not until they should be given life again. Not until there should be a *resurrection* of life from the dead. Not until God in His mercy, should quicken them unto eternal life by the mighty in-working power of His Holy Spirit, by whom He breathes into them heavenly life, eternal life, through the word of His power. Not until, by such a work, they be baptised with the Spirit of God, by which He makes His abode in man and comes to dwell in him, *“But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you... And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness”* (Romans 8:9,10). No, not until God quickens their *“mortal bodies by his Spirit”* (Romans 8:11). And no, not until that hour comes when *“the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live”* (John 6:25).

But *should* that hour come, should the Son of God be pleased to speak to us by His Spirit, through the gospel, *then* we will be born again, and having life – *Christ’s life in us* – we will see and believe on the Son of God who saved us. For, *“he that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life”* (John 6:24).

Have *you* heard the word of the Son of God? Have you who were once in the grave, bound by sin, death and corruption, heard Christ's voice in the gospel (John 6:28), being "*born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever*"? (1 Peter 1:23)

For unless you *have* heard, and until you *are* born again, you "*cannot see the kingdom of God*" (John 3:3).

And for that reason, "*Ye must be born again*" (John 3:7).

Converted

The immediate consequence of this new birth is conversion. Conversion means *to be turned* – turned from one way to another way, turned from walking in one direction, to walking in another direction altogether.

That is the effect of the gospel upon those whom God quickens unto life, those whose eyes are opened – "*to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me*" (Acts 26:18).

Those born of God, the sons of God, are turned from darkness unto the light. They are turned from that pathway they once walked in the flesh, to a new pathway in which they follow after the Son of God, as led by the Spirit (Romans 8:4). The change is dramatic – it is a 180-degree turn. Once they went that way.... But now they are led this way. Once they loved darkness, but now they love the light of truth. Once they hated God, but now they are brought to love Him whose love overwhelms them. Once they were unwilling, but now they are made willing in the day of God's power (Psalm 110:3). Once they walked after every desire and every lust of their sinful flesh, but now they hate the deeds of the flesh and that corruption which lies therein, and they long for the things of God. Once they

ROMANS – THE GOSPEL OF GOD

were oblivious to their inability in the flesh to keep the demands of God's holy law, but now, the commandment having come by the application of the Spirit they find that it condemns them utterly, and they find themselves crying out for deliverance! (Romans 7:9-11,24). And having cried out, "*O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?*" they find their answer in Christ and His gospel, who has delivered them from the law of sin and death, causing them to "*walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit*", Romans 8:4.

And now... as led by the Spirit of God, as separated – *sanctified* – unto God, they "*by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honour and immortality*" (Romans 2:7).

"*For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God*" (Romans 8:14).

The granting of repentance

From verse 5 of Romans 8 through to verse 17 Paul deals with the realities of the new life which believers have in Christ as being born of God. Through the preaching of the gospel, being born again by the Spirit of God through the truth, soundly converted, being turned from darkness unto light, God's people are given an *entirely new mentality*. Once they were carnally minded, but now they are spiritually minded. Once they minded the things of the flesh which brought death, but now they mind the things of the Spirit which are "*life and peace*" (Romans 8:6).

Such a dramatic change, such a change of the mentality, of our whole way of thinking, is known as repentance, and *without* repentance, without such a change, we will *never* think rightly of God, and never know God as our Saviour. But just as surely as all who are born of God *will* be converted, so too they will be brought

to repentance, turning from the things of the flesh to mind the things of the Spirit.

To this end Paul preached the gospel – *“Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ” (Acts 20:21)*. And to this end, to grant such repentance, such a change in the understanding, Christ Himself opened up the scriptures to His disciples in Luke 24:44-48, *“And he said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me. Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures, And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behooved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And ye are witnesses of these things.”*

Many think of repentance in terms of its effect upon the heart, in terms of that contrite spirit which is wrought within, the mourning over our sins and the turning away from them. But whilst all that might be an effect, the reality is that repentance is essentially to do with the mentality. The Greek is *metanoia* and its meaning regards the mind and a complete change of that mind and its thinking. Except our whole mentality be changed, our whole understanding and comprehension of the things of God, then we will remain opposed to the truth, *“because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God” (Romans 8:8)*. Likewise, because fallen men and women *“did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient; being filled with all unrighteousness...” (Romans 1:28-29)*.

But thank God that those whom he quickens unto life are no longer in the flesh, but in the Spirit (Romans 8:9), having a *new* mentality, having repented of their dead works before God and, reckoning their flesh to be dead, come to rest in the righteousness of

ROMANS – THE GOSPEL OF GOD

God in Christ for justification, as indwelt by the Spirit of God who is “life because of righteousness” (Romans 8:10).

Oh what a transformation does such repentance bring! What a passing from death unto life, from darkness unto light, from the flesh to the Spirit – and to what end? That we might be called the “sons of God” who have “not received the spirit of bondage again to fear” but “the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father”! Yes, whereby we cry “Abba, Father”! What communion, what nearness to God the Father the sons of God are brought into! How astounding this is, what a reconciliation there is here between those who were once so far apart, and yet are now brought to be so near.

And how shall we know that we are sons of the Father? By this means – “The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together” (Romans 8:17).

The faith which conquers

The conclusion of Romans 8 from verse 18 through to verse 39 represents one of the most encouraging and glorious passages of scripture for the believer in Jesus Christ. Having set before us the work of God in Christ in saving His people, the consequences of that work in bringing that people to newness of life in Christ Jesus by the work of the Holy Spirit, in turning them from darkness unto light, from walking after the flesh to being led by the Spirit, in granting to them repentance to bring them to a new way of thinking, being turned from the carnal mind to be spiritually minded, Paul now brings before our gaze the fruit of that work in the gift of saving faith by which all God’s people see and believe the gospel, by which they are united to and trust in Jesus Christ their Saviour, and by which they walk in hope before God, as assured of victory over all their foes. It is *faith* and the certain *hope* which is presented to that faith which lies behind the rest of chapter 8.

This passage presents to us the assurance which faiths find in the work of God for His people, not because of anything they do or can do, but *entirely* because of the work of God on their behalf. Here faith finds its comfort, finds its hope, and finds its victory, in the sure and certain work of God in the predestination, calling, justifying and glorifying (Romans 8:30) of all those whom God chose in Christ before the foundation of the world.

Here faith finds that whatever its tribulations may be in this earthly realm, whatever the *“sufferings of this present time”* (8:18) might entail, whatever the groaning and travailing in pain (8:22) as we wait for the *“adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body”*, nevertheless we are *“saved by hope”*, patiently waiting for that which we can’t now see with the natural eye (8:25) but which we look to by the eye of faith, yearning for the promise of the inheritance to come as we pray by the Spirit, who by Christ intercedes for us, the saints, *“according to the will of God”* (8:27).

It is by such faith that *“we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose”* (Romans 8:28).

And on what ground does that faith trust in such knowledge? On the ground that those *“whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified”* (Romans 8:29-30).

What a ground for hope to rest in! What a sure and certain salvation God has wrought for all His people. How sure the end is, given the beginning – *“whom he did foreknow... them he also glorified”*. Who did this? God did! It is all of God, from start to finish. Not one step depends on man, on his frail strength, his fickle will, nor his depraved desire, nor even his faith, for it is not his faith which saves man, but the One in whom faith rests. *All* is of God, all is by grace, all is sure and certain, for when Christ cried out *“It is finished!”* it

ROMANS – THE GOSPEL OF GOD

was finished! Everything necessary to justify His people was done. Salvation is of the Lord! And what a salvation!

But with what effect? What is the confident cry of faith in which it finds its hope?

What shall we say to these things?

“If God be for us, who can be against us?

He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?

Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God’s elect? It is God that justifieth.

Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.

Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.

For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord”, Romans 8:31-39.



THE
PEOPLE OF
FAITH

IX ROMANS

*“So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth,
but of God that sheweth mercy” Romans 9:16*

ROMANS IX

I SAY THE TRUTH IN CHRIST, I LIE NOT, MY CONSCIENCE ALSO BEARING ME WITNESS IN THE HOLY GHOST, THAT I HAVE GREAT HEAVINESS AND CONTINUAL SORROW IN MY HEART. FOR I COULD WISH THAT MYSELF WERE ACCURSED FROM CHRIST FOR MY BRETHREN, MY KINSMEN ACCORDING TO THE FLESH: WHO ARE ISRAELITES; TO WHOM PERTAINETH THE ADOPTION, AND THE GLORY, AND THE COVENANTS, AND THE GIVING OF THE LAW, AND THE SERVICE OF GOD, AND THE PROMISES; WHOSE ARE THE FATHERS, AND OF WHOM AS CONCERNING THE FLESH CHRIST CAME, WHO IS OVER ALL, GOD BLESSED FOR EVER. AMEN.

NOT AS THOUGH THE WORD OF GOD HATH TAKEN NONE EFFECT. FOR THEY ARE NOT ALL ISRAEL, WHICH ARE OF ISRAEL: NEITHER, BECAUSE THEY ARE THE SEED OF ABRAHAM, ARE THEY ALL CHILDREN: BUT, IN ISAAC SHALL THY SEED BE CALLED. THAT IS, THEY WHICH ARE THE CHILDREN OF THE FLESH, THESE ARE NOT THE CHILDREN OF GOD: BUT THE CHILDREN OF THE PROMISE ARE COUNTED FOR THE SEED.

FOR THIS IS THE WORD OF PROMISE, AT THIS TIME WILL I COME, AND SARAH SHALL HAVE A SON. AND NOT ONLY THIS; BUT WHEN REBECCA ALSO HAD CONCEIVED BY ONE, EVEN BY OUR FATHER ISAAC; (FOR THE CHILDREN BEING NOT YET BORN, NEITHER HAVING DONE ANY GOOD OR EVIL, THAT THE PURPOSE OF GOD ACCORDING TO ELECTION MIGHT STAND, NOT OF WORKS, BUT OF HIM THAT CALLETH;) IT WAS SAID UNTO HER, THE ELDER SHALL SERVE THE YOUNGER. AS IT IS WRITTEN, JACOB HAVE I LOVED, BUT ESAU HAVE I HATED.

WHAT SHALL WE SAY THEN? IS THERE UNRIGHTEOUSNESS WITH GOD? GOD FORBID. FOR HE SAITH TO MOSES, I WILL HAVE MERCY ON WHOM I WILL HAVE MERCY, AND I WILL HAVE COMPASSION ON WHOM I WILL HAVE COMPASSION. SO THEN IT IS NOT OF HIM THAT WILLETH, NOR OF HIM THAT RUNNETH, BUT OF GOD THAT SHEWETH MERCY.

FOR THE SCRIPTURE SAITH UNTO PHARAOH, EVEN FOR THIS SAME PURPOSE HAVE I RAISED THEE UP, THAT I MIGHT SHEW MY POWER IN THEE, AND THAT MY NAME MIGHT BE DECLARED THROUGHOUT ALL THE EARTH. THEREFORE HATH HE MERCY ON WHOM HE WILL HAVE MERCY, AND WHOM HE WILL HE HARDENETH.

THOU WILT SAY THEN UNTO ME, WHY DOETH HE YET FIND FAULT? FOR WHO HATH RESISTED HIS WILL? 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 ME THUS? HATH NOT THE POTTER POWER OVER THE CLAY, OF THE SAME LUMP TO MAKE ONE VESSEL UNTO HONOUR, AND ANOTHER UNTO DISHONOUR? WHAT IF GOD, WILLING TO SHEW HIS WRATH, AND TO MAKE HIS POWER KNOWN, ENDURED WITH MUCH LONGSUFFERING THE VESSELS OF WRATH FITTED TO DESTRUCTION: AND THAT HE MIGHT MAKE KNOWN THE RICHES OF HIS GLORY ON THE VESSELS OF MERCY, WHICH HE HAD AFORE PREPARED UNTO GLORY, EVEN US, WHOM HE HATH CALLED, NOT OF THE JEWS ONLY, BUT ALSO OF THE GENTILES?

AS HE SAITH ALSO IN OSEE, I WILL CALL THEM MY PEOPLE, WHICH WERE NOT MY PEOPLE; AND HER BELOVED, WHICH WAS NOT BELOVED. AND 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 OF THE LIVING GOD. ESAIAS ALSO CRIETH CONCERNING ISRAEL, THOUGH THE NUMBER OF THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL BE AS THE SAND OF THE SEA, A REMNANT SHALL BE SAVED: FOR HE WILL FINISH THE WORK, AND CUT IT SHORT IN RIGHTEOUSNESS: BECAUSE A SHORT WORK WILL THE LORD MAKE UPON THE EARTH. AND AS ESAIAS SAID BEFORE, EXCEPT THE LORD OF SABAOOTH HAD LEFT US A SEED, WE HAD BEEN AS SODOMA, AND BEEN MADE LIKE UNTO GOMORRHA.

WHAT SHALL WE SAY THEN? THAT THE GENTILES, WHICH FOLLOWED NOT AFTER RIGHTEOUSNESS, HAVE ATTAINED TO RIGHTEOUSNESS, EVEN THE RIGHTEOUSNESS WHICH IS OF FAITH. BUT ISRAEL, WHICH FOLLOWED AFTER THE LAW OF RIGHTEOUSNESS, HATH NOT ATTAINED TO THE LAW OF RIGHTEOUSNESS. WHEREFORE? BECAUSE THEY SOUGHT IT NOT BY FAITH, BUT AS IT WERE BY THE WORKS OF THE LAW. FOR THEY STUMBLER AT THAT STUMBLINGSTONE; AS IT IS WRITTEN, BEHOLD, I LAY IN SION A STUMBLINGSTONE AND ROCK OF OFFENCE: AND WHOSOEVER BELIEVETH ON HIM SHALL NOT BE ASHAMED.

Of God That Showeth Mercy

“So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy” Romans 9:16

THE overriding message of the ninth chapter of Romans is the absolute sovereignty of God in salvation, that *“salvation is of the Lord”*. In verse 15 we read God’s clear declaration that, *“I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion”*, demonstrating that salvation lies in the *will of God*, not in the will of man, and in the *calling of God*, not in the works or the merits of man (Romans 9:11), *“so then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy”*.

This truth of God’s sovereignty in calling those whom *He wills* unto salvation, in showing mercy to whom *He wills*, in showing compassion to whom *He wills*, is described in verse 11 as *“the purpose of God according to election”*. God has a people whom He has elected to save, a people whom He has chosen in Christ *“before the foundation of the world”* (Ephesians 1:4) having predestinated them *“according to the good pleasure of his will”* (Ephesians 1:5). These are those unto whom He shows His mercy, His compassion and His grace. For salvation does not rest upon the weak, fickle, corrupt and changeable will of man, but on the eternal will and purpose of God, *“according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself”* (Ephesians 1:9).

How often the scriptures repeat this truth. How clearly they show the contrast between the fallen will, desires and intents of mankind, and the perfect sovereign will and purpose of God. Man’s will by nature is always set in opposition to God and His grace, springing forth from the hearts of those who are *“dead in trespasses and sins”* (Ephesians 2:1), who walk according to the spirit of the children of

ROMANS – THE GOSPEL OF GOD

disobedience, according to the “*prince of the power of the air*”, in the lusts of their flesh, the “*desires of the flesh and of the mind*” (Ephesians 2:2-3). How can such choose to follow the God of the scriptures? They cannot and they will not. But in contrast God, in the good pleasure of *His will*, has purposed from all eternity to show mercy, to show compassion, to those who sought Him not, to those who had no will to seek Him, those who had no strength to run to Him, to those, who when taught their condition before God, when shown their sin and depravity, when awakened to the eternal consequences of their rebellion against God, could, and can, only throw themselves upon the mercy of God, upon His compassion, His grace. It is such as *these* whom God has purposed to save – those whom He has chosen in Christ unto salvation, those whom He has purposed to show mercy unto, and those whom He teaches, in time, their *need* of that mercy.

Romans 9 sets forth this truth of God’s sovereignty in considering the position of both the Jews and the Gentiles in relation to the promises of God. From the earliest of days God always had a people in this earth who were set apart from others. The nation of Israel was chosen of God as a people separate from others, to whom God showed great mercy, giving them the promises, the priesthood and the scriptures. God’s dealings with Israel throughout the scriptures stand as a clear picture of His sovereignty in salvation, of His electing purposes. God *always did* choose some, and not others. But as this chapter shows, Israel itself, as a physical nation, was merely a figure, a pattern, a type, of that which was to come. God’s eternal purposes in electing grace are set upon not a physical nation, *but a spiritual*. Not those born of the flesh, but those born of the Spirit. For those whom He saves are chosen out from amongst both Jews and Gentiles, and as one whole they form the true spiritual Israel of God, of whom Israel of old was but a picture, “*For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel: Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children: but in Isaac shall they seed be called. That is, they which are of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed*” (Romans 9:6-8).

OF GOD THAT SHOWETH MERCY

Having considered both those to whom God shows mercy, and those whom He hardens in their sin – those whom He raises up as vessels of mercy to make known His glory, and those described as vessels of wrath to make his power known in judgment – the chapter goes on to conclude that God has a people called out from amongst *both* Jews and Gentiles who are “*afore prepared unto glory*” to whom He shows His mercy. *These* are the people of God, the true Israel of God, the “*children of the living God*”.

“What if God, willing to shew his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction: And that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory, even us, whom he hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles?

As he saith also in Osee, I will call them my people, which were not my people; and her beloved, which was not beloved. And 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 of the living God”,
Romans 9:22-26.

But this truth of God’s sovereignty and of His divine election unto salvation is not one that “sits well” with the natural man. By nature we oppose it. By nature we have a high regard for ourselves, our own abilities and our own will. By nature we feel that we have a right to choose our own destiny. That salvation is by the will of God, and not by our own, we consider to be unfair. But the reality is, by nature, we never receive the things of God, we never seek after God (Romans 3:11), our will never desires Him or His salvation, and in our fallen depravity, with hardness of heart we simply shake our fist at our Maker in complaint. But God has a reply to this complaint: “*Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, why has thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour?*” (Romans 9:20-21).

ROMANS – THE GOSPEL OF GOD

No, man by nature may not react well to the truth of God's sovereignty. But that is because "*the carnal mind is enmity against God*" (Romans 8:7), because "*the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned*" (1 Corinthians 2:14). Except God reveal these truths to us by His Spirit they will always remain foolishness to us, something which we oppose.

Yet the truth is, if it were not for the rich mercy of God, for His undeserved compassion towards a people who sought Him not, who having turned from Him sought their own things, living life in the lusts and desires of their flesh, for their own ends, and for their own glory, in the depths of sin and rebellion, yea, if it were not for God's mercy to *such as these*, none would be saved. Yet God, in His glory, in His mercy, *has* chosen a people in Christ whom He has called out from amongst all people, all races, Jews, Gentiles, male and female, all "*vessels of mercy*", whom He has saved by the blood of Christ, by the death of His own Son, who loving them *gave* Himself for them. Oh what love for sinners! And were it not for this love, for this purpose of God according to election, for the immutable will of God in saving "*all Israel*", none would be saved. But because salvation *is* of the Lord, because God *is* sovereign in salvation, because He has mercy on those whom *He will* have mercy, salvation *is sure and certain* to every last one for whom Christ suffered and died, to those He purchased with His own blood upon the cross.

And when such sinners are brought to see the love and mercy of God towards them, through the revelation of God's Spirit, and feel the application of that mercy within their own hearts, then the truth of God's sovereignty in salvation, that *He by His own will* sought them out to save them, is not something they resist, but something they rejoice in, something they glory in, something which will cause them to praise God's Name for evermore!

May God be praised for His mercy in saving sinners freely by His grace!

X ROMANS

“...How shall they believe?” Romans 10:14

ROMANS X

BRETHREN, MY HEART'S DESIRE AND PRAYER TO GOD FOR ISRAEL IS, THAT THEY MIGHT BE SAVED. FOR I BEAR THEM RECORD THAT THEY HAVE A ZEAL OF GOD, BUT NOT ACCORDING TO KNOWLEDGE. FOR THEY BEING IGNORANT OF GOD'S RIGHTEOUSNESS, AND GOING ABOUT TO ESTABLISH THEIR OWN RIGHTEOUSNESS, HAVE NOT SUBMITTED THEMSELVES UNTO THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD.

FOR CHRIST IS THE END OF THE LAW FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS TO EVERY ONE THAT BELIEVETH. FOR MOSES DESCRIBETH THE RIGHTEOUSNESS WHICH IS OF THE LAW, THAT THE MAN WHICH DOETH THOSE THINGS SHALL LIVE BY THEM. BUT THE RIGHTEOUSNESS WHICH IS OF FAITH SPEAKETH ON THIS WISE, SAY NOT IN THINE HEART, WHO SHALL ASCEND INTO HEAVEN? (THAT IS, TO BRING CHRIST DOWN FROM ABOVE:) OR, WHO SHALL DESCEND INTO THE DEEP? (THAT IS, TO BRING UP CHRIST AGAIN FROM THE DEAD.)

BUT WHAT SAITH IT? THE WORD IS NIGH THEE, EVEN IN THY MOUTH, AND IN THY HEART: THAT IS, THE WORD OF FAITH, WHICH WE PREACH; THAT IF THOU SHALT CONFESS WITH THY MOUTH THE LORD JESUS, AND SHALT BELIEVE IN THINE HEART THAT GOD HATH RAISED HIM FROM THE DEAD, THOU SHALT BE SAVED. FOR WITH THE HEART MAN BELIEVETH UNTO RIGHTEOUSNESS; AND WITH THE MOUTH CONFESSION IS MADE UNTO SALVATION. FOR THE SCRIPTURE SAITH, WHOSOEVER BELIEVETH ON HIM SHALL NOT BE ASHAMED.

FOR THERE IS NO DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE JEW AND THE GREEK: FOR THE SAME LORD OVER ALL IS RICH UNTO ALL THAT CALL UPON HIM. FOR WHOSOEVER SHALL CALL UPON THE NAME OF THE LORD SHALL BE SAVED. HOW THEN SHALL THEY CALL ON HIM IN WHOM THEY HAVE NOT BELIEVED? AND HOW SHALL THEY BELIEVE IN HIM OF WHOM THEY HAVE NOT HEARD? AND HOW SHALL THEY HEAR WITHOUT A PREACHER? AND HOW SHALL THEY PREACH, EXCEPT THEY BE SENT? AS IT IS WRITTEN, HOW BEAUTIFUL ARE THE FEET OF THEM THAT PREACH THE GOSPEL OF PEACE, AND BRING GLAD TIDINGS OF GOOD THINGS!

BUT THEY HAVE NOT ALL OBEYED THE GOSPEL. FOR ESAIAS SAITH, LORD, WHO HATH BELIEVED OUR REPORT? SO THEN FAITH COMETH BY HEARING, AND HEARING BY THE WORD OF GOD.

BUT I SAY, HAVE THEY NOT HEARD? YES VERILY, THEIR SOUND WENT INTO ALL THE EARTH, AND THEIR WORDS UNTO THE ENDS OF THE WORLD. BUT I SAY, DID NOT ISRAEL KNOW? FIRST MOSES SAITH, I WILL PROVOKE YOU TO JEALOUSY BY THEM THAT ARE NO PEOPLE, AND BY A FOOLISH NATION I WILL ANGER YOU. BUT ESAIAS IS VERY BOLD, AND SAITH, I WAS FOUND OF THEM THAT SOUGHT ME NOT; I WAS MADE MANIFEST UNTO THEM THAT ASKED NOT AFTER ME. BUT TO ISRAEL HE SAITH, ALL DAY LONG I HAVE STRETCHED FORTH MY HANDS UNTO A DISOBEDIENT AND GAINSAING PEOPLE.

Whosoever Shall Call

"For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved"
Romans 10:13

FROM Romans chapter 9 through to 11 the apostle Paul considers that people whom God has chosen to save. This is a people chosen not according to their birth in the flesh, but chosen in Christ from before the foundation of the world, who in time are born again of the Holy Spirit. They are a spiritual people, the children of promise, pictured by Israel of old, but nevertheless, not that fleshly nation, but a people chosen amongst both Jews and Gentiles. As Romans 9:6-8 tells us, *"For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel: Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children: but, In Isaac shall thy seed be called. That is, They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed."*

Having pointed out in Romans 2:28-29 that the true Jew is not one who is outwardly a Jew, one born physically a Jew, but one who is *inwardly* a Jew, one whose heart is circumcised, being born of God by His Spirit, Paul returns to this truth in chapter 9 where he illustrates that God has elected to save a people from both Jews and Gentiles, who *collectively* are the *spiritual Israel* of God: *"Even us, whom he hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles? As he saith also in Osee, I will call them my people, which were not my people; and her beloved, which was not beloved. And 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 of the living God"* (Romans 9:24-26).

