

Rudiments of Romans

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INTRODUCTION

The book of Romans is no doubt one of the greatest books that has ever been written. Its riches have never been expended and its resources seem to be unfathomable. It takes its readers from the Stygian dungeons of sin to the sublime heights of the hills of God. It is a marvel of profound thought winging its way on simple language. It leads men from sin to salvation, from works to faith, from self to God. As long as it exists, Christian doctrine is safe. It covers every tenet of Christian belief. It is the key to the rest of the Epistles. If its doctrines were faithfully and fearlessly proclaimed,

it would bring on a crisis that would precipitate a revival in almost any church. It proclaims a world-wide gospel and interprets the great commission, which implies a gospel that is universal.

In this book on Romans the author makes no pretense of literary style. The book is not written for the critics. Neither is it written with the desire to give a new version on this great Epistle, but with the desire to help spread scriptural holiness in the earth. It is sent forth with a prayer that God's blessings may attend its reading.

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1. THE CALLING OF THE APOSTLE PAUL

Romans 1:1-16

Paul does not argue here the fact of his apostleship. He simply states it as a fact. In the first verse of this Epistle he goes from the lowest realm for a child of God to the highest, from a servant to an apostle. To be a servant was a voluntary act on his part. He had made himself a love slave of Jesus Christ.

As the love slave of the Old Testament bore in his body the marks of such slavery, so Paul bore in his body the marks of love slavery to Jesus Christ. He declared, "I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus (Gal. 6:17). Paul was not only a servant by his own choice but an apostle by God's choice, "called to be an apostle." There were originally twelve apostles. They were all called in peculiar ways. Not one of them ever chose the place or was chosen by a man. When one fell by transgression, the others replaced him by ballot. In a very peculiar way God called Paul to the apostolic position without the intervention of man or his ballot. When Jesus sets up His kingdom, there will be only twelve apostles who will sit on twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel. If Matthias is recognized by God as one of the apostles and becomes one of the rulers with the others, then Paul will be eliminated. It may be that Paul's calling to be the apostle to the Gentiles eliminates him from ruler-ship over a Jewish tribe.

Paul was a special apostle, it seems; for he had a peculiar relationship to the gospel of Jesus Christ. The others were greatly interested in the kingdom.

They wanted to know when it would be set up. Some of them wanted prominent places in it when it was established. But Paul was interested in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

He was interested in that gospel that changes lives and transforms societies, that gospel that sets up the kingdom of God *in the hearts of men* and prepares them for citizenship in His earthly kingdom when it is set up. He calls it his gospel, when He says, "God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel" (Romans 2:16). He is separated unto it.

"Separated unto the gospel of God" (Romans 1:1). He is set for its defense.

"I am set for the defense of the gospel" (Phil. 1:17). It was that gospel "which He had promised afore by His prophets in the holy scriptures" (Romans 1:2), but which had been hidden from man's understanding. Even the other apostles had not understood it, but Paul had it "by the revelation of Jesus Christ" (Gal. 1:12). How blind men are! From the earliest times God tried to get men to see Christ. No sooner had Adam fallen than God began to try to get Him to see the gospel plan of redemption. He pointed it out at Abel's altar; He wrote it on the waves by means of Noah's ark; He pictured it at Isaac's sacrifice, He proclaimed it at the crossing of the Red Sea, He thundered it from Sinai; He revealed it through the prophets; He let men see and handle it in the prepared body of Christ; He shined it from the cross and blazed it at Pentecost. And yet it took a special revelation before man comprehended the revealed Christ.

Paul said it was given him by divine revelation. That gospel is "concerning His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ." There is no possible way for anyone to know Jesus Christ or understand His gospel except by divine revelation. He is the "man nobody knows" through natural resources, mental reasoning, or logical deduction. On one occasion Jesus said to His disciples, "Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?" (Matt. 16:13). They replied, "Some say that thou art John the Baptist some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets." Then He asked, "But whom say ye that I am?" Peter replied, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." Jesus answered, "Flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven" (Matt. 16:14-17). It is clear that a personal, present Christ could not be known except by divine revelation. Jesus said, "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church." Jesus did not say that He was to build His church upon Peter, *but upon the rock of divine revelation of himself to the heart of man*. Membership in His church is not based on the practice of ordinances, the acceptance of a Church covenant, or the practice of a denominational standard of unworldliness in business, social relationships, or attire, but in knowing Christ through a divine revelation in the heart.