It is *this* people, chosen out of both Jews and Gentiles, to whom the promises of God apply, those promises made of old to Abraham and his Seed, the promises of salvation and of an inheritance in the

ROMANS – THE GOSPEL OF GOD

world to come. It is these who are the true Jews, God's people, those who are brought to saving faith in Christ. For it is by grace, through faith, that this people is saved, not by works, and in presenting the truth of that people whom God saves, Paul contrasts in chapters 9 and 10 the righteousness which is of the law, which Israel of old sought after, with that righteousness of faith, by which all God's people are saved: *"What shall we say then? That the Gentiles, which followed not after righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness which is of faith. But Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness. Wherefore? Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law. For they stumbled at that stumblingstone; As it is written, Behold I lay in Sion a stumblingstone and rock of offence: and whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed"* (Romans 9:30-33).

No, salvation is not by the works of the law, nor by virtue of our fleshly birth, but through faith in Christ, *"For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth"* (Romans 10:4).

But those people, both Jews and Gentiles, who are shown their sin, shown their utter inability to save themselves, to attain unto righteousness, or to keep the law of God, are taught their need of mercy. It is those whom God brings to call upon His Name for salvation, and everyone so brought, who so calls upon Him shall surely be heard: *"For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved"* (Romans 10:12-13).

Yes, those whom God saves, His people, the true Israel of God, are a people of faith, a people elected unto salvation, born again of God by His Spirit and given faith to call upon His Name for salvation, believing on Christ and His work in dying to save sinners.

But what is it to call upon the *name* of the Lord? Why does Paul stress the *name* of the Lord here?

WHOSOEVER SHALL CALL

Well, we read of the name of the Lord in other passages of scriptures, for example in Philippians 2:9-11:

"Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

Here we read of that coming day when every knee – every man's, every woman's, every child's – will bow to the Lord Jesus Christ. A day when every tongue will confess: *"That Jesus Christ is Lord"*. What a day that will be! What a tremendous confession, what glorious praise to God the Father and to Him whom He hath highly exalted, even Jesus Christ His Son!

But notice again how this passage is worded. It says *"That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow."*

Why does scripture state it in this way? Why, like Romans 10:13, stress the *name* of Jesus, that name *"which is above every name"*? Why? Firstly, because of how exalted both the Person and His name are – how glorious they are. But also because of what the name of Jesus signifies: the truth of it. The truth conveyed by the very name itself. It is not only the Lord to whom we must call for salvation, but we must call upon the *name* of the Lord as believing the truth regarding Him. It is not only to Jesus that every knee shall bow, but to the truth He represents. For Jesus said, *"I am the way, the truth and the life; no man cometh to the Father but by me"* (John 14:6). Jesus is The Truth and His name declares truth.

The name 'Jesus' is the Greek form of the Hebrew 'Joshua', or 'Jeho-shua', which has its roots in 'Jah-shua' meaning 'God Saves'. Not only does this name declare Christ's deity but it declares Him to be the God who saves! Now, *this* is a truth to which every knee shall bow – that *God Saves!* That through Jesus alone God saves sinners; that salvation is entirely of Him – from start to finish. Man

ROMANS – THE GOSPEL OF GOD

simply has no part to play in it – the work is *all* of God – for *God Saves*.

Oh! how man by nature, in the fallen depravity of his sinful heart, rails against such a truth! How he hates it! How his innermost spirit detests such a truth that asserts dogmatically the absolute sovereignty of God in salvation. How man *must* have some part to play in saving himself. How his pride rises up and fights against, the plain and simple truth that salvation owes *nothing* to himself, but *all* to God and His grace. Man by nature simply *must* have some part to play, he *must* have something which he can do, something which he can contribute – however small it may be. Whether it be his good works, his prayers, his attendance to religious ritual or worship, his ‘decision’ to follow God, his simple ‘acceptance’ of ‘Jesus’, his willingness to believe; something, *something* he does must play a part in his salvation. However much he may confess his need of Christ to save him, ultimately there is a part of his own strength, whether it be fifty percent or one percent, upon which he trusts. Man’s sinful nature, his pride, his arrogance, will not confess that he is absolutely worthless, utterly lost, totally blind to the truth, dead in trespasses and sins. He can go so far, but not *that* far. He’ll bow the knee to the idea of a saviour who saves those who allow Him to, those who ‘accept’ Him, but he’ll not bow the knee to the truth of *The Saviour*, the Lord Jesus Christ, and not to the truth of His Name: Jesus, ‘*God Saves*’. For God *does* save and He saves those whom *He wills* absolutely, entirely, without the work of man (James 1:18).

No, man by nature will never bow the knee to such a truth, he’ll never accept that ‘*God saves*’; that salvation is entirely of the Lord, entirely of His choice, entirely at His discretion (Romans 9:15); that God will either do everything to save a sinner, or he’ll do nothing at all, and if not, God will leave the proud, stubborn, rebellious, self-righteous, religious hypocrite to discover at the day of judgment that the filthy rags of his own righteousness could never wash away his sins – to discover that salvation has to be entirely upon a different footing from his own works, that he needs the blood of the

WHOSOEVER SHALL CALL

Saviour to wash away his sins and make him clean before a Holy and Almighty God. Such a one will be brought to see, when it is too late for him, that it is indeed the truth that '*God Saves*' and God alone – then, on *that* day, his knee will bow to such a truth, even as the Lord God of Heaven and Earth delivers His eternal sentence of wrath upon him.

How merciful then to be delivered from such wilful delusion! What grace is shown by Almighty God when He arrests a sinner in his rebellious way and opens his eyes to the gospel and the truth of the Name which is above every name. How wonderful to be brought to an end of ourselves and our own striving to save ourselves, and to be brought to see that "*salvation is of the Lord*"; how good to be brought to our knees to confess to God that we are nothing, that except He shows us mercy we will be lost; to cry out to Him, "*God be merciful to me a sinner*" (Luke 18:13)! For it is those who are brought to call upon the *name* of the Lord in this way who shall be saved (Romans 10:13), for '*God Saves*'!

What a salvation God has wrought for sinners through His precious Son the Lord Jesus Christ! How God is glorified by it! This salvation was purposed by God the Father from all eternity when He chose a people in Christ whom He would redeem, called the "*election of grace*"; this salvation was effected by God the Son who, "*made himself of no reputation...and being found in fashion as a man he, humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross*" (Philippians 2:7,8), when He laid down His life in the place of His people, bearing their sins in His own body on the tree, suffering the wrath of God against sin, that He might deliver them from sin and condemnation and grant them eternal life in Him; and this salvation wrought by the Son is applied by the Holy Spirit to these people when He quickens them from death to life and grants them faith to look to the Saviour who suffered and bled in their stead, to rest in Him and the righteousness of God in Him which is put to their account. This threefold work of Father, Son and Holy Ghost sets forth the glorious truth that '*God Saves*', *by grace alone*, and it is this truth to which God's people will be brought, by the Spirit, to

ROMANS – THE GOSPEL OF GOD

bow the knee: to confess at the name of Jesus that *'God Saves'*, that *Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father*. For God *"hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow"*.

Yes, the work of salvation is entirely God's work, from start to finish; all its handiwork, all its weaving, all its craftsmanship is of Him. All those who come to know such a salvation, all those who are quickened from death unto life by the irresistible work of the Holy Spirit, all those turned from darkness to light, from enmity to peace with God, from the dark paths of sin to the blessed way of righteousness, from misery unto joy, from a life lived for self unto a life lived for the Lord Jesus Christ and for His glory, all those chosen of God from amongst both Jews and Gentiles; *all those* will gladly, freely, willingly, lovingly, bow the knee to the Saviour, to Him who is Truth, and to this truth: that *God Saves*. And none who do will be passed by, *"For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved"* (Romans 10:13).

And whether man confesses this truth in his lifetime and bows the knee freely, or whether he comes to see it at the day of judgment, nevertheless, there comes a day when every man, every woman, every child, *all*, shall bow the knee to the truth that *God Saves*, for *"Salvation is of the Lord"*, *"that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow"*.

"...and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins", Matthew 1:21.

How Shall They Believe?

*"And how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard?"
Romans 10:14*

MUST one hear the gospel preached in order to come to salvation?

The plain answer to this question, is very simply, yes. I don't state that as an opinion, for my opinions really don't matter. What matters is what the word of God says – and any truth we hold to must be founded upon the word of God. From reading the scriptures, it can be seen that God repeatedly stresses in several places that it is by the preaching of the gospel that He is pleased to save sinners. A few simple references will demonstrate this:

"For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it [the gospel] is the power of God unto salvation..." Romans 1:16.

"For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe", 1 Corinthians 1:21.

"Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever", 1 Peter 1:23.

"But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you", 1 Peter 1:25.

Now here are just four verses which demonstrate that the gospel is the power of God unto salvation, that it pleases God by the foolishness of the preaching of that gospel to save them that believe, and that we are born again (regenerated by the Spirit) by the word

ROMANS – THE GOSPEL OF GOD

of God, that word being preached unto us in the gospel. There are many other passages of scripture which emphasise the same things.

It is certainly true that God is sovereign and can do as He pleases. He certainly isn't confined in His power to *having* to use the actual preaching of the gospel through the lips of mere men in order to save people. However the fact is that He has *chosen* to do His work this way. It has pleased Him to save sinners through the preaching of the gospel. He *could*, and He is *able to*, just save sinners Himself by the direct inworking of the Holy Spirit without the use of the gospel whatsoever. But what God is *able* to do and what He *pleases* to do are sometimes two different things. The fact is that scripture repeatedly stresses that God is pleased by the foolishness of preaching (the gospel) to save them that believe. That is His appointed means. Why? Because it confounds the wise for God to take poor weak base men and to speak His word through their lips to the saving of others (see 1 Corinthians 1), because God is pleased to make known the truth of His salvation through the Lord Jesus Christ in this way. Very simply, in God's great wisdom He has *chosen* to work this way.

However, some people have reacted to this truth with a certain wariness based upon essentially good (though misguided) motives, and because of an overemphasis of other truths. What they rightly recognise is that salvation is entirely of God, that until man is born again of the Holy Spirit he is dead in trespasses and sins and unable to comprehend the truths of God aright, and that man can only believe the gospel when God regenerates him and gives him faith to believe it. Man doesn't comprehend the truth with his natural mind. He has no strength or ability in himself to turn to God and no faith by nature with which to believe. In seeing all these points some then conclude that the preaching of the gospel itself cannot save, because man first needs to be regenerated by the Holy Spirit before he can understand and believe that gospel. Thus they emphasise that regeneration (the new birth) is a sovereign act of God, entirely 'without means' (without the preaching of the gospel), and as a result of that new birth man is given faith to then believe the gospel

HOW SHALL THEY BELIEVE?

when he hears it. Some of these people have thus divided things into two stages in which they stress regeneration by the Spirit *without means*, and then (afterwards) '*gospel conversion*' where a person, already regenerated, hears the gospel and believes it with the faith which they have been given by the Spirit in regeneration.

Now, all that sounds plausible, and is certainly based upon certain truths. 1 Corinthians 2:11-16 emphasises that the natural man (before the new birth) cannot understand spiritual things, so until he is born again by the Spirit he cannot fully comprehend the truth of the gospel. Some things may make sense to the natural intellect, but not properly. *However* whilst that is true, and whilst man cannot believe the gospel until God regenerates him (causing him to be born again of the Spirit), because naturally he has no faith (faith being a gift of God), *nevertheless* that does not alter the fact that God has said that it is by the preaching of the gospel that He is pleased to save His people. Romans 10:13-17 emphasises the necessity of the preaching of the gospel and the fact that "*faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God*". In order to believe the gospel heard, one must be born again of God. But God is pleased to quicken, to regenerate sinners to life, actually under or as a result of that preaching of the gospel. This is how He is pleased to work. The work is entirely of His sovereign mercy and grace, but the Spirit of God chooses to work through the preaching of the gospel, through the lips of those men whom He calls and sends to preach it, in order to quicken sinners to life. He sovereignly sows the word of God as a seed, and when He is pleased He causes that seed to bring forth life in the hearts of those whom God has chosen in Christ.

This can be observed in the following order: a dead sinner hears a God-sent preacher preach the gospel. Initially being dead in trespasses and sins the sinner cannot truly understand that gospel – he remains dead under it. He may comprehend many facts of the gospel in his head, in his natural mind, but really they just remain facts, mere head knowledge. He never comes to see Christ by faith as He really is, and know the power of His grace, or experience

ROMANS – THE GOSPEL OF GOD

eternal life in Christ by His indwelling in the heart by the Spirit. No, such a sinner merely hears the outward word of the gospel in his ears, he hears various facts, and may comprehend them to a degree, even 'believe' them (with a natural persuasion) as being right, with his natural intellect, but nevertheless his heart isn't changed, he remains spiritually dead... And such a state can go on for many years. With others, if they are not one of God's elect, that is the state they will remain in until the day they die. Some people sit under the preaching of the gospel all their lives but are never saved by it, because it isn't the outward word alone which saves. This is important to recognise. *The Son of God must speak* to us inwardly by His Spirit in order to quicken us unto life.

However, for the man of God's election, there comes a time in God's sovereignty, when He is pleased to regenerate him unto life by the preaching of the gospel, to give him a new heart, and grant him faith to believe the truth which he is hearing. Now the word ceases to be just the outward words of man, but become living words of the Holy Spirit which come in power. Having been alarmed by the gospel to the truth of the day of judgment, having been awakened to his own sinful condition before God, having been convicted of that sin, now, being born again, by the word of God (as spoken by the preacher, yes, but also by the Spirit inwardly within the heart), this elect child of God is given faith and by that faith he truly comes to see Christ in the gospel and believe on Him, embracing Him for salvation and for deliverance from the wrath to come. Now the words which he used to hear in the gospel which were once just in the 'dead letter' are now living words. What was once a mystery is now revealed, it is now made known, and the elect, being born again, know what it is to know Christ, the power of God, as He is revealed within them by the gospel. Of such Christ says, "*ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free*" (John 8:32).

So you see, those who question the importance of the preaching of the gospel in salvation are right to recognise that regeneration is a sovereign act of God the Holy Spirit, and they are right to recognise

HOW SHALL THEY BELIEVE?

that the gospel, when spoken by man, can remain as simply the 'dead letter' of scripture, words which fill the natural mind, but never enter into the heart in life. However, it is wrong to separate what God has joined together. It is wrong to see these things and separate the new birth by the Spirit from the preaching of the gospel, or the word of God. It is wrong to react to errors – such as the modern emphasis on 'easy believism' and man's supposed 'free will' and natural ability to believe – by not only rejecting those errors but also rejecting an emphasis upon the preaching of the gospel for salvation, as though that presupposes some natural ability in man to believe it. It does not. The scriptures teach, repeatedly and in many places, that salvation is entirely the work of God, but also that God uses the foolishness of the preaching of the gospel to *save them that believe*. Who are they that believe? The elect of God, chosen in Christ from before the foundation of the world, and redeemed by Christ at the cross, to be born again of the Spirit in due course... by the word of God, "*and this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you*" (1 Peter 1:25). God uses the preaching of the gospel to save His people. Not every one that hears the gospel with the outward ear will be saved, for man by nature is dead in trespasses and sins, yet God is pleased to take the outward words preached by those whom He sends to preach it, and speak them quietly by His Spirit into the hearts of His own, quickening them into life, and granting faith that they might believe the Living Word unto the salvation of their souls.

In Ezekiel 37 we read of the vision of the valley of dry bones and how God commanded Ezekiel to prophesy unto the bones that they might live. Was there any ability in Ezekiel to bring dry bones to life? Or were the words of a mere man able to do such a thing? No, only the power of God can work such a miracle. Yet, God was pleased to show forth His power in this case by having His prophet speak unto the bones. Through that speech God worked mightily in the vision to bring the bones to life – the whole vision being a picture of the gospel and its proclamation unto dead sinners, 'dry bones', who are totally dependent upon God's free grace to quicken them to life. The power to do this does not lie in the preacher or in

ROMANS – THE GOSPEL OF GOD

the eloquence of his words, but in the gospel preached when applied by the Holy Spirit in power to the hearts of the hearers – living words which bring life. *"The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live"* (John 5:25).

This is the way in which God usually saves sinners – through the word of God, through the preaching of the gospel, not *"in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance"* (1 Thessalonians 1:5). That gospel which sets forth the Person and the Work of the Lord Jesus Christ. That gospel of which Paul was not ashamed for *"it is the power of God unto salvation"* (Romans 1:16). Some may contend for exceptions to this 'rule' and point to exceptional conversions such as that of Saul on the Damascus Road (Acts 9), and it is certainly true that God can, and has, saved certain people in such exceptional ways by a direct revelation of the gospel from on high, in certain circumstances. God is, after all, sovereign and all-powerful. But nevertheless this isn't His usual way, or the way in which He is usually pleased to work. We can't take the exceptional experience of one of the twelve apostles to overturn what God repeatedly states in the scriptures about the preaching of the gospel. It pleased God by the preaching of the gospel to save them that believe, and this is why God has through the ages continually sent forth preachers of that gospel to proclaim it in power, by the Holy Ghost, that fallen, elect sinners might hear of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Saviour of Sinners, be born again by the word of God, through the power of the Holy Spirit, and with God-given faith believe on the Lord Jesus Christ – the Living Word of God – even unto the salvation of their souls. No wonder then that Paul writes, *"I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth"*.

How Shall They Preach?

“How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!” Romans 10:14-15

FAITH comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God. It is by hearing the word of God, the Gospel of Christ, that men are saved from their sins, for as Paul declares at the start of his epistle to the Romans: *“I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation”*.

Yes, the Gospel of Christ is the power of God unto salvation. It saves! It brings the knowledge of the Saviour into the ears of sinners, who, when quickened by the Holy Spirit from the deadness of their fallen, depraved state, are given eyes to see and ears to hear, and having that God-given gift of faith wrought within by the Spirit, are enabled to believe that word unto salvation.

Sent to preach

But that word must be heard – *“How shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard?”*

And to be heard it must be preached – *“How shall they hear without a preacher?”*

“And how shall they preach, except they be sent?”

ROMANS – THE GOSPEL OF GOD

So, it must be asked – just who are *sent* preachers? What is it to *preach* the gospel? Are all Christians called upon to preach the gospel? Or is there a specific call to preach which is given to some but not to others?

Well, certainly scripture teaches the ‘priesthood’ of all believers. All Christians are called upon to testify to the work of God and to edify one another in the body of Christ. In this sense each member of the body ministers to the body. There is a place in the gatherings of the church for all men to edify one another as the Lord leads according to the gifts given to each (see 1 Corinthians 12). One might bring a psalm, one might pray, one might read the word, another might give a word of exhortation and another might give a short devotional message. All these means of edification in the church have their rightful and proper place.

However scripture is also very clear that not all are called to be apostles, not all are called to be prophets and not all are called to be teachers (1 Corinthians 12:29). There are those in the church who are specifically called to the work of the ministry, those who are sent to preach the gospel, those who have received a particular calling to minister to others, that the church might be built up and strengthened, by delivering what the Lord has first given unto them – those who are called to devote themselves to the work of the ministry. Indeed, these are those who themselves are given to the church as ‘gifts’ by God for the building up of others in the faith. Such gifts are *sent* by God to His church. As Paul tells us in Romans 10: *“How shall they preach except they be sent?”*

Sent by God to preach

So to preach the gospel one must be sent. But sent by whom? By man? By the church?

No, the call to preach comes from God and God alone. Such a calling may be recognised and acknowledged by others in the

HOW SHALL THEY PREACH?

church, and indeed will be if it is true, but nevertheless the calling itself comes direct from God to those whom He sends to preach. The scriptures provide abundant examples of this pattern. Throughout the Old Testament we read of many prophets and each one has a particular and distinct calling of God. God meets with the man and sends him forth with His word as directed by the Lord. Many examples could be provided such as Moses in Exodus 3, Samuel in 1 Samuel 3, or Jeremiah in Jeremiah 1. The Lord appeared unto each one and specifically sent him forth with His word.

“Then the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations”, Jeremiah 1:4-5.

Likewise we see a similar pattern in the New Testament with those whom God called and sent forth to preach His word. Jesus called his disciples by name to follow Him and sent them forth to preach the gospel (see for example Mark 16:15 and Luke 10). In the case of Saul of Tarsus, one who was not called by Jesus during the time when Jesus was on earth in the flesh, he too received a specific call from Christ to preach, being stopped on his way to Damascus by a bright light from heaven and a voice from heaven, even that of the Lord Jesus Christ who specifically called him to the work of the ministry. As we read in Acts 26:

“At midday, O king, I saw in the way a light from heaven, above the brightness of the sun, shining round about me and them which journeyed with me. And when we were all fallen to the earth, I heard a voice speaking unto me, and saying in the Hebrew tongue, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks.

And I said, Who art thou, Lord? And he said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest.

ROMANS – THE GOSPEL OF GOD

But rise, and stand upon thy feet: for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee; Delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee, To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me.

Whereupon, O king Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision..." Acts 26:13-19.

So we see clear examples in both the Old and New Testament of the direct calling and sending of men to preach the gospel. Each heard the word of the Lord and each was sent forth with a specific charge.

But it may be asked whether these experiences were unique to the prophets and apostles?

It is true that the ministry of the prophets and apostles recorded in scripture was unique. They received the word of God by direct revelation at a time when the scriptural canon was incomplete. They often had direct dealings with God by hearing His voice audibly or in a vision or dream. The disciples indeed lived at a time when they actually beheld the Son of God incarnate in this world. Such experiences were obviously unique to them.

Nevertheless the general principles and patterns set forth by the calling of these men to preach hold good to the end of time. The principle of Romans 10, "*How shall they preach except they be sent?*" is as true today as it was in the early church. God still calls and sends men into the ministry. Men sent to preach the gospel. Men taught of God. Men prepared by God for that work. Men, such as Timothy, who though not an apostle was nevertheless called by the same God to the ministry. Like his spiritual 'father' Paul, he too was saved through the same gospel, by the same Saviour, and sent to preach

HOW SHALL THEY PREACH?

the same truth. The example of Timothy and the charge given to him by the apostle remains in Holy Writ as a precedent to follow for all those who might consider themselves to be called of God to the same ministry. For the Gospel of Christ will continue to be proclaimed down through the ages until the very last of God's sheep has been brought into the sheep-fold and the Lord returns again to gather his people to Himself for eternity to come. Until that great day the Lord continues to feed His sheep and He does so by sending men to preach His word.

But what is the call to preach? Just how does God call men to the ministry today?

Well, whilst the examples of the prophets and apostles may be unique, and whilst there may not be such signal, direct appearances of God to His servants today, nevertheless God does still call His servants to His work, He does still speak to them and they will know that their sending is of God. His word may come as a 'still small voice' and one sent to preach may well be beset by doubts to his calling for some time, but nevertheless the man truly sent to preach will hear the Lord's voice in direction, he will know the Lord's will in the matter and it will be made plain to him that his sending is of God not man.

The call of God to the ministry is very definite, and if and when a man is called to preach he will know it. He will know that God Himself has called him and ultimately he will have few – if any – doubts about it. His call will be much more than just a desire to preach, or a conviction that he should preach because of the need. No, the call is sounded with clarity – the man called of God knows that God has called *him* to preach and he must do so. He feels compelled to – the love of Christ constrains him. He may well be unsure of whether he has been truly called for some time, but when *he* is called then he will come to know it.

William Huntington wrote about the call to preach in his work, "*The Servant of the Lord – Described and Vindicated*", which is very

ROMANS – THE GOSPEL OF GOD

helpful regarding this matter. He deals not only with what a call *is* but also with what *isn't* a call. So, in like manner, I would like to provide here a few pointers to what *doesn't* in itself represent a call to preach (although some of these things may well form 'part' of an overall spiritual exercise leading to a call):

1. Seeing the need for the gospel to be preached.

How great a need there is for gospel preachers today! Yet seeing the need and feeling burdened about the state of the church isn't in itself a call to preach.