Paul said, "I count all things but loss . . . that I may win Christ" (Phil. 3:8). His membership in the Jewish congregation, His educational standing, His zeal for what he thought right, and his bright future as a leader of his nation, he counted but dross that he might win, know, and fellowship Christ. You are not a member of Christ's church unless you, too, know Him. That is the first requisite, and you can know Him only through a divine revelation.

His gospel was hidden in the law, the tabernacle, the sacrificial altar, the temple and its ordinances, and even in his parables. It was not known until Paul had a revelation of it. "For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles, if ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward: how that by revelation He made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words, whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ) which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto His holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit; that the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ by the Gospel: whereof I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of His power. Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ; and to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ: to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God" (Eph. 3:1-10).

This gospel was preached by Moses in the wilderness. "For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it" (Heb. 4:2). It could not be mixed with faith in them, for it was not understood; and

2. THE CONDITION OF THE GENTILE

Romans 1:17-32; 2:1-16

It has ever been the employment of agnostics and infidels to blame God, whom they contend does not exist, for all the ills of man. They blame God for creating man when He knew that man would fall and bring wreckage to His creation. They do not take into account that God could not have created any other kind of creature and have done justice to himself. Man, alone, of all God's creatures, is in His image. Man, alone, was privileged to act by choice.

Creation would not have been worthy of God without being climaxed with a creature endowed with the power of free choice. That man was capable of falling, as well as capable of choosing eternal life, is a sign of God's greatness, justice, and holiness. To have finished His creation without such a creature would have revealed weakness, fear, and injustice on the part of God.

That man fell when put on test is not a fault of God. It does not lend to man an excuse for living in sin and not trying to find God. That there is a God, all reasonable men must acknowledge because of the creation; for creation reveals that there is a God of system, law, order, justice, truth, and power. Thus men are left without an excuse relative to the knowledge of the fact of God. God has tried to reveal Himself to man through different channels, such as nature, conscience, law, and grace. Acknowledge God in nature and, if you are honest, it will lead you to acknowledge God in conscience. Acknowledge God in conscience and, if you are honest, it will lead you to acknowledge God in law. Acknowledge God in law and, if you are honest, it will lead you to acknowledge God in grace.

Acknowledgment does not mean obedience. Disobedience, in any of these will lead to idolatry and sin. In Romans 1:20-23 we read, "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 incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things." We see that idolatry and

appropriating faith can be founded only on understanding. It was preached by Jesus Christ. But it seems that it was not fully understood, even by His disciples: for up unto the last they were still inquiring, "Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?" (Acts 1:6). It seems that it was left to Paul to reveal the full meaning of the gospel.

What a gospel He revealed! It was a universal gospel. For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth" (Romans 1:16). It was an unchangeable gospel. "But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed" (Gal. 1:8). It was a gospel of power "For it is the power of God. Unto salvation" (Rom. 1:16).

Men are ashamed of its necessity; they would rather not think of themselves as lost sinners. They are ashamed of its demands; repentance is so repugnant and humiliating. They are ashamed of its (effectiveness); they would rather have a part in their own salvation. They do not like the idea that they in themselves cannot live well enough to go to heaven. They do not like the Scripture which says, "Salvation is of the Lord," or "By grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God" (Eph. 2:8). They are ashamed of its (effectiveness); they cannot, or will not, believe that Jesus Christ can save from all sin. They think that all men must sin a little every day. They do not like the Scriptures which say, "He that committeth sin is of the devil" (1 John 3:8); "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin" (1 John 3:9); "He was manifested to take away our sins" (1 John 3:5); and "The blood of Jesus Christ His son cleanseth us from all sin" (1 John 1:7). A gospel that does not make provision to take out of man what the devil put into Him, or lift man out of the sins he has gotten into, and out of himself, is unworthy of God. Such a gospel was necessary to save the world from the awful depths of sin to which it had plunged.

degrading sin go hand in hand. These Romans knew there was a God, but they had "changed the truth of God into a lie" and worshiped the creature instead of the Creator.