*2. Feeling that we can 'do better' than some other preachers, who by the deadness of their preaching demonstrate that they are quite possibly **not** called to preach.*

Sadly there are many in pulpits today who really shouldn't be there. Many men 'send' themselves into the ministry who simply have no calling and no gift from God for the purpose. Scripture speaks of them as 'hirelings' and 'false shepherds'. They bring real grief to the true children of God who groan to see such men leading others astray whilst making a name for themselves – and all under the guise of doing God service. Yet, recognizing such things; being able to see the errors of such men; knowing the true gospel better than they do; feeling that one could preach that gospel more correctly; may all be very good – but it doesn't in itself represent a call from God to such a work.

3. Simply wanting to do something for the Lord or to be useful in His service.

This can be a great trap, a snare into which many men fall. Many young believers, especially men, feel a great zeal for the things of God. They have a strong desire to serve God and to make His word known, and many desire – often out of good motives – to be useful in the service of God and

HOW SHALL THEY PREACH?

hence feel drawn to the work of the ministry. Yet all these desires, no matter how good, do not represent in themselves, a true call to preach.

4. Dissatisfaction with one's current job/situation and feeling that preaching would be more to God's glory.

This is another danger. One can feel drawn to preach because in some way the task seems more attractive than one's current employment. Some young men just starting out in life shun secular work in favour of the 'spiritually higher' task of preaching. Other men, later on in life, may feel weary with their present occupation and thus consider the work of the ministry as something more worthwhile. Much confusion can be caused by such feelings. Yet they must be guarded against – they do not represent a call by God to preach. More often than not when God calls a man to preach he is called to make a sacrifice – called to give up, not a tiresome, unsatisfactory employment, but to give up that which is very favourable to the flesh – that which is well-paid perhaps, or comfortable. Like Moses when he turned from the treasures of Egypt because he esteemed the reproach of Christ as greater riches (Hebrews 11:25-26), God's servants are called to suffer affliction with the people of God. Those truly sent of God to preach will know hardship, suffering, persecution, rejection, poverty, loneliness. But they will also know great joy and consolation in their Lord. For there are unsearchable and everlasting riches, to be found in Christ and His gospel.

5. Pressure from men/churches, given the lack of men entering the ministry in recent times.

In a day when there are fewer and fewer seemingly being called to the ministry there can be great pressure placed upon men to consider the work. Many see the need for gospel preachers and look to the young men in their

ROMANS – THE GOSPEL OF GOD

congregations in the hope that they will serve the Lord in this way. This presents a great pressure. Yet, feeling this pressure, seeing the needs and the hunger of others, does not represent a call to preach. We must be careful not to be ‘forced’ into the ministry, nor to force others into it.

Yes, there are many points which may together form part of a call to preach, but in themselves they do not represent such a call, and we need to be careful to discern which impressions we have in our hearts which are really from God, and which are not. Many things may seem like a call to preach, but aren’t.

Knowing what *is* a call to preach, however, can be rather harder to define. It is similar in some ways to how we know the Lord’s will and guidance in other matters, but obviously as this is such a high calling we need to be very sure about it. I believe the sent minister will know his calling in various ways – ways in which the Lord speaks to him and reveals His will in this matter to him. One way is through various passages of scriptures being laid very powerfully upon the man’s heart (not just because he ‘looks for them’ once he feels inclined to preach, because obviously there are texts there which will support his inclination, but because when he *isn’t* looking for them they seem to leap out at him, or come up in his daily readings, or at services where he has heard preaching and so on). Another way is through direct providences in life. By this I mean various incidences in life showing the Lord’s calling to preach in ways that are much more than simply ‘coincidences’ (as men often call them). An example is reading a certain passage (which may have to do with preaching), then having the very same passage preached on at the next church service, then having something similar happen the next week. When that keeps on happening you know that the Lord is saying something!

I heard one preacher say something about preaching which I believe is good advice. He said that if a man feels that the Lord may be calling him to preach he should resist for as long as he can – until he can resist no longer. In other words he should resist what may be

HOW SHALL THEY PREACH?

his own fleshly inclination or impressions, until it becomes *so* abundantly obvious that his conviction to preach is of the Lord and not of himself. Of course to resist God's will (as Jonah did), or to grieve the Spirit, would be wrong and ultimately fruitless, but because of the seriousness of the calling to preach a man must be sure that it is God, and He alone, who has sent him.

When God truly calls a man to preach He makes His will known to him. That man will feel an increasing burden in his heart about preaching. He will think about it constantly. He may try to escape it but the thought keeps coming back. The Lord will keep prompting him from within. Passages of scripture will keep on convicting him regarding the matter. His heart will be filled with a sense of compassion for God's sheep, a desire that they might be fed, a desire that Christ would be lifted up in the ministry and in the hearts and minds of His people. Such a man will find that the everyday providences of his life keep pointing him towards this matter. The Lord will place landmarks in his path, continual pointers in this direction. The man may feel his utter unworthiness and inability, yet the Lord will keep reminding him '*this is the way, walk ye in it*'. He will complain of lack of strength, but the Lord will assure him that He will be his strength. He will complain of ignorance, yet the Lord will teach him and be all sufficient to him. In the end he will have his doubts cast aside, his objections answered, and ultimately he will feel that the love of Christ constrains him – he can't *but* preach.

Yet, withal there are many dangers in the way. Satan does all he can to sow confusion and he loves to encourage men into the ministry who have no true calling to it. Some things we need to be most careful of are:

1. *Pride.*

This can affect all preachers. Certainly when he hears so much false preaching a man can think, "I wish I was preaching, I could do better than that!" and can easily get

carried along by his own pride. Preaching is a high calling and obviously carries a position of authority, of being seen and noted in public, and we have to be very careful not to seek any approval from men, but only that approval which comes from above. Those called to preach seek not their own things, but the things of Jesus Christ, they seek not honour for themselves, but for all honour and glory to be ascribed to their God and Saviour.

2. The applause of man and the fear of man.

Similarly, another trap is to seek the applause of men or to be afraid of men and their reaction. There are many who can preach in a way which is pleasing to man, which draws great acclaim, much adulation and honour from others. But those sent of God to preach will do so for God's glory only, proclaiming that message which God lays upon their heart to preach – no matter what men might say. The fear of man and what others might say can be a great stumbling-block, but those whom God sends forth with His word will preach it with boldness and with great plainness of speech. The message of the gospel is *not* pleasing to man in the flesh, indeed it is foolishness to him, but what man counts as foolish God calls wisdom – the power of God unto salvation (1 Corinthians 1).

3. Sending ourselves or resorting to the 'arm of the flesh'.

Once a man feels inclined to preach it is very easy to wonder whether he has been sent or not, and to be inclined to run before he has been truly sent. It is a temptation to look for passages in scripture to confirm his calling, before God really shows those passages to him, or to try to 'open doors' to preach before God opens those doors for him.

If we read the testimonies of past preachers who were truly used of God we can learn much from their accounts of God's dealings

HOW SHALL THEY PREACH?

with them and their own attitudes. The last thing that most preachers wanted to do, before God called them to it, was to preach and I think that is a good place in which to be – to *not* want to preach, but to feel that the Lord nevertheless is calling us to such a work. Then we will know it is His will and not ours.

Ultimately if God calls a man to preach he will know it when it has happened. He will be brought to a settled, inward persuasion in his heart and mind of the Lord's will in the matter. The confirmation of this being true will be that God will open a door, and an effectual one, for the preaching of the gospel. Often that doesn't come simply because that man has told others of his calling, but he will be asked to preach, or a door will open, without any contrivance of his own. *Then* when a door opens that man will *know* that the work is all of God.

To preach in God's name is a solemn and weighty calling which carries with it a huge responsibility. Hence no man should enter into the ministry hastily. But when God sends a man to preach, then that man will know that he walks in God's will, that God has called him, and that God will help him. For the word is not his, but God's, and he merely speaks as God's ambassador.

Sent by God to preach *the gospel*

Yes, a man must be *sent* to preach, and he must be sent *of God* to preach. But *what* does he preach?

The Gospel of Christ!

Whilst that might sound obvious the fact is that for many it clearly isn't. Many preach what amounts to anything and everything *but* the Gospel of Christ. They preach morals, the wisdom of men, anecdotes, advice, funny stories, history, philosophy, intellectualism, sacramentalism, legalism, dispensationalism... and the list

ROMANS – THE GOSPEL OF GOD

goes on. Yet, few, *very few*, really, *truly*, preach the Gospel of Christ as it is revealed in the scriptures.

Many preach another gospel and another Jesus. But those truly sent of God, called of God, preach *the* Gospel; The One Gospel; The Gospel of Christ. In fact, we may test a man's calling by whether or not he truly preaches that gospel, in the power of God, by His Spirit – see 2 Corinthians 11.

But any man sent of God to preach *will* preach the gospel. As Paul declares:

“For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith”, Romans 1:16-17.

“For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect”, 1 Corinthians 1:17.

“But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness; But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God”, 1 Corinthians 1:23-24.

This gospel which Paul preached was that which he learnt of God. Not only was Paul not sent by man, but by God, but also the gospel he was sent with was given to him not by man, but by God. As he states in Galatians 1:11-12:

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

HOW SHALL THEY PREACH?

All those really sent by God will be taught of God. The word they bring is not theirs, not man's, but God's. They look to Him to teach, and the word they bring is that which He gives them. When Jeremiah was called of God he felt his poverty and his ignorance. He complained, "*Ah, Lord GOD! behold, I cannot speak: for I am a child*", but God's answer was, "*Say not, I am a child: for thou shalt go to all that I shall send thee, and whatsoever I command thee thou shalt speak. Be not afraid of their faces: for I am with thee to deliver thee, saith the LORD.*" Jeremiah writes, "*Then the LORD put forth his hand, and touched my mouth. And the LORD said unto me, Behold, I have put my words in thy mouth. See, I have this day set thee over the nations and over the kingdoms, to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down, to build, and to plant*" (Jeremiah 1:6-10).

To preach isn't simply to know the doctrines of the gospel well and to have a desire to convey those truths to others. It is to be God's mouthpiece. To preach what God would have us preach, at that particular time, by the Spirit. This requires great humility, much exercise of soul, and much prayer before God, searching out what He would have preached from the scriptures. Sermons aren't simply 'constructed' from commentaries and books, but are sought out from the Lord.

The fact that a preacher is God's mouthpiece, His ambassador on earth, cannot be stressed enough. Ultimately it is not men who preach, but God. It is Christ who preaches – he is the one that speaketh and He speaks from heaven (Hebrews 12:25). God is sovereign in all things, especially in the proclamation of His word, and He is not constrained to sending forth that word through the mouths of mere men – God is quite able to speak directly to someone by His Spirit as they read His word. Yet the fact remains that "*it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe*" (1 Corinthians 1:21). It pleases God to send forth men to preach His word. But though God's servants might speak on earth it is still Christ who speaks from heaven through them by His Spirit. It is God's word which is conveyed by the Holy Spirit and placed upon the lips of those men whom He sends forth in this world to

ROMANS – THE GOSPEL OF GOD

proclaim that word. Except a man preach as the Holy Spirit leads him, his words will be of nothing worth. It is not man's word that must be proclaimed, but God's word, and the One truly sent forth to preach is Christ through His Spirit. When He preaches there is power in the word!

A preacher who preaches in the power of the Holy Ghost is one who effectively 'disappears' into the background so that the hearers aren't so much impressed by him, his learning or his oratory, but feel that they are hearing the Lord speak through him. He should be like a window through which the light shines in. And I think every true preacher would probably confess that more often than not 'he gets in the way' of the clear shining of that light, but nevertheless when the Spirit is present he knows it and has liberty in his preaching. As Romans 1:16-17 says, the power of God is in the *gospel*. Not in the church, nor yet in preachers. Not actually in the Spirit either, but in the gospel. Indeed, the power of the Holy Spirit is in the preaching of that gospel – the Gospel of Christ.

The very same gospel of which Paul was not ashamed, for it is the power of God unto salvation. A gospel which he received not of man, neither was he taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ (Galatians 1:12), as one who was called, sent and prepared by God for such a ministry.

Sent by God, and prepared by God, to preach the gospel

Not only are gospel preachers sent by God, not only are they taught the gospel by God, but they are also prepared for the work of the ministry by God. God equips those whom He sends to preach for the task which they are given.

No man *by nature* is fit to preach the gospel. All are sinners, all have gone astray, all are weak in the flesh. Yet those whom God sends to preach are those whom He has elected and called from eternity past, those whom He has saved from their sins, those

HOW SHALL THEY PREACH?

whom He has justified by the work of Christ at the cross, those whom He has quickened unto eternal life by His Spirit, those whom He has given faith to live by, those whom He has “*led forth by the right way*”, those whom He has revealed His Son unto, those whom He has granted grace to, those whom He has tried in the furnace and brought through many afflictions and trials for Christ’s sake. Such are those whom God calls and sends forth with His word.

Why? So that it might be seen that their fitness for the work is not found in themselves, in their own might, or in their own strength, but in God. God prepares such men for the ministry so that all the glory might be given to God and not to man. The flesh is mortified and the work of God is magnified.

The preaching of the cross in men’s eyes is foolishness, and those whom God sends to preach it are counted as fools by the wisdom of this world. As Paul states in 1 Corinthians 1:25-31:

“Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men.

For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: That no flesh should glory in his presence.

But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.”

God calls those who are ‘*nothing*’ in the eyes of the world, and in their own eyes, to preach His gospel. And having called such men

ROMANS – THE GOSPEL OF GOD

He prepares them for the task – for the work is all of God – to this end: that *“him that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord”*.

We can see this in Moses, for example. When God called him to His work Moses protested, *“O my Lord, I am not eloquent, neither heretofore, nor since thou hast spoken unto thy servant: but I am slow of speech, and of a slow tongue”*. But God’s answer was *“Who hath made man’s mouth? Or who maketh the dumb, or deaf, or the seeing, or the blind? Have not I the LORD? Now therefore go, and I will be with thy mouth, and teach thee what thou shalt say”* (Exodus 4:10-12).

Likewise with Jeremiah, as we have already seen, he protested that he was a child, unfit for the work. But God said that He would be with him to deliver him, and He would put His words in his mouth. God prepared and fitted both Moses and Jeremiah for His work. All their sufficiency and strength was to be found in Him and in Him alone. In themselves they were nothing.

But what of the apostle Paul? Surely he had much ability in the flesh for the task of preaching the gospel? As he wrote in Philippians 3:4-6:

“Though I might also have confidence in the flesh. If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more: Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; Concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.”

Paul had much in which to boast, naturally. He was very bright, well-taught, well-versed in the Old Testament scriptures; surely an excellent man for God to send to his brethren in the flesh, the Jews, to preach the gospel to them, as he was a ‘Hebrew of the Hebrews’? Yet, man’s ways are not God’s ways and God’s ways are not man’s ways. God called Paul to be the apostle to the *Gentiles*, not to the Jews. Many would have accused him of wasting his prior ‘training’,

HOW SHALL THEY PREACH?

but Paul had to submit to the calling of God, whatever man might think. To the Gentiles he went, and how powerfully GOD used him!

What did Paul himself think of his own natural abilities?

*“But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ”,
Philippians 3:7-8.*

Paul counted all his abilities in the flesh, not as an aid, but as a positive hindrance to the work of God! ALL the work must be of God, not man, and so it was. It was God who prepared Paul for the ministry, not man, neither the school of Gamaliel, nor even Paul's fellow apostles, but God. As Paul testifies in Galatians 1:15-24:

“But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace, To reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood: Neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were apostles before me; but I went into Arabia, and returned again unto Damascus. Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and abode with him fifteen days. But other of the apostles saw I none, save James the Lord's brother.

“Now the things which I write unto you, behold, before God, I lie not. Afterwards I came into the regions of Syria and Cilicia; And was unknown by face unto the churches of Judaea which were in Christ: But they had heard only, That he which persecuted us in times past now preacheth the faith which once he destroyed. And they glorified God in me.”

In the cases of Moses, Jeremiah and Paul, God prepared each one to preach His word. They were men who knew their God, men who knew the gospel, men who knew God's grace and salvation, and men who knew what it is to walk with God. They were taught the

ROMANS – THE GOSPEL OF GOD

gospel, they were taught in the School of Christ, they were men prepared of God to preach that gospel by being brought through fires, through afflictions, through trials and persecutions, and yet withal, standing fast in the strength of their God, and they thought nothing of themselves but all of Christ whom they sought to glorify, for...

You must know Christ to preach Christ,

You must experience grace to preach grace,

You must be saved by the gospel to preach the gospel,

You must be brought low to lift Christ high, and,

You must experience the pathway to comfort those on the pathway.

Yes, God sends His servants to preach the gospel, God teaches them the gospel, and God prepares them for the ministry of that gospel. For the work is *all* of God. It is the Gospel of Christ which God sends forth as it is uttered by the One who speaks from heaven, whose speech is carried forth by the Holy Spirit and is put upon the lips of those whom God sends to preach His word, that sinners might hear that word, that faith might come by hearing that word, and that all those for whom Christ died might hear and call upon the name of the Lord that they might be saved. As it is written:

*“For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, **How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things**”, Romans 10:13-15.*

Oh! That the Lord would be pleased to raise up men in our day – men set apart for His service, called and sent forth to preach the

HOW SHALL THEY PREACH?

everlasting gospel of peace; men called of God, sent of God, taught of God and prepared of God; men of faith who, like Paul, are not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ for it is the power of God unto salvation; men who are prepared to spend and be spent for Christ's sake and His glory alone!

For how *shall* they preach *except they be sent*?

“For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith”, Romans 1:16-17.

XI ROMANS

“There is a remnant according to the election of grace” Romans 11:5

ROMANS XI

I SAY THEN, HATH GOD CAST AWAY HIS PEOPLE? GOD FORBID. FOR I ALSO AM AN ISRAELITE, OF THE SEED OF ABRAHAM, OF THE TRIBE OF BENJAMIN. GOD HATH NOT CAST AWAY HIS PEOPLE WHICH HE FOREKNEW. WOT YE NOT WHAT THE SCRIPTURE SAITH OF ELIAS? HOW HE MAKETH INTERCESSION TO GOD AGAINST ISRAEL SAYING, LORD, THEY HAVE KILLED THY PROPHETS, AND DIGGED DOWN THINE ALTARS; AND I AM LEFT ALONE, AND THEY SEEK MY LIFE.

BUT WHAT SAITH THE ANSWER OF GOD UNTO HIM? I HAVE RESERVED TO MYSELF SEVEN THOUSAND MEN, WHO HAVE NOT BOWED THE KNEE TO THE IMAGE OF BAAL. EVEN SO THEN AT THIS PRESENT TIME ALSO THERE IS A REMNANT ACCORDING TO THE ELECTION OF GRACE. AND IF BY GRACE, THEN IS IT NO MORE OF WORKS: OTHERWISE GRACE IS NO MORE GRACE. BUT IF IT BE OF WORKS, THEN IT IS NO MORE GRACE: OTHERWISE WORK IS NO MORE WORK. WHAT THEN? ISRAEL HATH NOT OBTAINED THAT WHICH HE SEEKETH FOR; BUT THE ELECTION HATH OBTAINED IT, AND THE REST WERE BLINDED. (ACCORDING AS IT IS WRITTEN, GOD HATH GIVEN THEM THE SPIRIT OF SLUMBER, EYES THAT THEY SHOULD NOT SEE, AND EARS THAT THEY SHOULD NOT HEAR;) UNTO THIS DAY. AND DAVID SAITH, LET THEIR TABLE BE MADE A SNARE, AND A TRAP, AND A STUMBLINGBLOCK, AND A RECOMPENCE UNTO THEM: LET THEIR EYES BE DARKENED, THAT THEY MAY NOT SEE, AND BOW DOWN THEIR BACK ALWAY.

I SAY THEN, HAVE THEY STUMBLER THAT THEY SHOULD FALL? GOD FORBID: BUT RATHER THROUGH THEIR FALL SALVATION IS COME UNTO THE GENTILES, FOR TO PROVOKE THEM TO JEALOUSY. NOW IF THE FALL OF THEM BE THE RICHES OF THE WORLD, AND THE DIMINISHING OF THEM THE RICHES OF THE GENTILES; HOW MUCH MORE THEIR FULNESS? FOR I SPEAK TO YOU GENTILES, INASMUCH AS I AM THE APOSTLE OF THE GENTILES, I MAGNIFY MINE OFFICE: IF BY ANY MEANS I MAY PROVOKE TO EMULATION THEM WHICH ARE MY FLESH, AND MIGHT SAVE SOME OF THEM. FOR IF THE CASTING AWAY OF THEM BE THE RECONCILING OF THE WORLD, WHAT SHALL THE RECEIVING OF THEM BE, BUT LIFE FROM THE DEAD? FOR IF THE FIRSTFRUIT BE HOLY, THE LUMP IS ALSO HOLY: AND IF THE ROOT BE HOLY, SO ARE THE BRANCHES. AND IF SOME OF THE BRANCHES BE BROKEN OFF, AND THOU, BEING A WILD OLIVE TREE, WERT GRAFTED IN AMONG THEM, AND WITH THEM PARTAKEST OF THE ROOT AND FATNESS OF THE OLIVE TREE;

BOAST NOT AGAINST THE BRANCHES. BUT IF THOU BOAST, THOU BEAREST NOT THE ROOT, BUT THE ROOT THEE. THOU WILT SAY THEN, THE BRANCHES WERE BROKEN OFF, THAT I MIGHT BE GRAFTED IN. WELL; BECAUSE OF UNBELIEF THEY WERE BROKEN OFF, AND THOU STANDEST BY FAITH. BE NOT HIGHMINDED, BUT FEAR: FOR IF GOD SPARED NOT THE NATURAL BRANCHES, TAKE HEED LEST HE ALSO SPARE NOT THEE.

BEHOLD THEREFORE THE GOODNESS AND SEVERITY OF GOD: ON THEM WHICH FELL, SEVERITY; BUT TOWARD THEE, GOODNESS, IF THOU CONTINUE IN HIS GOODNESS: OTHERWISE THOU ALSO SHALT BE CUT OFF. AND THEY ALSO, IF THEY ABIDE NOT STILL

IN UNBELIEF, SHALL BE GRAFTED IN: FOR GOD IS ABLE TO GRAFT THEM IN AGAIN. FOR IF THOU WERT CUT OUT OF THE OLIVE TREE WHICH IS WILD BY NATURE, AND WERT GRAFTED CONTRARY TO NATURE INTO A GOOD OLIVE TREE: HOW MUCH MORE SHALL THESE, WHICH BE THE NATURAL BRANCHES, BE GRAFTED INTO THEIR OWN OLIVE TREE?

FOR I WOULD NOT, BRETHREN, THAT YE SHOULD BE IGNORANT OF THIS MYSTERY, LEST YE SHOULD BE WISE IN YOUR OWN CONCEITS; THAT BLINDNESS IN PART IS HAPPENED TO ISRAEL, UNTIL THE FULNESS OF THE GENTILES BE COME IN. AND SO ALL ISRAEL SHALL BE SAVED: AS IT IS WRITTEN, THERE SHALL COME OUT OF SION THE DELIVERER, AND SHALL TURN AWAY UNGODLINESS FROM JACOB: FOR THIS IS MY COVENANT UNTO THEM, WHEN I SHALL TAKE AWAY THEIR SINS.

AS CONCERNING THE GOSPEL, THEY ARE ENEMIES FOR YOUR SAKES: BUT AS TOUCHING THE ELECTION, THEY ARE BELOVED FOR THE FATHER'S SAKES. FOR THE GIFTS AND CALLING OF GOD ARE WITHOUT REPENTANCE. FOR AS YE IN TIMES PAST HAVE NOT BELIEVED GOD, YET HAVE NOW OBTAINED MERCY THROUGH THEIR UNBELIEF: EVEN SO HAVE THESE ALSO NOW NOT BELIEVED, THAT THROUGH YOUR MERCY THEY ALSO MAY OBTAIN MERCY. FOR GOD HATH CONCLUDED THEM ALL IN UNBELIEF, THAT HE MIGHT HAVE MERCY UPON ALL.

O THE DEPTH OF THE RICHES BOTH OF THE WISDOM AND KNOWLEDGE OF GOD! HOW UNSEARCHABLE ARE HIS JUDGMENTS, AND HIS WAYS PAST FINDING OUT! FOR WHO HATH KNOWN THE MIND OF THE LORD? OR WHO HATH BEEN HIS COUNSELLOR? OR WHO HATH FIRST GIVEN TO HIM, AND IT SHALL BE RECOMPENSED UNTO HIM AGAIN? FOR OF HIM, AND THROUGH HIM, AND TO HIM, ARE ALL THINGS: TO WHOM BE GLORY FOR EVER. AMEN.