They refused to "retain God in their knowledge." They corrupted the natural God-given impulses until they sank lower than the beasts of the field. They were filled with all unrighteousness, all fornication, all wickedness, all covetousness, all maliciousness. They were full of envy, full of murder, full of debate, full of deceit, full of malignity. They were usurpers, haters of God, (spiteful), proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, covenant breakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful. They took pleasure in those who committed wickedness, despised the riches of His goodness, treasured wrath from God. Their throats were an open sepulchre.

With their tongues they used deceit. The poison of snakes was under their lips. Their mouth was full of cursing. Their feet were swift to go to murder.

They knew nothing about peace, and had no fear of God. What a picture of sin!

What made them sink to such depths? Two things—their sinful nature and their refusal to accept any knowledge of the true God. One of the clearest truths taught in this book is that of original, or inborn, sin. It is mentioned as *the sin* 32 times. It is the sin that comes to light by the restraint of the law.

Rev. S. I. Emery teaches, "Without the law the sin in man would make one feel like knocking all the teeth out of the mouth of His enemy; but the law said only one tooth for a tooth. If a man were to put out one of your eyes, the sin would lead you to put out both of His eyes; but the law said only one eye for an eye." The sin would lead men into all kinds of immorality; but the law says, "Thou shalt not commit adultery." The sin would lead men to kill all those who injure them; but the law says, "Thou shalt not kill." The sin would deny the fact of God and man's moral responsibility to Him; but the law says, "Thou shalt have no other gods before Me." The moral law was given as a restraint to the sin, and in its restraint reveals the strength and wickedness of the sin.

The sin mentioned in Romans in the singular is different from sin in the plural. It is an inborn condition and is not an act of the will in unison with the devil, as is an act of sin. It is transmitted from one generation to the other, and does not carry with it personal responsibility or condemnation. It comes without choice and gives direction to one's thoughts, words, and actions until subdued by grace or cleansed by the blood of Christ. It manifests itself in various ways according to age, education, and environment of the individual.

It leads men away from God from birth. It is an enemy of God. The carnal mind is enmity against God" (Romans 8:7). It is subject to no law of God or man. That is, where the law tells it to go so far, and no farther, it will not obey. It incites wrong desires in men which, when impregnated by the devil, will produce actual transgression. "Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth He any man: but every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death" (James 1:13-15). We see by this that inbred sin in union with the devil produces actual transgression.

Inbred sin being a condition, the brightest pardon God can give will never touch it. There is only one remedy, and that is cleansing. Sin as an act must be forgiven; but sin as a principle must be cleansed. It was this sin principle working in the lives of those Gentiles that led them into the vile sins of which they were guilty.

This inborn sin, unrestrained by the moral law, leads man to deny the fact of a living God and causes him to make a god of His own fancy, like unto himself or his imaginary god, and causes him to go to excesses in immoral orgies and in paying homages to his created god. That was the condition of Rome before she knew the law of God and the gospel of Christ; and that is the condition of every nation or individual without law or grace, whether they are without them by neglect or by choice. The antediluvian world went to the depths of iniquity, and God had to destroy it because the people had no law or grace. The cities of the plains went to the same degree of iniquity because of the same conditions. As it was in the days of Noah, and as it was in the days of Lot, so shall it be in the coming of the Son of man. The only difference between the days of Noah and of Lot and these days is that the men of those earlier periods let the inborn sin of their hearts run riot because they had no restraining force given them. Today men and nations let their inborn sin run to excess because they reject all restraint. The result will be the same—destruction of the vast majority under the direct judgment of God.

One would think that such far-reaching, devastating judgment would have a restraining force; but the only thing that will ever restrain or solve the sin question is grace. Judgment from God may deter men from sinful acts for awhile, but they do not completely hold back humanity from disobedience.

God put judgment on Adam and Eve, but it did not restrain Cain from murder. He put judgment on Cain, but it had little restraining effect on Lamech. He put judgment on the antediluvians, but it had no restraint on Ham. He put judgment on Ham, but soon humanity was racing toward hell and ripening for the judgment of Babel. The judgments of Egypt were soon

forgotten by the Jews when they were at their licentious orgies dancing around the golden calf. For forty years they played fast and loose with God.