All Israel Shall Be Saved

“And so all Israel shall be saved” Romans 11:26

IN Romans 11:26, when concluding his consideration of just who the true Israel of God is – *that people chosen by God from amongst both Jews and Gentiles, that people called out from every tribe and kindred, from the four corners of the earth, all who are brought to faith in Christ, the election of grace* (Romans 11:6) – Paul makes this glorious statement *“And so all Israel shall be saved”*. Yes, *all* Israel shall be saved. All who God chose in Christ from before the foundation of the world. Shall *all* really be saved? Most assuredly, for *“as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob: For this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins”*.

God’s people upon the earth, both Jews and Gentiles, are pictured vividly in Romans 11 by the illustration of the Olive Tree. This tree has both root and branches, some branches being broken off, and some grafted in, many of the Jews being broken off for their unbelief, and the believing Gentiles being grafted in. Yet the illustration extends further than that. All those who are but outwardly religious, perhaps born and raised a Jew or perhaps brought up a ‘Christian’, brought up to ‘attend church or chapel’, will, if they remain in unbelief ultimately be broken off from the tree – whilst those people who are brought to true faith in Christ and His gospel, whether Jew or Gentile, whether brought up ‘in religion’ or not at all, are those branches whom the Lord grafts in.

But whether branches be broken off or grafted in, what remains sure, what never changes, is the root of the tree itself – and that root is Christ. *He* gives the tree its life, *He* gives it strength, *He* sustains it. All the branches on the tree have no life but what they receive

ROMANS – THE GOSPEL OF GOD

from the tree, the root, itself. For Christ is the “*firstfruit*” (*Romans 11:16*), He is the One who rose from the dead, the Deliverer in Sion whom, having taken away His people’s sins, conquered death and rose again in newness of everlasting life. The promises to Abraham concerning his Seed were all fulfilled in Christ for all His seed in Him – all those purchased by His blood at the cross, all that “*election of grace*”, all who by faith are united to Him as branches to His vine. The illustration of the olive tree reminds us of that wonderful passage in chapter 15 of John’s Gospel in which Christ declares of Himself:

“I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit. Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you.

Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing. If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned.

If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you. Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples. As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love”, John 15:1-9.

What a tremendous picture is seen here of the fruitfulness of God’s people as united to Christ, the true vine, in whom they abide as those in whom His words abide, those in whose hearts Christ dwells by faith, those whom He calls His disciples. What union, what love is shown here, and what glory is rendered to the Father by the fruitfulness of that vine, the *ekklesia* of Christ. Yet, despite this, what a warning the eleventh chapter of Romans presents to us of the consequences of unbelief, of the dreadful end awaiting those

ALL ISRAEL SHALL BE SAVED

whose profession is false, whose walk is but outward, whose association with the things of God is merely in the flesh, merely through natural inheritance, only in the letter and never in the Spirit. All of these, all who, despite the profession of their lips, have hearts which are far from God, all in whom remains unbelief of the truth, of Christ in His gospel, all of these, whatever they may appear before men, will be broken off – cut off, forever removed from the tree, cast into the fire and burned. What an end.... And what a warning.

Have you faith in Christ? Are you a branch on His vine? Is all well with your soul? Or is your profession but in word only? Have you received a love of the truth, of God's gospel as truly set forth in the scriptures? Do you rest in that salvation wrought by God for those whom He chose in Christ, His Israel? Is your salvation by the grace of God or by your own works, your own merit, your own worth? Has God grafted you into His olive tree or do you just put on a show, an appearance, of being a branch, yet ultimately to be broken off on that great day when God judges both the quick and the dead?

The answers to such questions are vital. *Do we have faith or not? Do we abide in Christ, and His words in us, or not? Might we at the last be found amongst that company who will cry out, "Lord, Lord", only to receive that crushing response for all eternity: "I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity"?* (Matthew 7:21,23)

When Christ, the Son of God, came into this world, He was born a Jew, *"made of the seed of David according to the flesh"* (Romans 1:3). He came to a people whose hearts had turned from God. An apostate nation. A people who drew near unto God with their lips when their hearts were far from Him. *"He came unto his own, and his own received him not"* (John 1:11).

The very ones who should have known Christ at His coming, the very people who should have been looking for the coming of Messiah, unto whom had been committed the oracles of God, the

ROMANS – THE GOSPEL OF GOD

scriptures, the Levitical priesthood, the sacrifices, all the types and figures which pointed unto the Deliverer in Sion, failed to see Him at His coming. They failed to see Him for whom He was, for whom He is. Their eyes were blinded and their hearts hardened. They followed after the law of righteousness, but never attained to it (Romans 9:31). Lacking faith, they stumbled at that stumblingstone laid in Sion (Romans 9:33). Despite all the prophecies of the scriptures, all the promises made to their fathers, being fulfilled before their very eyes, they saw nothing but a man. Though the very Son of God stood before them, though the very Messiah, the Deliverer of Jacob, of whom the scriptures testified, walked amongst them, they saw Him not for whom He was, but merely as a man like themselves, and despite all their religion, all their intellect, and all their outward zeal in the things of God, they rejected the very One sent of God as the Saviour: they cast Him out, despised Him, mocked Him, made false accusations against Him, ridiculed Him, hated Him, and, at the last, with wicked hands, crucified Him.

So God cut them off, breaking off their branches from the olive tree and grafting in Gentile believers to whom He sent His gospel, to whom He sent the word of life, to whom He revealed His Son as their Saviour.

But lest those Gentile believers, and lest we should boast in this, lest we should be found judging or despising the apostate Jews of old, as though we are any better than they, or judging those in the churches today who fall away or reject the truth, Paul reminds the Gentiles, he reminds *us*, that if grafted into the tree, if kept in the tree, it is only because of God's mercy, of His grace. It is God who saves, God who shows grace, God who gives His children the gift of faith to lay hold of Christ. Salvation owes *nothing* to the works or the will of man. As it is written, "*And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then it is no more grace: otherwise work is no more work. What then? Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for; but the election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded*" (Romans 11:6-7).

ALL ISRAEL SHALL BE SAVED

Yes, God's people are saved by grace and kept by grace, but should any who *profess* to be His people turn from grace to their own works, should they turn from the truth of the gospel to another, should they be found rejecting the Son of God as He truly is, then they too, Jew or Gentile, will be branches that are broken off. Profession of faith or not, churchgoer or not, outwardly religious or not, except God grants us true faith in the truth of Christ as revealed in His gospel, we will not, we *cannot* remain in that tree, amongst that company who will inherit eternal life.

When Christ came to redeem His people the vast profession of religion amongst the Jews was found to be apostate. It was corrupt. It was rotten. It had an appearance of godliness but denied the power thereof. But for the ones and twos, the "*remnant according to the election of grace*", the Simeons and Annas who looked for redemption in Israel, who looked by faith for the coming of Messiah, but for those few disciples whom God called to follow Christ from amongst His earthly people, but for *these*, the vast profession of Judaism had departed from God. They had words, they had forms, they had outward appearances, but they had no faith in their hearts. They were apostate.

Has not the same thing come to pass amongst the Gentiles today? Look around. Take notice. Has not the vast profession of 'Christendom', the great majority of churches, be they Catholic or Protestant, Evangelical or Fundamental, Baptist or Methodist, Presbyterian or Congregational, Conservative or Charismatic, Arminian or Calvinist... whatever the form, whatever the profession, has not the great majority turned from the truth of the gospel as set forth in the scriptures to another gospel? Have they not turned from the Christ as preached by the apostles, to another Jesus? Do the people not rejoice in their own strength, in their own will, in their own freedom to approach God on their own terms, to worship Him as *they* will?

Would not Christendom today, the great mass of religious profession, reject Christ if He came "*unto his own*" as Israel did

ROMANS – THE GOSPEL OF GOD

before them? Would they not, indeed *do* they not, put Him, the true Christ, to death in their very thoughts and affections? In their rejection of the truth regarding Him, in their rejection of those sent by Christ to preach His gospel? Do they not prefer their ‘gentle Jesus, meek and mild’ who loves all, who died for all, and who helplessly stands by desiring the salvation of all, yet is impotent to actually save any? Do they not proclaim a gospel and a Jesus who changes with the times, who adapts to the fashions and trends of the day? Is their Jesus truly “*the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever*” (Hebrews 13:8)?

Is not the professing church of our day as apostate, nay, *more* apostate, than Israel was at the time of Christ’s coming?

Surely the words of Christ in Matthew 21:13 ring true about our own day and generation: “*It is written, My house shall be called the house of prayer; but ye have made it a den of thieves*”.

Face the question – is this not the case? Can we not see it all around us?

And, my reader, ask *yourself* this question: are you among that number? Are you a branch ready to be broken off, ready to be burned in the fire? Might *you*, like Esau, seek repentance but never find it?

Or have you a better hope? Has God *given* you true faith, true repentance, as with Jacob? For *both* faith and repentance are the gifts of God – we can’t simply ‘work them up’. No! We’re dead by nature, dead in trespasses and sins. But I ask – are you by God’s great mercy, by free grace alone, found among that people, that remnant of grace, that poor contrite, lowly company, whose eyes have been *opened* to see their poverty before God, their pitiful state by nature as wilful sinners, as unbelieving creatures, as ungrateful servants who stand in need of mercy, of salvation. Has God opened your eyes to see Christ in the gospel, to have the truth of God’s grace *revealed* to you? Has He lifted you up, as a beggar from off a

ALL ISRAEL SHALL BE SAVED

dunghill, and set your feet upon that sure foundation of everlasting salvation by the grace of God, through the Lord Jesus Christ?

For all the election of grace, all that chosen people of God, all His true Israel *will* be saved; despite their rebellion and unbelief by nature they *will* be brought to faith, they will be brought to hear the truth of the gospel, they will be brought to hear the voice of the Son of God say unto them, as unto the dead, *“Live!”*

For, *“The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live”* (John 5:25).


And all such branches, all God’s people saved by grace, will never, *ever*, be broken off from that True Vine, from Christ, their Saviour, for *He* will *never* leave them, nor forsake them (Hebrews 13:5). All these branches, Jews and Gentiles, will surely be brought to faith and find their rest in Christ by the sounding of His gospel, and none other – *“And so all Israel shall be saved”*.

Amen.

“My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any [man] pluck them out of my hand”, John 10:27-28.

“O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor? Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again?”

For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen”, Romans 11:33-36.



THE
LIFE OF
FAITH

XIII

ROMANS

*“...We, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one
members one of another” Romans 12:5*

ROMANS XII

I BESEECH YOU THEREFORE, BRETHREN, BY THE MERCIES OF GOD,
THAT YE PRESENT YOUR BODIES A LIVING SACRIFICE, HOLY, ACCEPTABLE UNTO GOD,
WHICH IS YOUR REASONABLE SERVICE. AND BE NOT CONFORMED TO THIS WORLD:
BUT BE YE TRANSFORMED BY THE RENEWING OF YOUR MIND, THAT YE MAY PROVE
WHAT IS THAT GOOD, AND ACCEPTABLE, AND PERFECT, WILL OF GOD.

FOR I SAY, THROUGH THE GRACE GIVEN UNTO ME, TO EVERY MAN THAT IS
AMONG YOU, NOT TO THINK OF HIMSELF MORE HIGHLY THAN HE OUGHT TO THINK;
BUT TO THINK SOBERLY, ACCORDING AS GOD HATH DEALT TO EVERY MAN THE
MEASURE OF FAITH. FOR AS WE HAVE MANY MEMBERS IN ONE BODY, AND ALL
MEMBERS HAVE NOT THE SAME OFFICE: SO WE, BEING MANY, ARE ONE BODY IN
CHRIST, AND EVERY ONE MEMBERS ONE OF ANOTHER. HAVING THEN GIFTS DIFFERING
ACCORDING TO THE GRACE THAT IS GIVEN TO US, WHETHER PROPHECY, LET US
PROPHECY ACCORDING TO THE PROPORTION OF FAITH; OR MINISTRY, LET US WAIT ON
OUR MINISTERING: OR HE THAT TEACHETH, ON TEACHING; OR HE THAT EXHORTETH,
ON EXHORTATION: HE THAT GIVETH, LET HIM DO IT WITH SIMPLICITY; HE THAT
RULETH, WITH DILIGENCE; HE THAT SHEWETH MERCY, WITH CHEERFULNESS.

LET LOVE BE WITHOUT DISSIMULATION. ABHOR THAT WHICH IS EVIL; CLEAVE TO
THAT WHICH IS GOOD. BE KINDLY AFFECTIONED ONE TO ANOTHER WITH BROTHERLY
LOVE; IN HONOUR PREFERRING ONE ANOTHER; NOT SLOTHFUL IN BUSINESS; FERVENT
IN SPIRIT; SERVING THE LORD; REJOICING IN HOPE; PATIENT IN TRIBULATION;
CONTINUING INSTANT IN PRAYER; DISTRIBUTING TO THE NECESSITY OF SAINTS;
GIVEN TO HOSPITALITY.

BLESS THEM WHICH PERSECUTE YOU: BLESS, AND CURSE NOT. REJOICE WITH THEM
THAT DO REJOICE, AND WEEP WITH THEM THAT WEEP.

BE OF THE SAME MIND ONE TOWARD ANOTHER. MIND NOT HIGH THINGS, BUT
CONDESCEND TO MEN OF LOW ESTATE. BE NOT WISE IN YOUR OWN CONCEITS.
RECOMPENSE TO NO MAN EVIL FOR EVIL. PROVIDE THINGS HONEST IN THE
SIGHT OF ALL MEN. IF IT BE POSSIBLE, AS MUCH AS LIETH IN YOU,
LIVE PEACEABLY WITH ALL MEN.

DEARLY BELOVED, AVENGE NOT YOURSELVES, BUT RATHER GIVE PLACE UNTO WRATH:
FOR IT IS WRITTEN, VENGEANCE IS MINE; I WILL REPAY, SAITH THE LORD.
THEREFORE IF THINE ENEMY HUNGER, FEED HIM; IF HE THIRST, GIVE HIM DRINK:
FOR IN SO DOING THOU SHALT HEAP COALS OF FIRE ON HIS HEAD.
BE NOT OVERCOME OF EVIL, BUT OVERCOME EVIL WITH GOOD.

One Body in Christ

“...We, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another” Romans 12:5

*“And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence”
Colossians 1:18*

HAVING considered in chapters 9 to 11 of Romans just who the people of God are – those whom God has elected unto salvation, that chosen people called out from among both the Jews and Gentiles, a people of faith – Paul, in chapter 12, then commences to direct that people in their walk of faith.

It is important to note throughout the following chapters the overriding emphasis upon *faith* in the walk of the believer. Paul does not so much concentrate upon the outward conduct as upon that which governs it – faith. Whatever the exhortation – *faith* is what fulfils, and *love* is its outworking, and both are the work of God, being the fruit of the Spirit within. Throughout these chapters the emphasis continues to be not upon man and *his* works, but upon God and *His* works, and upon His people’s absolute reliance upon God and His work of grace in them as they walk in this world looking unto Him by faith. Constantly the gaze is lifted up above earthly things unto heavenly things, from that which is of the flesh, to that which is of the Spirit, from that which is but carnal, to that which is spiritual. Constantly man is abased, and Christ is exalted. Man is laid low, and Christ is raised up high. God will either do *all* for His people, or He will do *nothing*. It is God who saves, God who leads, God who keeps, and God who preserves. Hence Paul reminds his hearers towards the end of chapter 12 to *“avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is*

mine; I will repay, saith the Lord". God justified His people at the cross through the sacrifice of His own Son – so will He not avenge them? He will indeed!

Yes, the walk of the child of God is a walk of faith, for God *will* do everything for the salvation of His people. *Everything!*

So, in chapter 12 Paul leads our thoughts from that which is natural to that which is spiritual, beginning with the natural body and its reasonable service unto the Lord, and then directing the attention towards the spiritual Body which God's people are in Christ. Having instructed the people of God not to be conformed to this world but transformed through the renewing of their minds (Romans 12:2), in verses 4 and 5 Paul then speaks of that One Body which God's people are in Christ. Here the gaze of faith is lifted up from that which is natural to that which is spiritual – the Body of Christ.

"For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office: So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another", Romans 12:4-5.

In Colossians 1:18 Paul refers to Christ as *"the head of the body, the church"*. Here Paul touches upon a great mystery, the Body of Christ, His Church, in whom Christ dwells. I have not the space to open up this glorious theme fully here, an exposition of the Epistle to the Ephesians probably being more suited to that end, but we may nevertheless rightly ask the question, just what is the Body of Christ, the Church, as spoken of here?

Indeed, in these days of many 'religions', many 'churches', many beliefs and ideals, the question may well be asked, and rightly asked, which of *these* is the true church... indeed just *what* is the Church?

A worshipping people...

Let us consider a few aspects about the church as revealed in God's word, the Bible. Firstly, as is evident from the passage in Romans 12 concerning the Body of Christ, the Church of God is not a building. It may meet *in* buildings, but it is not a physical building. The English word 'church' is used to translate the Greek word *ekklesia* as used in the New Testament, and *ekklesia* essentially means a *called out congregation* or *assembly* of people. God's church, His *ekklesia*, is not a building, but *His people*, called out from the world to worship Him, and not only is this people called *out* but it is called *into* the fellowship of God's Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. God's church, Christ's church, the *Body of Christ*, is a worshipping people, a people who worship "*in spirit and in truth*" (John 4:23). Described as the *ekklesia*, the assembly of God, such a people may gather and worship God in many congregations around the world, but in God's eyes, they are One people, One body, One assembly, united by their common love for God and worship of Him. This was typified by the nation of Israel in the Old Testament scriptures who were themselves a people chosen of God to worship Him, as a picture and foreshadowing of that *spiritual* Israel, the church of God in Christ.

God's people...

Not only is the Church of God, the *ekklesia* of Christ, a called out assembly of people who worship God, but it is *God's church*, it is *His people*. God's church is that people whom God the Father chose in Christ from before the foundation of the world unto salvation "*...according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace*" (see Ephesians 1:3-6), whom Jesus Christ, the Son of God, *loved and gave Himself for* (Ephesians 5:25) in laying down His life in the place of His people that He might suffer the judgment of God against their sins, that they might have "*redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins*" (Ephesians 1:7). Such people, those who are sinners by nature, at enmity with God their Maker, far off from God

(Ephesians 2:17), described in the Bible as being “*dead in trespasses and sins*” (Ephesians 2:1) are, in the will of God, in His time, brought to hear the *good news* of Jesus Christ, the *Gospel* of Christ. They hear of how the Son of God entered this world by being made flesh and taking human nature into perfect union with His Divine Person so that He might live as a man amongst sinners and suffer and die in the place of His people in order to take their sins and the judgment of God against them away, that God might be just in forgiving them of their sins, washing them clean, declaring them just and righteous before Him and giving them eternal life in Christ that they might live and worship Him for ever. Through the preaching of this gospel, God the Holy Spirit causes this people to be *born again* by His almighty power, delivered from the darkness and death of their sin, into the light and life of the Gospel of Christ. It is *this* people whom God calls His Church. This is the *ekklesia* of Christ whom He purchased at great price – with His own blood, through His death upon the cross in the place of His people.

Called by grace...

The church of God, then, is that people whom God has saved through the Person and Work of His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, who are born again of the Spirit, hearing and believing the truth of Christ as declared in His gospel, and who are gathered as assemblies in various localities to worship God, in *spirit* and in *truth*. God’s word, the Bible, tells us a number of other things about the church. Not only is the church referred to as Christ’s, whom He loves, but He also declares in Matthew 16:18 that, “*I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it*”. Christ *builds* His church. He died for all those whom God the Father gave to Him as His people, and by the preaching of His gospel, by the mouths of those men whom He sends to preach it, through the power of the Holy Spirit, Christ calls that people out from the darkness of this world to believe on Him and to gather with His people, in the church. This is a work of God’s *grace* to bring His people to believe on Him, by His will, not theirs, as John 6:29 tells us, “*This is the work*

of God, that ye believe on him [Jesus Christ] whom he hath sent". Likewise Ephesians 2:4-5 tells us, "But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved)". And if by grace, then of 'Sovereign Grace', grace which reigns (Romans 5:21), for the grace of God, His undeserved, unmerited mercy towards sinners, is freely given by His will, being Lord of all – by Christ, the King of kings.

Indwelt by God...

Not only is the church said to be *Christ's*, and that *He* builds it, but He is also described as being the *Head* of the Church. "*And [God] hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all*" (Ephesians 1:22-23). Here we read of how Christ fills all in all. He dwells in His people, and in His church. For the church is not only a people gathered to worship God, but it is described in the scriptures as God's dwelling place, as His habitation – indeed as the very *Body* of Christ in which He dwells. We have stated that the church is not a physical building, but the people of God, and the Bible teaches us that it is *in* this people that God makes His habitation, Christ by His Spirit dwelling in their hearts by faith. Acts 17:24 tells us that God, "*dwelleth not in temples made with hands*", for God's people are described as His habitation "*In whom [Christ] all the building [of God's people] fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: in whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit*" (Ephesians 2:21-22).

So, we see that the church of God is that people called out by God to worship Him, for whom Christ died, having set His love upon them. The Church is *Christ's*, *He* is the *Head* of it, *He dwells* within it, *He reigns* within it, and *He builds* it. And He does so through the preaching of His gospel, which the Bible describes as "*the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth*" (Romans 1:16). It is by the preaching of the gospel that Christ builds His church, adds to it,

increases it and strengthens it. Described in 1 Timothy 3:15 as “*the pillar and ground of the truth*” the church is also described as the “*household of God*” and is “*built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone*”, and that foundation, that teaching of God regarding Christ as declared by the apostles and the prophets of old is set forth and proclaimed in the preaching of Christ in His gospel. Hence the preaching of the gospel from the word of God is not only that by which God’s people are saved, but is that by which the church is built and sustained, and it forms the centre of all worship of God in His church, “*For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent? ... So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God*” (Romans 10:13-15,17).

...Who worship *in spirit and in truth*

Having asked what the church of God is, we may also wonder how that church worships God when it gathers together?

Unlike much that is done in the name of ‘worship’ in many religious gatherings today, which are either full of pomp or ceremony, of outward form or ritual, or just frothy sentimentalism or entertainment, the church of God as described in the scriptures, and the way in which it worships, is actually very simple and without much ceremony. What is at the heart of true worship is the centrality of Christ in the meetings. The church is One Body *in Christ*. Quite simply, *Christ is all*.

At one time, in the days of His flesh, Christ walked upon this earth bodily. *Now*, having died, risen again and ascended, He sits in glory on the right hand of God the Father, yet even now, though not here physically, Christ still indwells His people collectively as One Body upon the earth, of which He is the Head – *especially* when they

ONE BODY IN CHRIST

are gathered together *“with one accord in one place”* (Acts 2:1). Oh, what a glorious mystery this is! Here, more than anywhere, Christ meets His people in a particular way, by His Spirit, as they meet as His Body. Christ says in Matthew 28:20, *“Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world”* and how true this is, especially in the experience of God’s people when they gather to worship Him who saved them.

True worship is to love and adore Christ, the Head of the Church, in whom God has revealed Himself to man. This is an act of faith, which works by love (Galatians 5:6), which springs from the new heart of the believer. We cannot worship Him whom we do not know, as we have seen in Romans 10, and the true knowledge of God as Father, Son and Holy Ghost, resulting in belief in Him and worship of Him, is made known by the preaching of Christ in His gospel. Hence the centre-point of all true worship is the preaching of Christ, the preaching of the truth as it is in Jesus, in His gospel. This results in worship from the hearts of God’s people who hear. Whilst their worship may also be expressed in singing, prayer and praise, all these things have no meaning unless we know *of whom* we sing, or to whom we come in prayer. True worship is not about ceremony, forms, rituals or entertainment, but is centred on God in Christ, as preached in His gospel. True worship is not an outward thing, but an inward, spiritual exercise, emanating from the heart, by faith, through love, towards God and His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. Such an inward exercise maintains the unity of the church together as One Body in Christ, who dwells in each member individually, but also in all particularly as One Body united in Him, centred upon Him by faith as the Head of the Body, who is its very life and strength.

In order to ensure this centrality of the preaching of the gospel in the meetings of God’s people, in order to give it free course, to remove hindrances to its being preached, and to keep God’s people’s gaze clearly set upon Christ and His work, God has given several simple guidelines in the Bible for how He should be worshipped (for example in 1 Corinthians or 1 Timothy), and has

given several ‘ordinances’ to be kept in the church as vivid pictures of Christ and His work. These ordinances include the ordinance of Baptism by which those who are brought to faith in Christ declare that faith publicly to others by confessing Christ’s Name in baptism, in which they are immersed in water as a picture of being buried with Christ in His death and having risen again with Him in His resurrection, having had their sins washed away by His blood (see Romans 6). We can read of this practice in Acts 2:41: *“Then they that gladly received his word were baptized”*. Having been baptized these early Christians met for worship as described in verse 42: *“And they continued stedfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.”* Notice the primary place given here to the apostles’ doctrine – that is the *preaching of Christ* in His gospel.

Not only does the church remember the ordinance of baptism, but it also remembers the Lord Jesus’ death in the ordinance of the ‘Lord’s Supper’. The Apostle Paul describes this in his first epistle to the church at Corinth in which he sets down a number of guidelines for how God should be approached in worship. In 1 Corinthians 11:23-26 he reminds them of the importance and meaning of the Lord’s Supper: *“For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread: And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord’s death till he come.”* Here we see what a powerful picture is depicted by the act of remembrance in the Lord’s Supper of the Lord Jesus’ death for sinners – the breaking of bread and drinking of wine, pointing to how His body was broken and His blood was shed that He might redeem them from their sins. As often as the church gathers to *“eat this bread”* and *“drink this cup”* they show forth *“the Lord’s death till he come”*. What a simple act this is, but what a wonderful reminder of Christ and His work to save sinners!

ONE BODY IN CHRIST

In the same chapter in 1 Corinthians we read of another ordinance which God has given to His church to illustrate a vital truth in a simple, yet clear and vivid manner – that truth being the Headship of Christ over His church. In chapter 11 verses 3-5 God the Holy Spirit states, *“But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God. Every man praying or prophesying, having his head covered, dishonoureth his head. But every woman that prayeth or prophesieth with her head uncovered dishonoureth her head: for that is even all one as if she were shaven.”* Christ is the Head of His church, that church often being depicted in the Bible as His bride. For this reason, and to illuminate this truth, here we are reminded of God’s order, of the Headship of Christ over His church, of how Christ is the head of the man and the man is the head of the woman, this relationship between the man and the woman being a reflection of Christ’s relationship to His bride, the church. In order to set forth this picture of Christ’s Headship in the church – as pictured by God’s order in male and female – God has provided this further simple ordinance for His church, for men to worship with their heads *uncovered* and for women to worship with their heads *covered*. What a tremendous truth this represents, with such simplicity! It is for this reason that when Christians gather to worship in the church, the women are directed to wear a head covering (hat or scarf¹) and likewise, the men should not. For by obedience in so doing the gathered church plainly declares both its willing submission to Christ’s Headship over His bride (His people) and His authority in the midst – and also the fact that as that bride, the church approaches unto God as having its nakedness and sin *covered* by Christ’s blood.

By such simple ordinances in God’s church, great truths are portrayed. Should anyone ask why we baptise, we may declare plainly the death and resurrection of believers in Christ. Should anyone ponder the meaning of the bread and wine, the death of our Lord is clearly set forth by them as depicting His body broken and His blood shed. And should anyone wonder why women cover their heads, and men do not, the glorious truth of Christ’s Headship

over His church and His authority and centrality within it can be clearly proclaimed. God hasn't given many requirements for outward form in His church, but those He has, in His wisdom, display such glorious and central truths relating to Christ and His work for, and in, His *ekklesia* – those same truths which we see declared in word and doctrine in the preaching of Christ in His gospel. It is this preaching of the truth which these simple ordinances help to maintain as the centre of all true worship. For since God the Father seeks a people who worship "*in spirit and in truth*" (John 4:23), for that worship to be in truth *the truth must be proclaimed*. It is by the preaching of the truth in Christ in His gospel, by the power of the Spirit, that Christ builds and gathers His church, as one company, one assembly of His people, His elect, who hearing of Christ in the gospel are given faith by God the Holy Spirit to worship Him, who loved them and gave Himself for them (Galatians 2:21). What a Saviour the gospel makes known, who, loving His own, gave Himself through death to save them, for "*God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us*" (Romans 5:8).

The church of the living God

So to come back to our original question: what is the church, the Body of Christ? It is that people called out of this world by God to worship Him, the living God, as revealed in Christ and in His gospel. The true church is not that which man builds, but that which is built by Christ, by the preaching of His word, and it is that over which He is the Head, that which was given to Him as His bride by His Father from before the foundation of this world, that for which He suffered and bled in death in order to perfect and purify as His own and that in which He dwells by His Spirit as the very life of the Body. The '*church of the living God*' is that company who worship the living God in '*spirit and in truth*', having the truth of God in Christ proclaimed in the midst through the preaching of the gospel, as being the '*pillar and ground of the truth*'. This is the

ONE BODY IN CHRIST

church of God, and anything short of it, or contrary to it, is but a counterfeit.

But praise God that He continues to build His church through the preaching of His gospel, even in this our day. Praise God that that church, the Body of Christ, still gathers as many members of one Body, who serve one another in love, as Christ first loved them, in order to serve, worship and adore the great Head of that Body, its Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ.

May God be pleased to send forth the gospel, which proclaims the message of this Saviour and His grace towards sinners, in power today, that many may be saved and that His Name might be glorified in the midst of His people!

“And I will walk among you, and will be your God, and ye shall be my people”, Leviticus 26:12.

Amen.

[¹ Whilst some today consent to the teaching regarding Christ’s Headship over His church as set forth in 1 Corinthians 11, and recognise God’s order in the distinctions made between male and female, and also recognise that such ordinances have nothing to do with legalism, but everything to do with faithful obedience to God’s word and a loving desire to willingly submit to Christ’s authority and Headship in His church, and to *demonstrate that...* they nevertheless explain away Paul’s intent in this passage regarding head-coverings by claiming that the woman’s hair *itself* is the only covering necessary in worship (see verse 15). However it is not Paul’s intent in his illustration from nature in verses 14 and 15 to argue that the woman’s long hair is the *same* covering described in verses 5-7 (*indeed a different Greek word is translated as ‘cover’ in verse 15 from that word translated similarly in verse 5 which more literally would be translated ‘veiled’*), but it is instead to demonstrate *from* this natural comparison of male and female (in which a woman has a natural covering of longer hair than men in order to show God’s order in the natural realm) *that* the covering of a woman’s head in approaching unto God in public worship, with an additional cover over the hair, is both right and proper for “*does not even nature itself teach you...?*”. Indeed if the hair alone were the cover of which Paul speaks in verse 5, then not only would it make a nonsense of the statement made in verse 5 itself (since not being covered would actually then *mean* being shaven, if the cover is the hair, hence the statement

ROMANS – THE GOSPEL OF GOD

“for that is even all one as if she were shaven” would become irrelevant), but it would also require that men approach unto God *bald*, for it is not the *length* of covering which is stressed in verse 5 but the respective *presence* of a covering or not, so if hair be the covering, men should not have a covering, and hence they should be shaved!

... Now, it is not my desire to labour such points, but faithful exegesis of the passage can really lead one to no other conclusion but that Christ’s Headship in His church is to be demonstrated visibly in its public assembly by the men having uncovered heads and the women wearing head-coverings – a practice which has been the accepted ‘norm’ within Christianity for hundreds of years, and has only really been set aside since the rise of the feminist movement in the 1960s. John Gill, for example, in his comments on 1 Corinthians 11, presents such sound exegesis and is well worth reading. This all said however, it cannot be stressed enough that outward forms in worship, in and of themselves are of nothing worth, if the thing pictured by the form is not understood. Sadly, there are many who can be very strict about adherence to such practices as head-coverings who think little of what the form pictures and who in their hearts are not subject to the Headship of Christ in His church, just as many others argue and divide over the correct application or mode of baptism. But that such things can be abused or adopted in a legal manner does not mean that they should in any way be set aside, but rather that they should be practised in the right spirit and attitude, looking past the forms to the glorious truths depicted by them, with God-given faith. May God keep us from a legal spirit and grant gracious hearts to worship Him in the *ekklesia* in spirit and in truth.]

The Gifts of Grace

*“Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us...”
Romans 12:6*

*“Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit.
And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord.
And there are diversities of operations, but it is
the same God which worketh all in all”
1 Corinthians 12:4-6*

IN the twelfth chapter of Romans, when considering believers as many members of one body in Christ, who walk by faith, ministering to one another in the assembly of the saints, Paul encourages them to walk in the will of God, in humility serving one another and preferring one another over themselves (Romans 12:10). In verse 6 he makes reference to the various gifts which God in grace gives to His people, that they, as different members of one body, may be able to serve God and one another.

Elsewhere in the New Testament, especially in the First Epistle to the Corinthians, we also read of various gifts of the Spirit which were given to believers and practised in the churches. Some of these gifts were miraculous and some not so miraculous. In Romans 12 the focus is upon prophecy, ministering, teaching, exhortation, rule and mercy. In 1 Corinthians however, other, seemingly more miraculous gifts, such as tongues and healings, are mentioned. We also read of various miracles being performed by the apostles during the time of the early New Testament church.

Many today are fascinated by the miraculous and supernatural and many in Christendom are taken up with these accounts of miracles, signs, wonders and the gifts of the Spirit and desire to see

such things repeated in the churches in our day. Indeed many would claim that it is only when such things are made manifest in the church that the Spirit of God is truly working. They claim that such manifestations of the Spirit authenticate their ministry and churches, and demonstrate the power of God at work.

But are these claims true? Is it true that such signs and wonders continue today? Do the miraculous gifts of the Spirit continue to be given and exercised in the church now? Do such things continue to the present day or did they cease with the passing away of the twelve apostles once the early New Testament church had been formed? Perhaps some gifts have ceased but others remain, and if so, which gifts continue to the present and in what form?

Let us examine this subject of the gifts of the Spirit and their continuation today, primarily with regard to the gift of prophecy. By considering this particular gift we can also draw some conclusions regarding the continuance of the other gifts today.

The inauguration of Israel and the inauguration of the New Testament Church

‘Signs and wonders’ were used by God when Israel was brought out of Egypt, to mark the nation’s deliverance and the subsequent giving of the law, for the time until they crossed over the river Jordan. During this period of 40 years they were led by a pillar of cloud, a pillar of fire, there was water from the Rock, and they were fed by manna from heaven. All were signs which ceased once the children of Israel crossed Jordan and for the hundreds of years following until the time of Christ. (This can be seen from the fact that these signs were recorded in the books of Moses and only ever mentioned elsewhere in the Bible as historical references to those times. Joshua 5:6-12 informs us of the cessation of the provision of manna. See also Nehemiah 9:9-21, Psalm 99:6-7, Psalm 105:23-45, Isaiah 48:21, Psalm 78:1-32, and John 6.)

THE GIFTS OF GRACE

Likewise, with the inauguration of the New Testament there were many signs and wonders demonstrated, and miraculous and special gifts of the Spirit given to mark a special time in the history of the church until the full canon of scripture was produced and their necessity ceased. This is similar to what happened in the time of Moses.

The fact that the children of Israel had these signs for 40 years was significant. In the New Testament Christ rose from the dead and ascended around AD30. In AD70 the temple of Jerusalem was destroyed. A period of 40 years, during which the New Testament church was formed and the gospel had gone out to the Gentiles. During this time the people of God were fed on the 'Bread of heaven' by the preaching of the apostles and by those who then prophesied by the Spirit declaring the truths of the Gospel of Christ as laid upon their memories by the Spirit until all the scripture had been set to paper, and gathered together, not long after.

Prophecy preferred over tongues

In 1 Corinthians Paul discusses the gifts of the Spirit and their use in the gatherings of the church. In 1 Corinthians 14 he shows how the gift of prophecy is to be preferred to the gift of tongues. Why? Because tongues were beneficial to those who spoke in them as led by the Spirit, and only to others if an interpreter existed. How often today are there truly interpreters of those who speak in tongues? I daresay some would claim there are, but if there are not, as Paul says, it would be better for those who speak in tongues to keep silent.

But Paul emphasises the preference of prophecy over tongues. Why? Because prophecy is intelligible and is beneficial to the whole church which hears it. It presents 'truth', it edifies, and the secrets of the heart are made manifest in those who hear (1 Corinthians 14:25). Much like preaching does today.

But Paul states that all things should be done in order. Those who prophesy should do so by two or three (1 Corinthians 14:29), and the spirits of the prophets are subject to the Old Testament prophets (1 Corinthians 14:32).

Why is this?

Well, at the time of the church at Corinth – the early church – the written New Testament didn't fully exist. Certainly those believers in the churches had very little of it. Each assembly of saints may have had a letter or two from the apostles, but not the full canon of scripture, and certainly not in the possession of each believer. So people couldn't 'preach' from the Bible. They had to do so from their memories of the truths of the gospel which had been taught to them by the apostles, as they were led of the Spirit. This is described as 'prophesying'. And to ensure that what people stood up and said in the assembly was truly that gospel, of the Spirit, and not error, Paul encourages those who prophesy to do so in twos and threes so that each man could testify to the truth of what the other had said. Also what they said needed to be subject to the prophets, meaning to be subject to what others in the assembly prophesied/preached, and also to what the Old Testament prophets had written and to what that church had of the New Testament writings.

So this 'prophesying' by the Spirit was essentially preaching of the gospel in a day and age when men couldn't preach that gospel from the scriptures because of the lack of them. (Some may think of the gift of prophecy as having more to do with foretelling of future events. Certainly this type of prophecy is seen in the Bible, but the gift of prophecy mentioned in 1 Corinthians 14 is connected with teaching the truth concerning Jesus Christ. This can be seen from the fact that the gift of a prophet given to the church is listed in Ephesians 4:11-15 alongside other teaching roles such as pastors and teachers. All these roles were given for the edifying of the body of Christ, just as prophecy in 1 Corinthians 14 was given for edification – 1 Corinthians 14:3.) So, owing to the lack of written scriptures, those who prophesied were led by the Spirit to bring truths from

THE GIFTS OF GRACE

their remembrance which they had received from the apostles, but they needed others to corroborate what they said as being true to the Apostolic Gospel, true to what they had been taught by the apostles, and true to the scriptures which they *did have*. And when the New Testament was completed it would be seen to be true to that as a whole.

With the apostolic church having been established we now have the completed scriptures. These are widely available in the churches. Prophecy in the sense of 1 Corinthians 14 now continues as preaching, without the need for two or three to preach in the same way in order to corroborate what is said. We can now compare what the preacher says with the Bible to see if he truly speaks of the Spirit, or is in error. Anything preached of the Spirit will accord with what is in the Bible and will not be a 'new revelation' outside of it.

Now that scripture is complete the necessity of special gifts of the Spirit, such as speaking in tongues and prophesying by the Spirit (without written scripture), has gone. Prophecy continues in the form of preaching by the Spirit from the word of God. The Spirit *always* prophesied in accordance with that word, at one time before it had been recorded, but now having been recorded still in accord with it. As it says in John 14:26 and John 15:26:

"But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you."

"But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me".

It is clear from these verses that those things the Spirit 'brings to our remembrance' are those things which testify of Christ. As has been noted, before the New Testament scriptures were complete, the Spirit would testify of Christ by causing men to prophesy truths

of the gospel regarding Christ which had yet to be set down on paper, but which were *being taught by the Apostles*. Once those truths had been recorded in scripture then the *administration* of these truths changed. The need for ‘prophecy’ having gone, all further prophecy/preaching would be in accord with the completed Bible. The Spirit would still be involved in this but the Bible would now take the place of the ‘twos and threes’ to corroborate the word preached.

The manna which fed Israel in the wilderness ceased after they crossed Jordan, and the people were then fed with normal food. They didn’t stop eating, but *how* their food was provided was changed, the *administration* of their food changed. Thus the same thing is reflected in the New Testament age. There is still the feeding on the Bread of Heaven (John 6), but the way in which that is *administered* is now by preaching from the written word, not by prophesying ‘apart’ from the word (1 Corinthians 12:4-6). Hence, whilst the Spirit’s gift of prophesying continues to this day, the *form* of that prophesying has changed – it is now the preaching of the word of God *from* the scriptures. Yet it must be emphasised that *it is by the Spirit* that the scriptures are preached from – we are no less reliant upon the Spirit and His revelation of God’s truth than those in the early church were. Indeed, without the Spirit’s leading into truth the Bible remains a closed book to men, they simply cannot understand it except the Spirit opens it up to them (see 1 Corinthians 2:7-16).

The inner work of the Spirit contrasted with that which is outward

The ‘miraculous’ signs and provisions which God used during Israel’s 40 year pilgrimage – the manna, the pillar of fire, the pillar of cloud, and water from the rock – represented various things. They demonstrated the Lord’s presence amongst the people, His guidance of them and His feeding and watering them. But God only used the outwardly miraculous for a relatively short time. But more

THE GIFTS OF GRACE

importantly these signs also have other spiritual significance too, in pointing to Christ – manna typifying Christ, the Bread of heaven, the water from the Rock also pointing to Christ, in fact they all point to Christ in one way or another – but nevertheless they also had an immediate relevance to Israel through what they provided – guidance, feeding, watering.

Again, with the inauguration of the New Testament similar miraculous signs and gifts of the Spirit were evidenced. Various ‘signs and wonders’ like miraculous healings by the apostles were performed which showed the Lord’s presence in a powerful, outward way to demonstrate God’s work in the establishment of the New Testament church. Likewise gifts of the Spirit such as prophecy and tongues were used to guide, edify and feed the people. There is a similarity here between these ‘gifts’ and the signs mentioned in the Old Testament.

With the completion of the scriptures the need for such ‘outward’ manifestations of the Spirit’s work passed, and God continued from that time forth to work by the Spirit in a more inward way through the preaching of the gospel, leading to the resultant New Birth by the Spirit, the ‘baptism’ of the Spirit. This is no less miraculous a work, but it is *inward*, not an outward thing. Such preaching results in men who are dead in trespasses and sins being quickened unto life by the Spirit, given new hearts and receiving the gift of faith to believe and rest in the finished work of salvation for sinners wrought out by Jesus Christ at the cross by His death. This powerful work of the Spirit is one which is essentially inward – within man – not outward.

Yet outward things appeal to men in the flesh. People like to *see* ‘miracles’. Seeing ‘miracles’ with the eye doesn’t require faith. Such apparent miracles demonstrate the supernatural and provide proof of it, but don’t require faith to believe in the supernatural. But Christians walk by faith, not by sight. Faith believes in things that can’t be seen with the natural eye, things which are ‘hidden’ (Hebrews 11:1). God uses outwardly miraculous signs at such times

in history which indicate a great event in His work, such as the deliverance of Israel from Egypt, and the start of the New Testament church both during the life of Christ and shortly after under the Apostolic ministry. This was to demonstrate to all who looked on, including unbelievers, that God was at work in a particularly significant way (ie. Christ had come in the flesh!). But once this had been shown, and testimony to it was recorded in the scriptures, then God continued to work by His Spirit in the more 'hidden' realm of men's hearts.

Prophetic guidance contrasted with the Spirit's teaching gift of prophecy

We have seen that the nature of the gift of prophecy described in 1 Corinthians 14 is that of teaching. Some may question whether all prophecy is of that nature and would claim that we read of various examples of prophecy in the New Testament, such as in the book of Acts, which are of a predictive nature – a foretelling of events. For example in Acts 21:10-11 we read of the prophet Agabus approaching Paul and warning him not to go to Jerusalem because the Jews there would persecute him.

It is true that such 'prophecies' occurred in the New Testament. However these sorts of prophecies are not what are described by Paul in 1 Corinthians 14 as being related to the Spirit's gift of prophecy. The context is very different and they also don't fall into the pattern laid down by Paul in that chapter.

By stating that 1 Corinthians 14 describes a form of prophecy which is primarily of a preaching and teaching nature I am not suggesting that this was the only form of prophecy there was in the New Testament. It is true that there are several instances of prophecy throughout the New Testament which are evidently of a predictive nature. During the Early Church days there were indeed prophets who prophesied by the Spirit in a predictive way and there were also those who prophesied in the gathering of the

assembly by the Spirit to teach the Gospel of Christ to the church. These are two different forms of prophecy, both by the Spirit, which occurred during that time.

Most of the examples we may find of 'foretelling prophecies' in Acts however are simply occurrences of the Lord guiding people in specific ways, either through dreams, or by the Spirit. The Spirit's leading of Philip to approach the chariot of the Ethiopian eunuch for example isn't prophecy, but a *leading* of the Spirit. Likewise the angel appearing to Cornelius, or the Lord speaking to Paul in visions. Other examples are those of specific prophets with a message from the Lord, for instance Agabus. However none of these examples are taken from gatherings of the church during a meeting where two or three prophets stand up in turn and prophesy and where the people 'learn' by these prophecies and are edified, exhorted and comforted. It could be argued that Agabus might have delivered his prophecy regarding the famine in such a context but that really isn't clear from the text. So none of these examples really fit with what Paul is encouraging in the gathering of the assembly in 1 Corinthians 14.

What Paul is dealing with in 1 Corinthians, especially in chapters 10-15, is the Body of Christ and how that is built up. It is no coincidence that the subject of the gifts of the Spirit such as tongues and prophecy is dealt with in the very same epistle written to a church which had fallen into such outward, fleshly corruption where fornication and other sins went on unchecked, where the Lord's Supper was abused, and so on. This was a church obsessed with outward fleshly things. And therefore also obsessed with those 'spiritual' things which had outward, supernatural, manifestations. The Corinthians thought it the height of spirituality to speak in tongues or to give prophetic revelations.

But Paul deals with this obsession with the outward not by outrightly forbidding the use of tongues or prophecy, but by gently guiding the church towards that which is best; that which will really build up the church. And that, ultimately, is the Gospel of Christ. So

we see a progression from chapter 12 where the Body and its members are described, through an emphasis on love in chapter 13 (the gift which if prevalent would eventually overcome all the failings in the church), through prophecy being much preferred to tongues in chapter 14 (Why? Because by it the church is edified, encouraged and comforted because it is built up in the Gospel of Christ – it ‘learns’ by it), through to chapter 15 where Paul again discusses the gospel and how the church should “*keep in memory what I preached unto you*” (1 Corinthians 15:2). This leads on to the truths of the coming resurrection of the dead.

The point here is that chapter 15 emphasises what Paul *delivered* to the church. *The Gospel of Christ*. That which declares Christ to be “*the power of God, and the wisdom of God*” (1 Corinthians 1:24). This is what should be in their ‘memory’. As 14:36 indicates, the word of God came to Corinth by Paul’s preaching, from God, it didn’t come out of them. What they should ‘prophesy’ in their meetings should be those truths, kept in their memory, which Paul taught them, which the Spirit then brings to mind in the prophets who would then speak as led by the Spirit in the meeting, by two or three. Paul “*received*” these truths from God and delivered them to the church at Corinth (15:3). Likewise their prophets should speak those things “*revealed*” to them (14:30) by the Spirit. The same truths that Paul had “*received*” of the Spirit and preached.

What truths are these? 1 Corinthians 15:3-11 tells us:

“...how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures:

And that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve: After that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep. After that, he was seen of James; then of all the apostles. And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time. For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I

THE GIFTS OF GRACE

persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.

Therefore whether it were I or they, so we preach, and so ye believed."

Thus we are led full circle back to what Paul emphasises right at the start of the epistle in chapters 1-4: "*But we preach Christ crucified*" (1 Corinthians 1:23). "*For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified*" (2:2). The focal point of the *whole* letter is "*Christ Crucified*". The gospel.

This is what the prophecy of chapter 14 regards – the Gospel of Christ. That is why Paul encourages its use. And in that sense it is still encouraged today because we preach and teach the same gospel *from the scriptures*, by the Spirit.

The outwardly supernatural nature of prophecy along with other signs and wonders seen at the time of the Early Church demonstrated in power the formation of the Church, that Christ had come, died, and risen again, and that the Spirit was now given to God's people in the church. Under the Apostolic doctrine the Church of Christ was established, as testified by these outward signs. But once established, and the scriptures completed, these outward demonstrations of the Spirit's work were replaced with an equally powerful work in the more hidden, inward realm of men's hearts.

The prophecy or preaching which we now have is still very much a gift of the Spirit who ensures that the gospel comes, "*not in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance*" (1 Thessalonians 1:5), but it is by means of the scriptures. Likewise, we continue to be guided by God, by the Spirit, through various means, but not with the same direct, supernatural prophecies as seen in the New Testament (at least this is not usual – it may have been seen in the Early Church, but it is no longer required to the same extent

now as God guides His people primarily through the word of God and the preaching of that word by His Spirit).