Their history is one of returning and backsliding, one of judgment and mercy, until finally God had to destroy them as a nation and as a people, because in defiance to God they asked for it.

Sin puts man where "there is no fear of God before his eyes." Sin hardens man's heart until he is willing let the judgments of God accumulate as a treasure. "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" (Romans 2:5). The Sodomites laughed at the judgments of God. The Egyptians laughed at God's judgments and said they could also do those tricks. The Gentiles laughed at God's judgments until God gave them up to their evil affections. Today such a condition is so prevalent that men will not recognize anything as a judgment from God; and it will get worse and worse, until nearly half of the judgments of the tribulation will have been poured out before men will recognize God's hand.

There is no deliverance from sin by natural revelation. There is a natural revelation of God to man. It is found in all heathen lands and leads the heathen to make gods to worship. If they would obey that revelation of God it would lead them to worship the unknown god and no doubt would have a moral effect upon their lives. We would not have anyone to believe that such a revelation is sufficient for salvation. Had it been, God would not have given other revelations. Such a revelation, however, if followed, would have led men to a deeper revelation of God, "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 four-footed beasts, and creeping things" (Romans 1:19-23). The inference in these Scriptures is that through natural revelation man, in a way, knew God. If that is the case, then men deliberately left the knowledge of God and "darkened their own heart." They changed the glory of God into an image. You see, "They knew God." But they would not glorify Him as God. They changed Him into an image. This was the beginning of idolatry. They were led into idolatry because they refused to obey the revelation of God in nature and were left without excuse. This revelation was enough to put them under wrath for rejecting. God will of necessity have to punish such people, and He will; for He says, "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, spiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, . . . 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" (Romans 1:28-30, 32).

3. THE CONDITION OF THE JEW

Romans 2:12; 4:25

"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" (Romans 2:12).

The first part of this verse has reference to the Gentiles, who had a revelation of God only through nature, but who refused it, turned to idolatry, and perished in their sins. The last part of this verse is a warning to the Jew, inferring that He will meet the same fate if He sins, with His greater light and clearer revelation of God through the law.

Having this greater light through law, Paul asked, "What advantage then hath the Jew?" (Romans 3:1). His answer was, "Much every way: chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God" (Romans 3:2).

The Gentiles did not have the oracles of God, but the Jews did. Did this

advantage profit them? A study of the Scripture will help us.

We are told that they "rested in the law" (Romans 2:17). They boasted in God, they knew His will; they approved the excellency of the law; they gloried in their ability as teachers and instructors; but they did not keep the law which they taught others to keep. See Romans 3:18-23. They were very strong on the letter of the law but weak in the spirit of it. They were more concerned with outward forms than with an inner condition. Just as the Gentiles turned from the revelation of God in nature and made gods of wood and stone patterned after animals and creeping things, so the Jews turned from the revelation of God through the law and worshiped idols, until God allowed the Babylonians to subject them as slaves for seventy years. Since then no Jew has ever been a worshiper of a god of wood or stone, but as a people they did put their ordinances and ceremonies ahead of

God and His moral laws and became worshipers of such things. They taught others the law, but did not learn its spiritual lessons themselves. They preached to others not to steal, while they were guilty of stealing. See Romans 2:23. *Through high preaching and low living* they caused the name of God to be blasphemed among the Gentiles (Romans 2:24). They boasted of, and depended upon, their circumcision. If they had that, they felt safe; but Paul points out that ceremonies and rites only avail if the heart is right. “For circumcision verily profiteth, if thou keep the law; but if thou be a breaker of the law, thy circumcision is made uncircumcision” (Romans 2:25).

And if the heart is right, such are of little avail except as a privilege or a sign of a work of grace in the heart (Romans 2:25-29). With all of their outward forms and ceremonies they sank as low in sin as the Gentiles without the law. “What then? Are we better than they? No, in no wise: for we have before proven 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” (Romans 3:9-21).

We see that the revelation in nature was insufficient in itself for man’s salvation. We see also that the law in itself could not save. These factors were only informative and disciplinary forces to lead man to a higher revelation.