Other gifts of the Spirit

Of course there are various kinds of gifts of the Spirit, various ‘charismata’, and prophecy is just one of them. For example we read in 1 Corinthians 12:4-12:

*“Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal. For to one is given by the Spirit the **word of wisdom**; to another the **word of knowledge** by the same Spirit; To another **faith** by the same Spirit; to another the **gifts of healing** by the same Spirit; To another the **working of miracles**; to another **prophecy**; to another **discerning of spirits**; to another **divers kinds of tongues**; to another the **interpretation of tongues**: But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will. For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ.”*

All these gifts of the Spirit ultimately have one purpose – the edification of the body of Christ. There is one body with many members and there are diversities of gifts given to those members, but all the gifts are given that the body might be edified, strengthened, and built up in the knowledge and wisdom of God. It is in this light that we must consider these gifts and the way in which they are manifested and used in our day. Are the ‘gifts’ we see exhibited in some churches today truly being used for the edification of the body through the truth, by the proclamation of the word, by feeding the body upon Christ, or do they rather draw attention to man rather than Christ and excite the flesh rather than direct the gaze of faith towards the Saviour? I believe that any

THE GIFTS OF GRACE

continuation of 'prophecy' today will be in accord with the written word of God, which is now complete, as there is no new revelation given today beyond the scriptures. That doesn't mean that we can rule out the continuation of all gifts of the Spirit – not at all – but it is clear that the more outward manifestations of gifts have served their purpose during the time of the early New Testament church. So the same principles set forward here regarding prophecy can also be related to other gifts of the Spirit, such as healing for example. Yes, there is a gift of healing which continues to this day, but in keeping with the inward nature of the working of the Spirit upon the heart through the gospel, which so characterises the ongoing work of the Spirit in our day, I believe that the gift of healing we see today is that which is edifying to the body of Christ. This is a gift of healing which comes through the preaching of "Christ Crucified" and which provides true healing for the souls of God's people, which brings them to peace with God, which washes them clean from their sin, and which brings them into unity with their brethren. How often do we see disunity and wounds appearing between brethren? How wonderful then that God still provides the gift of healing to His people to heal those wounds and to strengthen the Body of Christ in the midst of its ongoing spiritual warfare with the many enemies which are set against it.

Is there the word of wisdom granted by the Spirit today? Yes, certainly. The word of knowledge? Yes. Faith? Most assuredly. Gifts of healing? Yes, but of an inward, spiritual nature to the edification and healing of the body of Christ. The working of miracles? Again, yes, in the inward sense, for it is true that the conversion of a sinner to new life in Christ Jesus under the power of the gospel is indeed a miracle, and those sent to preach that gospel can but stand by in awe and wonder at the mighty power of God in turning men from darkness to light. The discernment of spirits? Yes, indeed, this gift continues today for we must "test the spirits" and as we now have a completed canon of scripture we can also compare what men say with what is recorded in Holy Writ. What of tongues and the interpretation thereof? Well, as has been previously stated, Paul encouraged prophecy over and above the use of tongues and both

gifts ultimately are a means of conveying the truth of the gospel for the edification of the Body of Christ. This continues today through the preaching of the word as recorded in scripture. But what of the outwardly miraculous? Well, as has been already mentioned, such things occurred at the inauguration of the New Testament church. The church having been established under the Apostolic ministry and testified by such outward demonstrations of God's power has no longer any need for such outward manifestations of the Spirit's work. The Spirit's work is to testify of Christ, inwardly to the hearts of men, and this He continues to do today under the preaching of the gospel. A ministry *no less miraculous* than that seen in the Apostles' days but one which concerns the revelation of truth to the eye of faith rather than the sight of men in the flesh.

Conclusions

In summary then, if it could be shown that the manna given to Israel continued to be given from that time until the coming of Christ, or that Israel continued to be led by a pillar of cloud by day or of fire by night, then a precedent for the continuance in an outward, miraculous, sense of such gifts as prophesying (for example in the manner of Spirit-inspired revelations apart from the Bible) would be found. But I don't believe that that precedence can be shown, and therefore we can conclude that such outward gifts, signs and wonders ceased after the Early Church had been brought in under the Apostles, as prefigured by Israel of old. This seems only right too, considering that the bringing in of the New Testament church under the Apostles was of such great importance. Furthermore a survey of the history of the church from Apostolic times up to the present demonstrates that this indeed has been the case.

May the Lord be pleased to give us that gift of the *discerning of spirits* in these days of much confusion that we might know what is truly of the Spirit of God and what is not. May we also recognise that there are diversities of gifts and differences of administration

THE GIFTS OF GRACE

(for example between today and Apostolic times) but nevertheless *"the same Lord"* (1 Corinthians 12:4-6). May we be given faith to follow the Lord Jesus Christ as revealed by the Spirit in the Gospel of Christ, as recorded in the scriptures, and to seek that real, true, inward reality of the working of the Spirit in contrast to that false, outward, counterfeit religion which seems to be so popular in our day and which appeals to the flesh which is fascinated by the unusual, the supernatural, the superficial and the spectacular. May we be found amongst those who walk by faith, not by sight, seeking an heavenly country, not an earthly, who walk as pilgrims and strangers in this present evil world. May we run the race before us looking unto Jesus the Author and Finisher of Faith. May we be amongst those who have found that the power of God rests not in the outwardly miraculous but in the *"gospel of Christ"* (Romans 1:16). And may all glory be given to the Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the Spirit was sent to testify and to honour, through the proclamation of that very gospel, which was, and is, the power of God unto salvation.

Amen.

XIII ROMANS

“He that loveth another hath fulfilled the law” Romans 13:8

ROMANS XIII

LET EVERY SOUL BE SUBJECT UNTO THE HIGHER POWERS. FOR THERE IS NO POWER BUT OF GOD: THE POWERS THAT BE ARE ORDAINED OF GOD. WHOSOEVER THEREFORE RESISTETH THE POWER, RESISTETH THE ORDINANCE OF GOD: AND THEY THAT RESIST SHALL RECEIVE TO THEMSELVES DAMNATION.

FOR RULERS ARE NOT A TERROR TO GOOD WORKS, BUT TO THE EVIL. WILT THOU THEN NOT BE AFRAID OF THE POWER? DO THAT WHICH IS GOOD, AND THOU SHALT HAVE PRAISE OF THE SAME: FOR HE IS THE MINISTER OF GOD TO THEE FOR GOOD. BUT IF THOU DO THAT WHICH IS EVIL, BE AFRAID; FOR HE BEARETH NOT THE SWORD IN VAIN: FOR HE IS THE MINISTER OF GOD, A REVENGER TO EXECUTE WRATH UPON HIM THAT DOETH EVIL.

WHEREFORE YE MUST NEEDS BE SUBJECT, NOT ONLY FOR WRATH, BUT ALSO FOR CONSCIENCE SAKE. FOR FOR THIS CAUSE PAY YE TRIBUTE ALSO: FOR THEY ARE GOD'S MINISTERS, ATTENDING CONTINUALLY UPON THIS VERY THING. RENDER THEREFORE TO ALL THEIR DUES: TRIBUTE TO WHOM TRIBUTE IS DUE; CUSTOM TO WHOM CUSTOM; FEAR TO WHOM FEAR; HONOUR TO WHOM HONOUR. OWE NO MAN ANY THING, BUT TO LOVE ONE ANOTHER: FOR HE THAT LOVETH ANOTHER HATH FULFILLED THE LAW.

FOR THIS, THOU SHALT NOT COMMIT ADULTERY, THOU SHALT NOT KILL, THOU SHALT NOT STEAL, THOU SHALT NOT BEAR FALSE WITNESS, THOU SHALT NOT COVET; AND IF THERE BE ANY OTHER COMMANDMENT, IT IS BRIEFLY COMPREHENDED IN THIS SAYING, NAMELY, THOU SHALT LOVE THY NEIGHBOUR AS THYSELF.

LOVE WORKETH NO ILL TO HIS NEIGHBOUR:
THEREFORE LOVE IS THE FULFILLING OF THE LAW.

AND THAT, KNOWING THE TIME, THAT NOW IT IS HIGH TIME TO AWAKE OUT OF SLEEP: FOR NOW IS OUR SALVATION NEARER THAN WHEN WE BELIEVED.

THE NIGHT IS FAR SPENT, THE DAY IS AT HAND: LET US THEREFORE CAST OFF THE WORKS OF DARKNESS, AND LET US PUT ON THE ARMOUR OF LIGHT. LET US WALK HONESTLY, AS IN THE DAY; NOT IN RIOTING AND DRUNKENNESS, NOT IN CHAMBERING AND WANTONNESS, NOT IN STRIFE AND ENVYING.

BUT PUT YE ON THE LORD JESUS CHRIST,
AND MAKE NOT PROVISION FOR THE FLESH, TO FULFIL THE LUSTS THEREOF.

Faith Which Works By Love

“He that loveth another hath fulfilled the law” Romans 13:8

IN chapter 13 of Romans Paul exhorts God’s people to walk before others as those who walk by faith, as those who love one another, for faith *“worketh by love”* (Galatians 5:6). He exhorts them to submit to those who have the rule over them, knowing that it is God who raises up leaders and God who removes them. Likewise he directs his hearers to owe no man anything, to give honour to whom honour is due and do no ill to neighbours, for in so doing the law is fulfilled as *“love is the fulfilling of the law”*. Here Paul is not directing God’s people back to the law to be ruled by it, but rather to walk by faith, which works by love, and in so doing the law is fulfilled.

Paul’s exhortation is to turn from darkness to walk *“as in the day”*, having put on *“the armour of light”*, making no provision for the flesh, but walking by faith, as led by the Spirit, by putting on the Lord Jesus Christ, for *“the just shall live by faith”*.

Such exhortations to walk by faith, which works by love, can be found throughout the New Testament wherever the new life of faith is presented. For example in John 13:34-35 Jesus says, *“A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another”*.

Let us consider this ‘new commandment’ which is presented to us in the gospel and how it relates to the life of faith.

At the commencement of the Gospel of John the Lord Jesus Christ is introduced as the Word of God, He who is life, who is the light of men, which shineth in darkness *“and the darkness comprehended it*

ROMANS – THE GOSPEL OF GOD

not". He was sent unto His own, the Jews, but His own received him not.

Despite all the religion which the Jews had – the priesthood, the law, the tabernacle, the promises – they are still depicted in John chapter one as being in darkness when Christ came into the world, and they received not the One who is the light of men. That's where their "enlightenment" in religion and in the law of Moses brought them – into darkness.

But Christ is *light*. The Gospel of John sets forth Christ as *light*. It is a book about light and about life – eternal life.

Christ is described as being full of grace and truth. This is contrasted with the law and Moses in John 1:17: "*For the law was given by Moses but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ*". Clearly there is light in Christ which wasn't revealed in the law. Though there was a glory to the law, it was veiled compared to the light in Christ; compared to the glory which excelleth, which is revealed in the gospel, the law is but a shadow – like a candle held up to the light of the sun it is but darkness.

This point is picked up in John 14 verse 6 which reads, "*I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father, but by me*". Again we see here that Christ is "*the life*". He is the Word of God and His words are life as we read in John 6:63:

"It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life."

We can see from this that there is something different about Christ's words, His commandments. They are life and they are life-giving commandments. They are attended with power. Why? Because of who Christ is – The Son of the Living God.

In John chapter 14 Christ demonstrates how He is the revelation of the Father, that He and His Father are one. That he who believes

FAITH WHICH WORKS BY LOVE

on Christ believes on the Father, and he who rejects Him rejects the Father. The Father is glorified in the Son (John 14:13).

In verses 16-19 Christ talks of sending the Comforter, the Spirit of truth, as He Himself is about to depart from the disciples. It is the Spirit who leads God's people into truth. So we have here a chapter in which the great truth of One God in Three Persons is set forth.

It is in this context that we read the following:

"If ye love me, keep my commandments... He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him", John 14:15,21.

In verse 23 we go on to read, *"If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him"*, whereas verse 24 states, *"He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings: and the word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father's which sent me"*.

The key to understanding what these commandments, these sayings, are, and what 'keeping' them means is picked up in verse 26, where the Comforter's role is developed:

"But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you."

This is the keeping of Christ's commandments, His sayings. It is to 'keep' them in remembrance, to be taught them, to believe them, and consequently to walk in obedience to them. It is the Holy Spirit's work to teach us these things, to bring them to our remembrance.

The only people who will 'keep' Christ's words are those who have the Spirit sent unto them, who receive from Him *faith*. But not

ROMANS – THE GOSPEL OF GOD

all men do – see verse 17. The Jews who rested in the law and rejected Christ didn't know the Spirit, or His leading into truth, and they didn't believe Christ's words, or receive them, let alone 'keep' them.

The end of all these commandments is that we love God; we love Christ; we dwell in Him. We have eternal life because Christ *is* our life. The union of Father, Son and Holy Ghost is set forth in John 14, and our union with God, as those who 'keep' (believe, remember, treasure up) Christ's words, is shown forth in the love we have for God and our brethren.

All of these ideas of union, of abiding in Christ, in His love, in His life, in His light, of keeping and loving His words, as the words of grace and truth, are developed in chapter 15 where we read of the true vine and the branches. Our life as believers is inextricably linked with Christ's. We are branches on His vine. We abide in Him and His love, and thus we love His words, His commandments – we 'keep' them. As He says:

*“As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love. If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love”,
John 15:9-10.*

So, if we 'keep' Christ's words of grace and truth in our minds and hearts, if we abide in Him, then we shall abide in Christ's love. There is no other way to remain in His love. And out of love we do all that Christ asks us to – *willingly*. We love His word, we treasure it and we believe it by faith. We walk in faith and faith produces works, *“works of faith”*. It is all a matter of abiding, of walking in the light, which only those chosen of God, born of the Spirit, can do – for they have eternal life.

This is the message of John, that light has shone in the darkness. That Christ is that light, that He has revealed the Father, that to love God we must be in that light, we must partake of that life, we must

FAITH WHICH WORKS BY LOVE

abide in Christ's love, we must walk in the Spirit, and believe in Christ by faith. And it is the work of God that we do just that – not of the will of man, but of God.

It is these truths, these sayings, which God's people believe. That Christ is the light of men. That He is eternal life. That we can only know the Father through the Son. That those who abide in Christ will love the Father. That Jesus has the words of eternal life. These sayings are at the heart, they are the essence, of the commandments mentioned in the Gospel of John and in the First Epistle of John.

The First Epistle of John commences in a similar way to John's Gospel. Christ is set forth as the *"Word of life"*, the *"eternal life"* which is manifested, and the message which John declares in verse 5 is *"that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all"*. This sets the tone of John's epistle just as it did in his Gospel. The child of God is pictured as one who walks in the light, who abides in Christ, who has the love of God in him and keeps His commandments.

These commandments are mentioned in 1 John 5:3:

"For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous."

Well, what commandments are these? The law? No, for we are dead to the law by the body of Christ (Romans 7). And these commandments are not grievous whereas the commandments of the law were – they were a burden our fathers could not bear. This easy 'yoke' of Christ's commandments is mentioned in Matthew 11:

"All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him. Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light", Matthew 11:27-30.

ROMANS – THE GOSPEL OF GOD

Who are those who are burdened, who are heavy laden? Why, those who are under the law, who find it to be hard labour striving to keep all its demands, who find that the sin within them only multiplies under the law and condemns them so that the good that they would they cannot do (Romans 7). But Christ calls them to take his yoke which is easy. This is the yoke of His commandments, which unlike the burdensome law, are easy to bear, they are not 'grievous' as 1 John 5:3 tells us.

What commandments are these? Well they are mentioned throughout John's first epistle, but chapter 3:23-24 summarises them as follows:

"And this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment. And he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him. And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us", 1 John 3:23-24.

The commandments are summarised as believing on the name of God's Son Jesus Christ, and loving one another. How can we do that? Only by the work of the Spirit. No-one, without the work of the Spirit in granting the gift of faith, can believe. And no-one can love God or their brethren except the Spirit worketh that fruit, that love, within them. But if the Spirit does work, then we believe on Christ willingly, we love Him and our brethren. We dwell in God and He in us. He abides with us by the Spirit. We walk in the light and not in the darkness. We have eternal life. We *believe* these things.

All of this corresponds with that taught in John chapters 14 and 15. The connection between abiding in Christ, and being led into truth by the Spirit, and keeping the commandments of believing in Christ, loving Him and the brethren, is so strong in all these passages. When we abide in Him, we love Him. These commandments, these words of Christ, are words of life – they result in the things commanded.

FAITH WHICH WORKS BY LOVE

None of this has to do with the law. It simply isn't mentioned, though we see it contrasted in John 1:17. Christ's commandments of believing in Him (faith) and loving Him and the brethren will certainly lead to a life that fulfils all the demands of the law, but it is in no way a sending of believers back to Moses. For that would be to have the burden we couldn't bear put back on our shoulders. Those commandments *are* grievous, and they work wrath. As we see in the following verses:

"Now therefore why tempt ye God, to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear?"

"For it seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things; That ye abstain from meats offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication: from which if ye keep yourselves, ye shall do well. Fare ye well", Acts 15:10, 28-29.

"For I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died. And the commandment, which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death. For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me", Romans 7:9-11.

But Christ's commandments are not burdensome, for they are in the light, whereas the law never brought light, it left men in darkness. It is under the gospel, by the Spirit that we have light, we receive eternal life, we abide in the love of the Father, Son and Spirit, and in which we walk by faith, looking unto Jesus, the Way, the Truth and the Life, 'keeping', believing, holding onto His words, sayings and commandments, and by which we love God and our brethren.

Returning to John 13:34-35 we read again:

"A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another."

ROMANS – THE GOSPEL OF GOD

A new commandment? Yes, but an old commandment too. Then why a new commandment? Because although Christ's commandments of faith and love are a fulfilment of the old (the Law) nevertheless they are new, they are not the law, but the gospel. They are words of life, they are the living word, the ministration of righteousness, whereas the Old Covenant condemned to death, it was a ministration of death. (See 2 Corinthians 3.)

There is a huge contrast between the commandments in the Law of Moses and those words of life, full of grace and truth, which come from the lips of Jesus. The Law demanded works from man without ever providing the ability to perform those works. All the ability was demanded from man. But man being full of sin just finds that he is utterly incapable of keeping those commandments. Even the believer who loves them and would desire to keep them finds that when he tries, the good that he would he cannot do. The law simply fires up the sin which is in the flesh, and man finds himself completely condemned by the law, as described in Romans 7.

The words of Christ however are living words. They are *"the words of eternal life"*. When Christ commands, power attends the command, life attends it, and the ability to do what is requested is provided. When Christ called to dead Lazarus to *"Come forth"*, Lazarus came forth! Nothing was expected of Lazarus – the words provided the life. When Christ commanded the impotent man at the pool of Bethesda to, *"Rise, take up thy bed and walk"* (John 5:8), *"immediately the man was made whole, and took up his bed and walked"*. Such are the commands of Jesus, life-giving commands, which we are called to 'keep'.

And who does 'keep' these commands? Those disciples whom God has called out of this world, quickened by the Spirit, brought to life at the command of Jesus. At the time when many left Jesus he spoke to his disciples as follows:

*"Then said Jesus unto the twelve, Will ye also go away? Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? **thou hast the***

FAITH WHICH WORKS BY LOVE

words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God", John 6:67-69.

To whom else shall *we* go? Christ has the words of eternal life. May God's people keep these words in faith and love in the power of an endless life.

Amen.

XIV ROMANS

“Whatsoever is not of faith is sin” Romans 14:23

ROMANS XIV

HIM THAT IS WEAK IN THE FAITH RECEIVE YE, BUT NOT TO DOUBTFUL DISPUTATIONS. FOR ONE BELIEVETH THAT HE MAY EAT ALL THINGS: ANOTHER, WHO IS WEAK, EATETH HERBS. LET NOT HIM THAT EATETH DESPISE HIM THAT EATETH NOT; AND LET NOT HIM WHICH EATETH NOT JUDGE HIM THAT EATETH: FOR GOD HATH RECEIVED HIM.

WHO ART THOU THAT JUDGEST ANOTHER MAN'S SERVANT? TO HIS OWN MASTER HE STANDETH OR FALLETH. YEA, HE SHALL BE HOLDEN UP: FOR GOD IS ABLE TO MAKE HIM STAND. ONE MAN ESTEEMETH ONE DAY ABOVE ANOTHER: ANOTHER ESTEEMETH EVERY DAY ALIKE. LET EVERY MAN BE FULLY PERSUADED IN HIS OWN MIND. HE THAT REGARDETH THE DAY, REGARDETH IT UNTO THE LORD; AND HE THAT REGARDETH NOT THE DAY, TO THE LORD HE DOTHT NOT REGARD IT. HE THAT EATETH, EATETH TO THE LORD, FOR HE GIVETH GOD THANKS; AND HE THAT EATETH NOT, TO THE LORD HE EATETH NOT, AND GIVETH GOD THANKS.

FOR NONE OF US LIVETH TO HIMSELF, AND NO MAN DIETH TO HIMSELF. FOR WHETHER WE LIVE, WE LIVE UNTO THE LORD; AND WHETHER WE DIE, WE DIE UNTO THE LORD: WHETHER WE LIVE THEREFORE, OR DIE, WE ARE THE LORD'S. FOR TO THIS END CHRIST BOTH DIED, AND ROSE, AND REVIVED, THAT HE MIGHT BE LORD BOTH OF THE DEAD AND LIVING.

BUT WHY DOST THOU JUDGE THY BROTHER? OR WHY DOST THOU SET AT NOUGHT THY BROTHER? FOR WE SHALL ALL STAND BEFORE THE JUDGMENT SEAT OF CHRIST. FOR IT IS WRITTEN, AS I LIVE, SAITH THE LORD, EVERY KNEE SHALL BOW TO ME, AND EVERY TONGUE SHALL CONFESS TO GOD. SO THEN EVERY ONE OF US SHALL GIVE ACCOUNT OF HIMSELF TO GOD.

LET US NOT THEREFORE JUDGE ONE ANOTHER ANY MORE: BUT JUDGE THIS RATHER, THAT NO MAN PUT A STUMBLINGBLOCK OR AN OCCASION TO FALL IN HIS BROTHER'S WAY. I KNOW, AND AM PERSUADED BY THE LORD JESUS, THAT THERE IS NOTHING UNCLEAN OF ITSELF: BUT TO HIM THAT ESTEEMETH ANY THING TO BE UNCLEAN, TO HIM IT IS UNCLEAN. BUT IF THY BROTHER BE GRIEVED WITH THY MEAT, NOW WALKEST THOU NOT CHARITABLY. DESTROY NOT HIM WITH THY MEAT, FOR WHOM CHRIST DIED.

LET NOT THEN YOUR GOOD BE EVIL SPOKEN OF: FOR THE KINGDOM OF GOD IS NOT MEAT AND DRINK; BUT RIGHTEOUSNESS, AND PEACE, AND JOY IN THE HOLY GHOST.

FOR HE THAT IN THESE THINGS SERVETH CHRIST IS ACCEPTABLE TO GOD, AND APPROVED OF MEN. LET US THEREFORE FOLLOW AFTER THE THINGS WHICH MAKE FOR PEACE, AND THINGS WHEREWITH ONE MAY EDIFY ANOTHER. FOR MEAT DESTROY NOT THE WORK OF GOD. ALL THINGS INDEED ARE PURE; BUT IT IS EVIL FOR THAT MAN WHO EATETH WITH OFFENCE. IT IS GOOD NEITHER TO EAT FLESH, NOR TO DRINK WINE, NOR ANY THING WHEREBY THY BROTHER STUMBLETH, OR IS OFFENDED, OR IS MADE WEAK.

HAST THOU FAITH? HAVE IT TO THYSELF BEFORE GOD. HAPPY IS HE THAT
CONDEMNETH NOT HIMSELF IN THAT THING WHICH HE ALLOWETH. AND HE THAT
DOUBTETH IS DAMNED IF HE EAT, BECAUSE HE EATETH NOT OF FAITH:
FOR WHATSOEVER IS NOT OF FAITH IS SIN.

What is Not of Faith

“Whatsoever is not of faith is sin” Romans 14:23

IN the fourteenth chapter of Romans Paul considers the relationships of Christians to their brethren who are weaker in the faith, and the liberty that each has in Christ to partake of or abstain from certain things, for example, the eating of meats. In so doing he contrasts those things which are earthly and temporal with those things which respect the kingdom of God, being heavenly and eternal. Constantly and repeatedly throughout the whole epistle, and here in a most practical part of it, the attention is focused on Christ and His gospel.

Paul’s emphasis throughout this chapter is that many of the things which men so easily make rules out of, by which they judge one another, are in themselves of little consequence (Romans 14:14). What is important is the motive behind what we do, that all things should be done as unto the Lord, as springing forth from faith: *“for whatsoever is not of faith is sin” (Romans 14:23)*. All must regard Christ for He is all, and in all.

So much of what men stress in religion, so many of the practices which they press upon others, so much of what men set up as a standard by which they judge and condemn others, is that which springs forth from the flesh, is that which is earthly, not heavenly. It might seem ‘right and proper’ but it merely respects man approaching unto God in the will of his flesh. Such things owe nothing to the leading of the Spirit, and nothing to the walk of faith. The flesh so easily creeps into the things of God, and into our judgment concerning such things. But we are called to walk in the Spirit, not in the flesh. To walk by faith, not by sight. *Whatsoever is*

ROMANS – THE GOSPEL OF GOD

not of faith is sin. Whatsoever. Whatever we may do, however good it may seem before men outwardly, if it is *not of faith*, it is *sin*.

Yes, faith is the rule by which the believer walks. “*The just shall live by faith*” (Romans 1:17). This principle applies to *all* aspects of his life. He *lives* by faith. Hence Paul exhorts believers to be fully persuaded in their own minds (Romans 14:5) regarding their daily conduct, to live as “*unto the Lord*” (14:8) knowing that *we are the Lord’s*, and to have a clear conscience before God regarding our conduct knowing that “*every one of us shall give account of himself to God*” (Romans 14:12). Paul reminds his brethren of the death and resurrection of Christ for them, that He might be Lord over them (14:9), and hence it is to Christ and Him alone that they are answerable for their conduct... so why do they – *why do we* – judge one another?

Nevertheless Paul reminds the stronger brethren to be mindful of those who are weaker and not to do such things as might make their weaker brethren stumble. It is better to abstain from something, even if there is nothing wrong in the thing itself, than to offend the man who is weak in the faith (14:21). Likewise Paul stresses the need to avoid “*doubtful disputations*” (14:1) over such earthly, inconsequential things. Those who are young in the faith can often become very strong-minded, and very vocal, about many things they think should or shouldn’t be done by Christians. The wisdom of those stronger in the faith, however, is to avoid such disputes over earthly things, avoid giving their weaker brethren offence through their own conduct, and constantly to be mindful of and exhort their brethren regarding the life of faith which is founded upon heavenly things. To point to Christ!

Paul therefore concludes this chapter by lifting the gaze of his hearers up from the earthly realm, from the inconsequential things of food and drink, and the keeping of days, to the hope of their faith, and that in which the kingdom of God stands:

WHAT IS NOT OF FAITH

“For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. For he that in these things serveth Christ is acceptable to God, and approved of men. Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another”, Romans 14:17-19.

May God give His people grace to walk by faith continually, having their affections set not on earthly things, but heavenly, not judging one another, but following after the things which make for peace, those things which edify one another. For *the just shall live by faith*, and *what is not of faith is sin*.

The Regarding of Days

“He that regardeth the day, regardeth it unto the Lord” Romans 14:6

IN the midst of the fourteenth chapter of Romans, in verses 5-6, Paul considers the keeping, or regarding, of days.

The keeping, or not keeping, of certain special days is an issue which is often debated in religion. The Jews – under the law – were commanded to keep the Sabbath day, as well as a number of other days as part of their ceremonial worship of God. The Gentile believers at Rome, however, had never been under the law as an outward covenant as the Jewish nation had. Therefore what was customary and natural to some, was an unusual and foreign practice to others. Some at Rome, therefore, were strongly persuaded that they should continue to keep the Sabbath day, or other days, as they had once done. Others saw no need for it. Some felt the practice of setting aside one day in seven in order to devote themselves to God’s worship was important. Others felt that they should treat all days alike.

Opinions on the matter were very strong, and they continue to be so up to this very day. Many are fully persuaded of one thing, and others are fully persuaded against. Some, for example, particularly remember the Lord’s birth and His death on certain days each year. Others feel that such a practice is not commanded in scripture and is influenced by mere worldly tradition. Arguments for and against can be very strong.

It is this which Paul addresses in these verses, by stressing that whether one keeps a day, or doesn’t keep it, he should do so, as *‘unto the Lord’*. Under the New Covenant believers are not under a law to keep a Sabbath day, or any other particular day of re-

ROMANS – THE GOSPEL OF GOD

membrance. However, that does not in itself make the keeping of such days wrong. Paul seeks to emphasise that the keeping of, or not keeping of, such days is not wrong in itself and should not be a cause for division. He stresses the need to avoid “*doubtful disputation*” (Romans 14:1) over such matters. What matters is how one approaches the day. Whether kept, or not, all should be as unto the Lord.

Someone once asked me the following question about the Sabbath day:

“You mentioned that Sabbath-keeping is not specifically mentioned in the New Testament whereas nine of the other commandments are quoted. Is there any implication to this? It seems to me that it is omitted because the Sabbath (or day of rest) was mainly instituted at the Creation, i.e. God was 6 days working and on the 7th He rested? What would your practical views be on the Sabbath now, for example would you be happy to do your groceries shopping on the Sunday? If not, then why not?”

Let us consider this particular question of the Sabbath day, especially in the light of what Paul teaches in Romans 14. Firstly, it is very significant that the Sabbath command is not repeated in the New Testament. This is because it was essentially a type, a shadow, pointing to the rest which the believer has in Christ. Before coming to Christ the believer is, spiritually speaking, under the law, labouring. But when brought to faith his ‘six days’ of work come to an end and he enters into rest, having been crucified with Christ and risen with Him the other side of death. Then he is at rest, having the reality of what the Sabbath was but a shadow. Hence in the New Testament with the coming of Christ, and His work being finished at the cross, the Sabbath comes to an end. Therefore we read in Matthew 28:1, “*In the end of the Sabbath*”, regarding the resurrection of our Lord. This is not simply referring to the end of that particular Sabbath day, but to the end of the Sabbath entirely.

Regarding the mention of the Sabbath at creation, it is true that Genesis 2 mentions the seventh day, and of course Exodus 20 refers

back to this in relation to the Sabbath law. However, it is significant that nowhere else in Genesis is the Sabbath mentioned. There is no mention of it being made a law or a requirement of man to keep until Moses brought Israel out of Egypt. We never read of the Patriarchs observing a Sabbath in that sense. Certainly at the creation the 'type' of the seventh day is mentioned, because it would be – the account of God's creation is figurative of what He brings in with the new creation in which there is an *eternal* rest. The law of Moses certainly refers back to this because again the Sabbath law is a figure of that which is to come so it refers back to the previous figure. *Most importantly it is made a law to teach us that to 'break' such a rest by working in it is wrong, because this is tantamount to adding our works to Christ's in order to be saved – but we are to rest entirely in Him.* However the fact remains that no mention is made elsewhere in Genesis of Sabbath observance, and the strict requirements of how to observe the Sabbath are only stated in the law.

When we arrive at the New Testament we read various references to the Sabbath in the Gospels and Acts, but many of these references are to what Christ did on the Sabbath, to the consternation of the Jews who accused him of being a Sabbath-breaker. In the epistles the primary mention is in Colossians (2:16) which is highly significant as there the teaching concerns deliverance from earthly things, into which men try to bring us into bondage. Paul seeks to set the Colossians' gaze upon heavenly things, showing them that these earthly types and figures have all passed away in Christ.

So, in summary, in the New Testament we are delivered from the law, including the Sabbath law. The mention of the seventh day rest at creation doesn't alter that, because the position of the believer is one of being dead to this present world, this present creation, and alive in Christ, risen in newness of life the other side of death. What pertains to *this* creation is but a type and figure of the reality brought in by the new creation. The seventh day rest pictures that eternal rest we have in Christ. In Galatians 6:14 Pauls tells us that the world is crucified unto him, and he unto the world. If so, he is crucified unto all worldly, earthly things, including the observation

ROMANS – THE GOSPEL OF GOD

of holy days, sabbaths and so on. We are not under a legal bondage in respect of such things (we are both dead to the law and also to the world). As Christians we need to be mindful of our position in Christ the other side of death, as we are no longer earthly in the first man Adam, but heavenly in the Second Man Christ. We are called to mortify the deeds of the flesh, and if so, we reckon ourselves dead to the flesh, dead to this world, hence dead to what is earthly. Types, figures and shadows served their purpose in the Old Testament but now the reality has come, now the true Light has dawned, we put such things away and walk in liberty in Christ our Saviour.

But how does this work out in practice? Obviously despite our state in Christ we do still have the flesh, we are still in this world (though not *of it*) and we do have weeks with days and nights.... And for that reason, whilst we are not under any legal obligation to keep a Sabbath day, being dead to the law, nevertheless the principle of one day of rest in seven, whilst in this world, is a good one – physically and spiritually, in many ways, we need it. Also, it is good to worship our Lord as often as we can, and having one day a week set aside *specifically* for that purpose, without the distraction of our daily work *is* helpful. So the historical situation in this country for example (Great Britain), which means that many have Sunday off work, is something to be thankful for, and we can be happy, *voluntarily*, to set such a day aside for the worship of God, it being the first day of the week which is the day that Christ rose from the dead. As such it is not the Sabbath day itself anyway, but nevertheless still one day in seven, and a continual reminder of our Lord's resurrection, and of course a day on which the disciples in the New Testament became accustomed to meeting on as a result – see John 20:19 and Acts 20:7.

Being able to avoid many of the everyday demands of life – such as shopping and work – on such a day is helpful, as these concerns prevent or distract from the worship of God. As Paul says in Romans 14:6, "*He that regardeth the day, regardeth it unto the Lord*". We have no legal obligation to keep one day in seven, and we

should not be judgmental of others who see their liberty in Christ differently or indeed of those who lack the same freedom owing, for example, to commitments with work. But whether we esteem one day above another or not, whether we observe one day a week differently, or one day annually, or not, we should do *all* as unto the Lord, *all* by faith, *all* for His glory. And *all* freely, willingly, out of love for Christ our Saviour.

There are some who recognise that the believer is no longer under the Sabbath law who therefore treat Sunday much like any other day (except perhaps for attending a meeting or two on that day). Well, they have the liberty to do that, but why surround the worship of God with the distractions and busyness of everyday life if we have the freedom to do otherwise? Others would rather seek to raise every day *up* to the same standard, rather than bringing this one day *down* to the standard of others (in terms of being taken up with the distractions of earthly cares and duties). But as we can't bring all the other days 'up', because of the need to work, shop, and so on, and although we might love to have two, three or more days a week like this one, we can nevertheless be thankful for that day, and that time, with which we have the freedom and liberty to set it aside entirely for the worship of God, not only in private, but publicly. It is good at least to be able to treat one day differently – to *give* our time in it freely to the Lord (*to be mindful of heavenly things, putting aside earthly cares*). We have no 'Sabbath', and such a day isn't legally binding, but it is still nevertheless good to be able to devote such time freely out of love for the Lord. With a day of rest we can be reminded of that eternal rest which we have in Christ who has delivered us from bondage and brought us into liberty, as children of light who walk in the light of His countenance in the power of an everlasting life in Him, who having died for our sins rose again as the Firstborn from the dead, in whom we have our life and being.

But whether we keep a day, or don't keep a day, may it never be the cause of dispute. May we live by faith, each and every day, doing all as unto the Lord, and may we gather often with our

ROMANS – THE GOSPEL OF GOD

brethren, whether on the first day of the week, the second, or any other, to hear the preaching of Christ in the Gospel of God and to worship His Name for His glory. May we walk as *children of the day*, children of light (1 Thessalonians 5:5), who walk in the light of God's glory in that 'day' of Christ's ascended glory, that *Lord's Day*, in which Christ, the Sun of Righteousness, shines forth His glory through the proclamation of His gospel from on High.

As Paul writes:

"Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations. For one believeth that he may eat all things: another, who is weak, eateth herbs. Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not; and let not him which eateth not judge him that eateth: for God hath received him.

Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth. Yea, he shall be holden up: for God is able to make him stand. One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind. He that regardeth the day, regardeth it unto the Lord; and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard it. He that eateth, eateth to the Lord, for he giveth God thanks; and he that eateth not, to the Lord he eateth not, and giveth God thanks.

For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself. For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's.

For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living", Romans 14:1-9.

Amen.



THE FAITH
ONCE
DELIVERED

XV ROMANS

“Ministering the gospel of God” Romans 15:16

ROMANS XV

WE THEN THAT ARE STRONG OUGHT TO BEAR THE INFIRMITIES OF THE WEAK, AND NOT TO PLEASE OURSELVES. LET EVERY ONE OF US PLEASE HIS NEIGHBOUR FOR HIS GOOD TO EDIFICATION. FOR EVEN CHRIST PLEASED NOT HIMSELF; BUT, AS IT IS WRITTEN, THE REPROACHES OF THEM THAT REPROACHED THEE FELL ON ME.

FOR WHATSOEVER THINGS WERE WRITTEN AFORETIME WERE WRITTEN FOR OUR LEARNING, THAT WE THROUGH PATIENCE AND COMFORT OF THE SCRIPTURES MIGHT HAVE HOPE. NOW THE GOD OF PATIENCE AND CONSOLATION GRANT YOU TO BE LIKEMINDED ONE TOWARD ANOTHER ACCORDING TO CHRIST JESUS: THAT YE MAY WITH ONE MIND AND ONE MOUTH GLORIFY GOD, EVEN THE FATHER OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST. WHEREFORE RECEIVE YE ONE ANOTHER, AS CHRIST ALSO RECEIVED US TO THE GLORY OF GOD.

NOW I SAY THAT JESUS CHRIST WAS A MINISTER OF THE CIRCUMCISION FOR THE TRUTH OF GOD, TO CONFIRM THE PROMISES MADE UNTO THE FATHERS: AND THAT THE GENTILES MIGHT GLORIFY GOD FOR HIS MERCY; AS IT IS WRITTEN, FOR THIS CAUSE I WILL CONFESS TO THEE AMONG THE GENTILES, AND SING UNTO THY NAME.

AND AGAIN HE SAITH, REJOICE, YE GENTILES, WITH HIS PEOPLE. AND AGAIN, PRAISE THE LORD, ALL YE GENTILES; AND LAUD HIM, ALL YE PEOPLE. AND AGAIN, ESAIAS SAITH, THERE SHALL BE A ROOT OF JESSE, AND HE THAT SHALL RISE TO REIGN OVER THE GENTILES; IN HIM SHALL THE GENTILES TRUST.

NOW THE GOD OF HOPE FILL YOU WITH ALL JOY AND PEACE IN BELIEVING, THAT YE MAY ABOUND IN HOPE, THROUGH THE POWER OF THE HOLY GHOST. AND I MYSELF ALSO AM PERSUADED OF YOU, MY BRETHREN, THAT YE ALSO ARE FULL OF GOODNESS, FILLED WITH ALL KNOWLEDGE, ABLE ALSO TO ADMONISH ONE ANOTHER.

NEVERTHELESS, BRETHREN, I HAVE WRITTEN THE MORE BOLDLY UNTO YOU IN SOME SORT, AS PUTTING YOU IN MIND, BECAUSE OF THE GRACE THAT IS GIVEN TO ME OF GOD, THAT I SHOULD BE THE MINISTER OF JESUS CHRIST TO THE GENTILES, MINISTERING THE GOSPEL OF GOD, THAT THE OFFERING UP OF THE GENTILES MIGHT BE ACCEPTABLE, BEING SANCTIFIED BY THE HOLY GHOST. I HAVE THEREFORE WHEREOF I MAY GLORY THROUGH JESUS CHRIST IN THOSE THINGS WHICH PERTAIN TO GOD. FOR I WILL NOT DARE TO SPEAK OF ANY OF THOSE THINGS WHICH CHRIST HATH NOT WROUGHT BY ME, TO MAKE THE GENTILES OBEDIENT, BY WORD AND DEED, THROUGH MIGHTY SIGNS AND WONDERS, BY THE POWER OF THE SPIRIT OF GOD; SO THAT FROM JERUSALEM, AND ROUND ABOUT UNTO ILLYRICUM, I HAVE FULLY PREACHED THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST. YEA, SO HAVE I STRIVED TO PREACH THE GOSPEL, NOT WHERE CHRIST WAS NAMED, LEST I SHOULD BUILD UPON ANOTHER MAN'S FOUNDATION: BUT AS IT IS WRITTEN, TO WHOM HE WAS NOT SPOKEN OF, THEY SHALL SEE: AND THEY THAT HAVE NOT HEARD SHALL UNDERSTAND.

FOR WHICH CAUSE ALSO I HAVE BEEN MUCH HINDERED FROM COMING TO YOU. BUT NOW HAVING NO MORE PLACE IN THESE PARTS, AND HAVING A GREAT DESIRE THESE MANY YEARS TO COME UNTO YOU; WHENSOEVER I TAKE MY JOURNEY INTO SPAIN, I WILL COME TO YOU: FOR I TRUST TO SEE YOU IN MY JOURNEY, AND TO BE BROUGHT ON MY WAY THITHERWARD BY YOU, IF FIRST I BE SOMEWHAT FILLED WITH YOUR COMPANY. BUT NOW I GO UNTO JERUSALEM TO MINISTER UNTO THE SAINTS. FOR IT HATH PLEASSED THEM OF MACEDONIA AND ACHAIA TO MAKE A CERTAIN CONTRIBUTION FOR THE POOR SAINTS WHICH ARE AT JERUSALEM. IT HATH PLEASSED THEM VERILY; AND THEIR DEBTORS THEY ARE. FOR IF THE GENTILES HAVE BEEN MADE PARTAKERS OF THEIR SPIRITUAL THINGS, THEIR DUTY IS ALSO TO MINISTER UNTO THEM IN CARNAL THINGS.

WHEN THEREFORE I HAVE PERFORMED THIS, AND HAVE SEALED TO THEM THIS FRUIT, I WILL COME BY YOU INTO SPAIN. AND I AM SURE THAT, WHEN I COME UNTO YOU, I SHALL COME IN THE FULNESS OF THE BLESSING OF THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST. NOW I BESEECH YOU, BRETHREN, FOR THE LORD JESUS CHRIST'S SAKE, AND FOR THE LOVE OF THE SPIRIT, THAT YE STRIVE TOGETHER WITH ME IN YOUR PRAYERS TO GOD FOR ME; THAT I MAY BE DELIVERED FROM THEM THAT DO NOT BELIEVE IN JUDAEA; AND THAT MY SERVICE WHICH I HAVE FOR JERUSALEM MAY BE ACCEPTED OF THE SAINTS; THAT I MAY COME UNTO YOU WITH JOY BY THE WILL OF GOD, AND MAY WITH YOU BE REFRESHED.

NOW THE GOD OF PEACE BE WITH YOU ALL. AMEN.

Ministering the Gospel of God

“Ministering the gospel of God” Romans 15:16

IN chapter 15 of Romans Paul concludes his thoughts from Chapter 14 by encouraging the brethren to serve one another in love, to encourage one another, to edify one another. By pointing them to Christ and His example Paul encourages that unity of the brethren in their love for Christ and one another, that they might *“with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ”*.

Notice here, how the Father is glorified. Contrary to how man generally views it, when the message of God’s salvation in the gospel is seen from God’s perspective, it is evident that the gospel is not so much about what is brought in *for man*, in terms of the salvation of God’s elect, but of what is brought in *for God* and to His glory, through the Son’s redemption of His Bride, the church, whom He brings to His Father to worship and glorify Him, as making known the wonders of His grace before all creation, both now and in eternity.

On this foundation the apostle goes on to remind the church at Rome of the great mercy of God in sending the gospel to the Gentiles that those who had not known the truth before should see, *“and they that have not heard shall understand”* (Romans 15:21). He affirms how God sent him forth as *“the minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering the gospel of God, that the offering up of the Gentiles might be acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy Ghost”* (Romans 15:16) and again expresses his great desire to come unto Rome to preach the gospel unto the saints there face to face, and to fellowship with the brethren there, being refreshed with them. Yet Paul must first visit the saints at Jerusalem (Romans 15:25) and he reminds his

ROMANS – THE GOSPEL OF GOD

Gentile readers of their unity with both Jewish and Gentile believers and of the love the Gentiles in the church should show their Jewish brethren, for having received of the Jews *“spiritual things, their duty is also to minister unto them in carnal things”*.

Above all, Paul’s great longing and desire in coming to the church at Rome is to preach the gospel, to preach Christ, to bring the *“fulness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ”* (Romans 15:29). Paul was sent with a message. He had a message to deliver, and that message, *“the faith”* was that which was *“once delivered unto the saints”* (Jude 1:3). Paul’s message, his gospel, didn’t vary. He preached the same message in Rome as he did in Jerusalem. The same gospel in Galatia as he did in Ephesus. The same message of the cross, of *“Christ crucified”* in Corinth as he declared at Thessalonica. He had one message, one gospel, one faith, which had been delivered once by God, through revelation, by His servants to the church. Having been taught that message – the faith – Paul was sent forth to preach it, and his great longing was that the saints at Rome might know it, not just in part, and not just in the head, but in all its fullness, in all its riches, in the inward man, both in heart and mind, that they might be established and built up in the truth, that the *“blessing of the gospel of Christ”* might be theirs, and that God might be glorified in them.

As one sent by God to preach His gospel, as *“a servant of Jesus Christ”*, Paul not only had a message to deliver to the saints at Rome, but he wrote unto them and would come unto them as *one who lived that message*, as one who walked in the Truth, as one who served both His Lord and Master, and His brethren, for Christ’s sake. Paul was a servant, a slave, of Jesus Christ, *“separated unto the gospel of God”*, whose life was devoted to the service of others, to *“ministering the gospel of God”*. Paul led by example. He ministered to others. His exhortations to the brethren to serve one another were borne out by his own life and conduct as he served them. He exhorted them to follow him as he followed Christ.

MINISTERING THE GOSPEL OF GOD

Now, let us consider the lesson set before us here. In at least three places in his epistles the Apostle Paul exhorts those to whom he is writing to follow him (1 Corinthians 4:16, 1 Corinthians 11:1, Philippians 3:17). Paul's exhortation is not without ground or authority. He is not encouraging others to follow him blindly as a man, or follow his teaching simply because *'he says so'*. No, Paul's exhortation carries weight because of the One that he himself follows, the One who sent Paul to preach the gospel: even the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul writes "be ye followers of me, *even as I also am of Christ*".

Have you ever heard people say "don't follow a man"? It is a criticism that can often be raised when the ministry of a particular man is commended. The inference is that we should follow Christ, rather than follow men. There is of course truth in this (though the criticism presents a false dichotomy), in that man should never be exalted above his measure, that Christ is pre-eminent in all things, and that ultimately we should be followers of Him, the one who is the Great Shepherd of the sheep, He who gave His life for the sheep that they might have everlasting life in Him, the forgiveness of sins, and peace and reconciliation with the Father. Scripture rightly warns us in one place to "*cease ye from man, whose breath is in his nostrils*". Men, being sinners by nature, may often lead us astray. We must be very wise about whom we follow. Many foolish people have been led to destruction by deceivers, by those who promise much and give little, by those who can 'sound right' but ultimately speak of themselves, not of God. Except for the grace of God all men are fallen and at enmity with their Maker. Yet, *nevertheless* Paul exhorts his hearers to be "followers of me, *even as I also am of Christ*".

It is in that final part of Paul's sentence that we may find the answer to whether or not we should follow men, and, if at all, which men. Paul was a *follower of Christ*! His exhortation was not simply to follow him, but to follow him *as he followed Christ*. Paul led his followers to Christ, and *that* is why they should follow him. By following Paul they followed Christ. It is Christ who appeared to Paul (when he was named Saul) on the Damascus road, revealing

Himself to him from heaven above, and sending him forth to preach the gospel (see Acts 26). Paul was sent by Christ Himself to open the eyes of sinners, *“to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me [Christ]”* (Acts 26:18). It is this sending forth by Christ to preach the gospel which gives Paul’s exhortation to *“be ye followers of me”* such weight. Christ sent Him to His people to lead them unto Christ. Then should they not follow such a one unto He who died to save them?