This higher revelation we find mentioned first in chapter 3:21-31, “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 that 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.” Now the righteousness of God without the law is manifest (Romans 2:21). That is, the revelation of the righteousness of God in man was in the law and in the prophets as well as in the revelation of God in nature, but there was no power in them to save.

There was a necessity for a greater revelation of God’s righteousness and God’s power to save. That revelation was given by God in Jesus Christ and is received, not by mental deduction or wilful keeping of the law, but by faith in Christ. “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” (Rom. 3:22). The revelation through nature was for the Gentile; the revelation through the law was for the Jew; but the revelation through Jesus Christ was for both Jew and Gentile. There is no difference, for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God and can be saved only through Jesus Christ by grace. “Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus” (Romans 3:24). This excludes boasting. “Where is boasting?” (Romans 3:27). It excludes salvation by works. See Romans 3:27. It excludes nationalism. “Is He the God of the Jew only? Is He not also of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also” (Rom. 3:29). It adopts all that is good in the revelation by nature and law, but excludes them as being sufficient to salvation. “Seeing it is one God, which shall justify the circumcision by faith, and un-circumcision through faith. Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law” (Rom. 3:30-31).

4. FAITH, THE CHANNEL OF OUR SALVATION

Romans 5:1

There are many reasons why faith alone is the condition of our salvation.

When man fell, it was because of unbelief. He questioned the veracity of God and acted as if God did not mean what He said. Before He can make contact with God He must reverse himself and place implicit faith in God. He questioned the righteousness of God. Only by faith can the righteousness of God be established. It was pictured in the law, but established by faith.

Through faith God can be just and the justifier at the same time. He was just in His demands. He had a right to demand that His creatures should not touch the fruit of the tree in the midst of the garden. He did not tell them why He made such a demand. He did not need to. He had a perfect right to make demands on His creatures without explanation. He was just in demanding a satisfaction. If He had permitted man to break His law at will without demanding satisfaction for the breaking of it, He would have disrupted His government. No government, human or divine, can stand unless law is maintained either by obedience or by satisfaction after law is broken. God said, “In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.” Either man or His substitute must die. God’s justice demanded it. Angels could not provide it; man could not provide it. God’s love alone could make it possible. What His justice demanded, His love provided. And His law was upheld, His government maintained, and His righteousness established.

By faith in that substitute alone have men been saved in all ages and dispensations, and by lack of faith men have been damned. No doubt God taught man to make a sacrifice of blood on an altar that would reveal faith in a salvation purchased by the blood of His son shed on Calvary, when He slew animals and clothed Adam and Eve with the skins; for we see man

building an altar and bringing to it a sacrifice of blood. “By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain” (Heb. 11:4). “And the Lord had respect unto Abel and to his offering” (Gen. 4:4). “But unto Cain and to his offering He had not respect” (Gen. 4:5). Cain and Abel were both of the same parentage; both were brought up under the same influences and environment.

They were both following legitimate and honorable pursuits for a livelihood.

There is nothing charged against either of them until this time. They were both worshipers of God. They both brought of what they had as an offering to God. Wherein lies the reason that one was accepted and the other rejected? There is only one difference—faith. Abel believed what God had taught about the blood being necessary for man’s redemption. Cain listened to the voice of the sin in his heart rather than what God had said. God said to Him, “If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? And if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door.” The reason he was not accepted was because he let the sin dominate his thinking and destroy his faith. He was rejected because of the sin in his heart. His offering was not accepted because it was not coupled with faith in the promised redeemer. Abel was accepted because the sin did not dominate him, and his offering was accepted because it was coupled to Jesus Christ by faith.

To deny the merits of the blood of Christ and try to buy the favor of God by gifts and good works is not new in the earth. It is nearly as old as man. Its children have multiplied much faster than the children of faith, and will continue to do so. Jesus, looking down to the end time, cried out, “When the Son of man cometh, shall He find faith on the earth?” (Luke 18:8).