In 1 Corinthians 4 Paul makes a similar exhortation and adds a further reason why he should be followed: *“I write not these things to shame you, but as my beloved sons I warn you. For though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers: for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel. Wherefore I beseech you, be ye followers of me. For this cause have I sent unto you Timotheus, who is my beloved son, and faithful in the Lord, who shall bring you into remembrance of my ways which be in Christ, as I teach every where in every church”* (1 Corinthians 4:14-17).

The saints at the church at Corinth to whom Paul was writing had been born again by God the Holy Spirit through the preaching of the gospel by Paul’s lips. Hence Paul calls them his *“beloved sons”* and writes, *“in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel”*. So close was Paul’s relationship to these believers, so involved was he in leading them to Christ, so instrumental was he in their conversion that he declares himself to be their father, and they his sons. Whilst it is true that their birth was by the Holy Ghost from above, whilst it is true that only God is their true Father, nevertheless it is God’s means to use the preaching of the gospel, by the lips of those men He sends forth with it, to bring dead sinners to life. Paul was sent with that gospel to Corinth, men and women were saved under the preaching of that gospel, and Paul rightly declares that *“in Christ Jesus”* he had *“begotten [them] through the gospel”*. Then should they not follow the one who faithfully led them to Christ, who faithfully declared Christ to them in the gospel,

by whose words they were born again from above? Though they might have had ten thousand instructors in Christ, was not Paul their 'father' by whose preaching they were saved? By Christ, yes, by the Holy Spirit's regenerating work, yes, by believing the gospel with God-given faith, yes, but nevertheless by believing that gospel as delivered unto them by the man whom God sent forth, that gospel which they heard from Paul's lips. God begat them through Paul's preaching of the Gospel of Christ. Then *surely* they should follow such a man, sent from above to bring them to the One who sent him. "*Wherefore I beseech you, be ye followers of me.*"

As if these were not good enough reasons – that Paul followed Christ, and that his preaching of Christ's gospel had caused his hearers to be born again – Paul sent unto the Corinthians his beloved son Timothy, one faithful in the Lord, to bring them "*into remembrance of [his] ways which be in Christ, as [he taught] every where in every church*". Paul's teaching and conduct confirmed that he was a follower of Christ, one whom God's children should follow gladly. So Paul sent Timothy to the people to testify of Paul's character, of his "*ways which be in Christ*" and of his teaching which he taught "*every where in every church*" lest Paul's absence should have caused the Corinthians to become forgetful of his true character in Christ.

Yes, Paul taught others to follow him. But not without cause! He gives here three reasons which should dispel all opposition, which should silence every contrary tongue, which should answer every objection regarding the following of men. Firstly he followed Christ, and therefore by following Paul, others would be led to Christ. Secondly Christ sent him to preach His gospel and by the preaching of that gospel God, through Paul, had brought many to life in Christ Jesus. And thirdly, Paul's conduct, his "*ways which be in Christ*" and his teaching in all the churches bore witness to the work of God in him and by him. It proved with what authority he said these things. It demonstrated the fruit by which Paul's followers might know that he was sent of Christ to lead them to Christ (Matthew 7:15-20). Then how could they *not* follow him?

ROMANS – THE GOSPEL OF GOD

Paul's hearers were *right* to follow him. In doing so they were not following a man, *but following Christ* by receiving him whom Christ had sent to them, by believing the word preached by Christ through that man, and by owning the evident work of God seen in Paul, whom they had as an example of one who lived and breathed to serve His Lord and Master, Jesus Christ. "*Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ*" (1 Corinthians 11:1); "*Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample*" (Philippians 3:17). See also 2 Thessalonians 3:7-9 and Hebrews 13:7.

What was true of Paul is true for all those whom God sends to His church to preach the gospel. Whilst Paul was indeed an apostle, and was unique in that respect, nevertheless those who have followed him are still called from above, still sent by Christ from above, to preach the same gospel as Paul did. They still come with the authority of the One who sends them, they still declare the same gospel by which men and women have their eyes opened, are turned from darkness to light, from the power of Satan unto God. It is by the preaching of the same gospel that God the Holy Spirit quickens dead sinners unto everlasting life in Christ Jesus. It is by the preaching of the gospel that Christ brings a people, His Bride, unto His Father to glorify Him. And it is the same wonderful work of grace in the lives and characters of those whom God sends forth with His word that makes them examples for others to follow, as they follow Christ. Paul rightly exhorts others to follow him, and in such an exhortation God rightly exhorts us to follow those men whom He sends unto His church as gifts for its edification, as *they too* follow Christ.

You see, the question is not so much about whether or not we *should* follow men (for Paul's exhortations make it clear that we should), but about *which* men we should follow. So, which men *should* we follow? Those who follow Christ! For when God purposes to save a people He always sends a man with His gospel to lead that people unto Christ (Romans 10:14). Paul says, "*Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ*". We should follow those who, like Paul,

MINISTERING THE GOSPEL OF GOD

are sent by Christ to preach His gospel, those who proclaim the same apostolic doctrine: Those who declare the same truths regarding the person and work of the eternal Son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ. Those who declare His divinity, His humanity, His incarnation, His baptism, His visitation, His death, resurrection and ascension, and His present ministry from the glory. Those who declare the fall of man and his total depravity in sin by nature. Those who declare the finished work of Christ upon the cross, a free justification of fallen sinners by the blood of Christ, the imputation of the righteousness of God by faith of Jesus Christ unto all who believe on His Name, the forgiveness of sins and reconciliation with the Father for all that election of grace chosen of God in Christ from before the foundation of the world. Those who declare that salvation is of the Lord, entirely of the Lord, entirely by grace from start to finish. Those who declare the threefold work of God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit in salvation. Those who declare the Gospel of Christ, just as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be – just as Paul preached it as the Spirit of God gave him utterance, and as the Spirit continues to do so down through the ages through all those whom He sends in Christ's Name. *These* are the men whom we should follow, *those who follow Christ*.

...Whereas others should certainly be avoided. We should test what all men say in the Name of Christ by the scriptures, and if found wanting we should turn from them. We should turn from such who would bring another gospel, and another Jesus, with another spirit (2 Corinthians 11:4). We should turn from such who deny the person of Christ or that He has truly come in the flesh. From such who deny One God in Three Persons, Father, Son and Holy Ghost. From such who question and deny the inspiration and authority of God's word recorded in all the scriptures and its continual testimony to the person and work of Christ. From such who proclaim salvation by the works or by the will of man. From such who deny the free and sovereign grace of God in salvation. From such who deny God's eternal purposes and decrees in Christ, in electing a people for whom Christ should die, to bring them to

ROMANS – THE GOSPEL OF GOD

everlasting life in Him. From such who deny the true regenerating work of the Holy Spirit in quickening dead sinners unto life. From such who preach a mixed gospel, a mixture of works and faith, of law and grace, of Sinai and Zion. From such who preach so much of man and so little of Christ that their followers can only be led *away* from Christ and never led *to* Him. *Such* men should be avoided. But, despite these, there are those who *do* follow Christ, those whom Christ *has* sent with His gospel: and *those men* we should follow. For those men seek for man to be abased and Christ to be exalted, they labour that they should fade from view, that their followers should see “*no man save Jesus only*”.

To turn our backs on those whom God sends forth with His gospel; to shy from following them in a pious fear of being found to follow men, is, if those men truly follow Christ, to turn our backs on *Christ Himself*. To not receive those whom Christ sends to us, is to not receive Christ Himself. To treat with caution and reserve those preachers of the gospel whom Christ has sent, is to treat with caution and reserve Christ Himself. To turn from all men and to trust only our own interpretation of the scriptures, is, ultimately, to follow ourselves and our own understanding. We are right to be wary of man, and the teaching of men, we are absolutely right to weigh up every word spoken by man by that which we find in the scriptures, but we would be wrong to be so wary that we turn away from the teaching of Christ Himself, by the Spirit, in power, through those men whom He has sent forth to preach His everlasting gospel of salvation, those who minister the Gospel of God.

May we be given grace and discernment from God to know and recognise those whom He sends as gifts to His church, and to follow them as they follow Christ! For to follow Christ truly is to receive those whom He sends with His word, those gifts given to His church for its edification, for the building up of the church, for Christ’s glory!

And may we be found to be true followers of Christ as we follow those who follow Him, that Christ might be glorified in His body on

MINISTERING THE GOSPEL OF GOD

earth, and the Father by Him, for, *“Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory and blessing”* (Revelation 5:12).

Amen.

“And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love”, Ephesians 4:11-16.

“Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee? Or thirsty, and gave thee drink? When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee?”

And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me”, Matthew 25:37-40.

XVI ROMANS

"The revelation of the mystery" Romans 16:25

ROMANS XVI

I COMMEND UNTO YOU PHEBE OUR SISTER, WHICH IS A SERVANT OF THE CHURCH WHICH IS AT CENCHREA: THAT YE RECEIVE HER IN THE LORD, AS BECOMETH SAINTS, AND THAT YE ASSIST HER IN WHATSOEVER BUSINESS SHE HATH NEED OF YOU: FOR SHE HATH BEEN A SUCCOURER OF MANY, AND OF MYSELF ALSO.

GREET PRISCILLA AND AQUILA MY HELPERS IN CHRIST JESUS: WHO HAVE FOR MY LIFE LAID DOWN THEIR OWN NECKS: UNTO WHOM NOT ONLY I GIVE THANKS, BUT ALSO ALL THE CHURCHES OF THE GENTILES.

LIKewise GREET THE CHURCH THAT IS IN THEIR HOUSE. SALUTE MY WELL-BELOVED EPAENETUS, WHO IS THE FIRSTFRUITS OF ACHAIA UNTO CHRIST. GREET MARY, WHO BESTOWED MUCH LABOUR ON US. SALUTE ANDRONICUS AND JUNIA, MY KINSMEN, AND MY FELLOW-PRISONERS, WHO ARE OF NOTE AMONG THE APOSTLES, WHO ALSO WERE IN CHRIST BEFORE ME. GREET AMPLIAS MY BELOVED IN THE LORD.

SALUTE URBANE, OUR HELPER IN CHRIST, AND STACHYS MY BELOVED. SALUTE APELLES APPROVED IN CHRIST. SALUTE THEM WHICH ARE OF ARISTOBULUS' HOUSEHOLD. SALUTE HERODION MY KINSMAN. GREET THEM THAT BE OF THE HOUSEHOLD OF NARCISSUS, WHICH ARE IN THE LORD. SALUTE TRYPHENA AND TRYPHOSA, WHO LABOUR IN THE LORD. SALUTE THE BELOVED PERSIS, WHICH LABOURED MUCH IN THE LORD. SALUTE RUFUS CHOSEN IN THE LORD, AND HIS MOTHER AND MINE. SALUTE ASYNCRITUS, PHLEGON, HERMAS, PATROBAS, HERMES, AND THE BRETHREN WHICH ARE WITH THEM. SALUTE PHILOGOGUS, AND JULIA, NEREUS, AND HIS SISTER, AND OLYMPAS, AND ALL THE SAINTS WHICH ARE WITH THEM.

SALUTE ONE ANOTHER WITH AN HOLY KISS. THE CHURCHES OF CHRIST SALUTE YOU.

NOW I BESEECH YOU, BRETHREN, MARK THEM WHICH CAUSE DIVISIONS AND OFFENCES CONTRARY TO THE DOCTRINE WHICH YE HAVE LEARNED; AND AVOID THEM. FOR THEY THAT ARE SUCH SERVE NOT OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST, BUT THEIR OWN BELLY; AND BY GOOD WORDS AND FAIR SPEECHES DECEIVE THE HEARTS OF THE SIMPLE. FOR YOUR OBEDIENCE IS COME ABROAD UNTO ALL MEN. I AM GLAD THEREFORE ON YOUR BEHALF: BUT YET I WOULD HAVE YOU WISE UNTO THAT WHICH IS GOOD, AND SIMPLE CONCERNING EVIL. AND THE GOD OF PEACE SHALL BRUISE SATAN UNDER YOUR FEET SHORTLY. THE GRACE OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST BE WITH YOU. AMEN.

TIMOTHEUS MY WORKFELLOW, AND LUCIUS, AND JASON, AND SOSIPATER, MY KINSMEN, SALUTE YOU. I TERTIUS, WHO WROTE THIS EPISTLE, SALUTE YOU IN THE LORD. GAIUS MINE HOST, AND OF THE WHOLE CHURCH, SALUTETH YOU.

ERASTUS THE CHAMBERLAIN OF THE CITY SALUTETH YOU, AND QUARTUS A BROTHER.
THE GRACE OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST BE WITH YOU ALL. AMEN.

NOW TO HIM THAT IS OF POWER TO STABLISH YOU ACCORDING TO MY GOSPEL, AND
THE PREACHING OF JESUS CHRIST, ACCORDING TO THE REVELATION OF THE MYSTERY,
WHICH WAS KEPT SECRET SINCE THE WORLD BEGAN, BUT NOW IS MADE MANIFEST,
AND BY THE SCRIPTURES OF THE PROPHETS, ACCORDING TO THE COMMANDMENT OF
THE EVERLASTING GOD, MADE KNOWN TO ALL NATIONS FOR THE OBEDIENCE OF FAITH:

TO GOD ONLY WISE, BE GLORY THROUGH JESUS CHRIST FOR EVER. AMEN.

THE EPILOGUE

The Revelation of the Mystery

“The revelation of the mystery” Romans 16:25

IN the last chapter of Romans Paul concludes his epistle by sending greetings to the brothers and sisters gathered in the church at Rome and reaffirms his confidence in the message of the gospel delivered to the saints.

Having addressed the saints in chapter 1 and commended their unity in Jesus Christ, in whom they were called through the gospel, and thanked God for their faith which was “*spoken of throughout the whole world*” (Romans 1:8), Paul again commends their conduct, their faith, their love, and their labours for Christ as he closes his epistle. Here is a people drawn from both Jews and Gentiles whose unity is found not in nationality, race, culture or earthly interests, but in Christ. They are knit together in Christ, by His gospel – chosen by God in eternity with an everlasting election, redeemed by the blood of His Son at the cross and quickened into spiritual life by the Spirit to live and walk by faith.

Yet, in verse 17 Paul warns the brethren against those who would cause division in the church through their opposition to the message preached. The well-being and unity of the church rests in this – the faithful proclamation and adherence to that gospel, that message declared from the beginning and expounded in this very epistle. Division stands in departure from this message. Unity does not stand in the creeds and confessions, it does not stand in denominations, or church orders, nor in man-made authority, be it the Pope of Rome or any other, neither in the theology, traditions or

ROMANS – THE GOSPEL OF GOD

organisations of men – however scriptural-sounding and however seemingly well-meant. No, unity stands in one thing, and one thing only, *Christ and His gospel as revealed by the Spirit*, and anything and everything which departs from that message, in any way, merely encourages and maintains division. Mark it well – take heed what you hear. How vital then is this message, and how seriously Paul treats that which is “*contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned*” (*Romans 16:17*) and especially those who would bring in such contrary doctrine, by which divisions and offences come, though they “*by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple*” (*Romans 16:18*).

How seriously then should *we* take the message of the gospel. This is God’s message to sinners. It must not be taken lightly. It cannot be compromised.

But we thank God that the very gospel which Paul declared to those at Rome continues to be sounded even to the present day. It remains the same. It is that “*faith which was once delivered unto the saints*” (*Jude 1:3*). It does not vary. It cannot be added to, nor subtracted from. It is not subject to the opinions or objections of men, it is not subject to the changing fashions of this world or the differences between cultures and peoples. It stands sure and certain. It is the faith which was *once* delivered.

This is the message we need to hear in our day and age – the same message preached from the very beginning, and as recorded in the scriptures.

Is this the message you have heard? Is this the faith you confess? The faith *once* delivered to the saints? Has God revealed this ‘*mystery*’ to you?

For these things *must* be revealed to us. Until they are they remain a mystery. Though with the coming of Christ, and the writing of the New Testament, those things which had previously been hid as a secret, were now revealed, though those things which

had only previously been known in types, figures and prophecy were now fulfilled in Christ, nevertheless, *even now*, until God opens our eyes to see them, they remain a mystery to us too. Until the Spirit of God takes the words of scripture and breathes them into our hearts, until He proclaims the gospel unto us in power, the truth remains but words on a page. A hidden mystery. We may read the Bible, we may devour books, we may hear a preacher, but all is beyond our comprehension, all is confused, everything is no more than information. No matter how intelligent, how wise, how well-read we may be, these things will remain hidden from us until God in mercy teaches us to bow before Him and His revelation with child-like humility, for Jesus said, *“I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes”* (Matthew 11:25).

Yet when God *does* reveal the truth to us, when He, as it were, takes the wraps off the truth, opens our eyes to see and reveals that gospel unto us *then* everything becomes clear – that which was once hidden can then be seen, what was once a dark shadow is then revealed in the light of the day, in heavenly light, divine light. What may once have been but knowledge of the letter, knowledge *about* Christ, then becomes a knowledge *of* Christ – in *experience* – by the *Spirit...*

I ask again, has God revealed this ‘mystery’ to you? Has He revealed His Son unto you through the preaching of His gospel – that gospel which is *“the power of God unto salvation”*? That *“mystery of the gospel”* (Ephesians 6:19) *“which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints”* (Colossians 1:26), which declares *“the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory”* (Colossians 1:27). For, *“without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory”* (1 Timothy 3:16). Yea, has *this* gospel, *this* mystery been revealed to you?

ROMANS – THE GOSPEL OF GOD

For salvation lies in *no other message* – for Christ, the Saviour, is revealed in *no other message*. Every variation from that “*faith... once delivered*”, however small, is by so much a departure from the truth and its saving power. Our great need today is to return to the truth as it was delivered in the beginning. Not to the ‘great days’ of the past in church history. Not to the Great Awakening, not to the Reformation, not to 1689, 1646, the 1500s, not to Lloyd-Jones, Philpot, Spurgeon, Whitefield, Luther or Calvin. But back to the beginning! Back to the gospel as recorded in the scriptures, and as declared by Christ and His apostles. Back to the “*faith which was once delivered unto the saints*”. That faith Paul preached and expounded in his epistle to the Romans.

Has God taught you that faith? That gospel? That message?

Has it been revealed unto you, in the heart, in the inward man, by the Spirit, through the word, by those sent to preach it – not in word only, but in power, in the Holy Spirit and in much assurance?

May God be pleased to sound this message in power in this day and generation. The message of Christ, of His salvation, of His justifying righteousness wrought by faith, of an eternal election, free justification, of salvation by grace and not by works. That salvation which is of God, not man, which is “*from faith to faith*” – even the “*faith which was once delivered unto the saints*”.

This message. And none other. The faith once delivered to the saints.

The faith... of Jesus Christ.

Now to him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began, But now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith: To God only wise, be glory through Jesus Christ for ever.

Amen.



*"Now when the centurion saw what was done, he glorified God, saying,
Certainly this was a righteous man" Luke 23:47*

Colophon

Further Information

In many ways what is presented in this book is but a poor presentation of the truths contained in Romans – truths so deep and so sublime it would take a lifetime just to begin to see something of the vast treasure contained therein. Yet, the author trusts that something of what the Lord has taught him over many years, and what He has enabled him to put into print might prove profitable to the reader. The publication of this book represents the culmination of some years spent expounding these truths. The chapters have gradually been posted to *'The Gospel of God'* website before finally being published in print. However, despite committing to print the author does not expect the contents of the website to become, as it were, 'set in stone', but trusts that it may continue to develop as the Lord leads and as He grants further insight into the riches of the gospel as declared in Romans. To this end the reader is encouraged to consult the website for ongoing exposition.

Visit: www.thegospelofgod.wordpress.com

Readers may also be interested in visiting the website "*Grace and Truth Online*", which contains many more articles proclaiming the Gospel of Christ and God's Free and Sovereign Grace in salvation. The website also contains book reviews, scripture texts, quotations and a number of links to other Christian websites of interest.

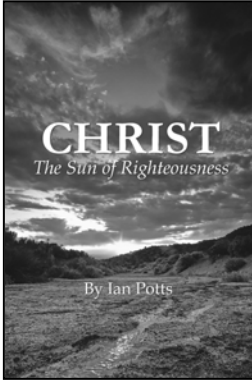
Visit: www.graceandtruthonline.com

*"For the law was given by Moses,
but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ" John 1:17*

www.graceandtruthonline.com

CHRIST, THE SUN OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

By Ian Potts



This work sets forth pictures of Christ as He is revealed throughout scripture. The whole message of the Bible regards the person and the work of Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God. He is to be found on every page of Holy Writ. He is the sum and substance of God's message to lost mankind, He is the One through whom God reveals Himself to man, He is the One through whom God reconciles sinners to Himself, He is the One in whom all the blessings of God to His people are revealed. The Gospel of God concerns His Son, Jesus Christ, and the message of the Bible is one of the salvation of sinners through Jesus Christ, by Free and Sovereign Grace.

The book comprises chapters based upon a number of articles which were originally published on the website "Grace and Truth Online". A couple of the articles have also appeared in print in the pages of "New Focus" magazine. It is hoped that the chapters in this book will clearly point the reader towards Christ, the Saviour, the "Sun of righteousness".

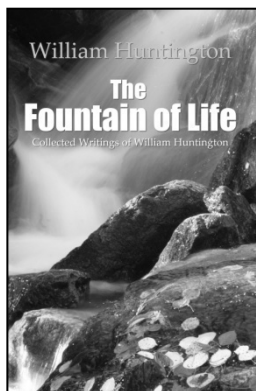
"I am happy to recommend this book for personal reading and meditation. It will handsomely reward time invested in it. However, it has other uses too. The book may readily be employed evangelistically as a gift... throughout the book grace is unambiguously presented as the free gift of God." New Focus Magazine Dec/Jan 2006

Price £6.95 in UK or \$10.99 in USA
ISBN 1-4116-5133-2
150 pages, 6 x 9 in., Paperback

www.graceandtruthonline.com

THE FOUNTAIN OF LIFE

By William Huntington S.S



This publication contains six chapters taken from the works of William Huntington S.S. All the chapters are Christ-exalting and experimental as they set forth the true work of God in the salvation of sinners. Included are the following works:

"The Dimensions of Eternal Love", "The Destruction of Death by the Fountain of Life", "The Eternal Setting of the Sun", "The Saint's Seed-time and Harvest", "An Innocent Game for Babes in Grace", "The Broken Cistern & The Springing Well"

The book also includes biographical material about Huntington and his ministry written by Dr. George M. Ella, as well as a useful bibliography of available books by or about William Huntington.

We trust that this publication will prove edifying to readers and also provide a welcome introduction to the writings of Huntington to those who may be unfamiliar with the works of this man who was greatly used by God in his day and generation.

"Lovers of Huntington will welcome this well-produced book, in clear print, of some of his works."

Gospel Standard Magazine, April 2006

Price £10.50 in UK or \$16.99 in USA

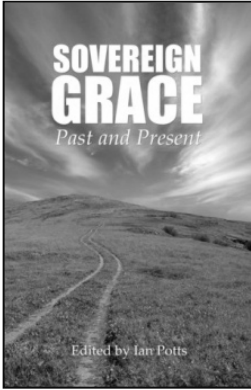
ISBN 1-4116-5856-6

340 pages, 6 x 9 in., Paperback

www.graceandtruthonline.com

SOVEREIGN GRACE - PAST AND PRESENT

Edited By Ian Potts



A collection of writings from both past and present preachers of God's Gospel of Free and Sovereign Grace through Jesus Christ. Includes works by William Tiptaft, Tobias Crisp, William Huntington, William Gadsby, Robert Murray M'Cheyne, J.C. Philpot, John Kershaw, James Bourne, Eli Ashdown, Francis Covell, John Vinall, John Warburton, Don Fortner, Henry Mahan, Don Bell, Gary Shepard, Todd Nibert, Tom Harding, Peter Meney and B.A. Ramsbottom.

The book also includes an introduction on 'Sovereign Grace', background information about each author and a useful appendix containing much information about other works written by or about the authors. These works are by authors whose lives span several hundred years, yet their message is the same – they proclaim the grace of God which brings salvation – because the One of whom they speak never changes, He is "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever".

"What a collection of burning and shining lights! Surely "a feast of fat things"!" ... "Beautifully produced and sold at a most reasonable price"

Gospel Standard Magazine, September 2006

Price £12.00 in UK or \$21.50 in USA

ISBN 978-1-84627-097-8

416 pages, 6 x 9 in., Paperback

All books available online at:-

www.graceandtruthonline.com