Faith was a requisite of the Old Testament as well as of the New Testament, "Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh. By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him By faith, Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac." Their faith was active. Through it, they "subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. Women received their dead raised to life again." Their faith was also passive: for "others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection: and others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment: they were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; (of whom the world was not worthy:) they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth. And these all . . . obtained a good report through faith. (Heb. 11) These were all in the Old Testament times. What about now? "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." "The just shall live by faith." "We walk by faith, not by sight." "According to your faith, be it unto you." These and kindred passages reveal the religion of Jesus Christ to be a religion of faith.

If men are saved by faith, then works are excluded. "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 Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? Of works? Nay: but by the law of faith." No person can live well enough to go to heaven.

No person can improve his talents to such a degree that he can win the favor

5. CHANGE WROUGHT BY CONVERSION

Romans 5:1-10

We are using the term conversion to cover the change wrought when one receives the first work of grace. This is a Bible term. We call this work of grace the new birth, justification, regeneration. Conversion covers all of these, as the term, new birth, covers all of them.

When one is converted, a number of agencies act to make it possible. The law of God, the Spirit of God, the will of man, the Word of God, man's faith in that Word, the blood of Jesus Christ, and the justification of the Father, all cooperate.

The law of God is applied to bring conviction. Salvation, or conversion, without conviction is an impossibility. Conviction is not a work of conscience. Conscience, being a creature of education, cannot be trusted to convict. An enlightened conscience may induce one to change some ways of living, but that is not conviction. Conviction is a work of the Holy Spirit. He may accomplish it through a life that is lived by the Word of God. He may do it by bringing to remembrance long-forgotten truth and overdue obligations to God. Whatever method he uses, it is conviction that comes either directly or indirectly through the law of God. Conviction is not just a bad feeling; it is light. It is light that manifests what is wrong in one's life. The manifestation may bring a bad feeling, or it may bring a feeling of thankfulness because one has seen his condition before it is too late.

To be effective, conviction must be fed by a serious reflection on the goodness of God—"The goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance"; a vision of the folly of sin—"Whatsoever a man soweth that shall he reap"; and the penal results of sin—"The wages of sin is death."

The Holy Spirit convicts. He convicts of sin because of unbelief, "of righteousness," Jesus said, "because I go to my father," and "of judgment,

of God thereby. Good works reveal faith. James said, "Show me thy faith without thy works, and I will show thee my faith by my works." But good works, when done to merit the favor of God, without faith are an abomination to God. Even under the law no one was saved by works or by the keeping of the law. (Rom. 4:1-16). "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." Luther said, "That we are saved by faith and not by works is a wholesome doctrine and very full of comfort."

because the prince of this world is judged." And then He convicts of the sins one has committed. He cannot convict one of murder unless he has committed murder, nor of adultery, unless he has committed adultery. He can convict only of the wrong one has committed.

This leads one to repentance. Here is where the will of man acts.

Repentance is a necessity because of the perfection of God's laws. His laws which we are commanded to keep are founded on moral issues. His law is holy and just. To break it is to sin against all right principles, and demands an adjustment on the part of the law breaker. That adjustment can be made only by a repentance which takes a stand with God against oneself. It is a change in one's attitude toward God and sin that brings about a change in his conduct. It brings a death to all illegitimate relationships. It is not seeking an experience, or an ease of conscience, or comfort for a wounded spirit. It is a deliberate seeking after God because one wants God. When one finds Him, He will give an experience. He will remove the load of guilt from the conscience and He will pour a balm into the broken heart.

Conviction can be fought off by an act of the will, but it cannot be regained by an act of the will. It may be fought off, never to return; and without it there is no hope of finding salvation. It is a necessity; for "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish," and "The times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent." It consists of sin-consciousness, godly sorrow for sin, a confession of sin to God as far as one has wronged God and to man as far as he has wronged man, an adjustment of every moral relationship, and a restitution of all ill-gotten possessions to the party from whom they were taken. If God were to save men on terms less than that, He would disrupt the moral economy. It must be accompanied by a faith that both believes and trusts. "He that cometh to

God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him.” “In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth.”

This will bring regeneration, which is *a change in one's nature wrought by an infusion of divine life into the faculties of the soul that has been cut off from God*. The soul cut off from God is dead in trespasses and sin, but is not inactivated. Death is separation, not inactivation. “The soul that sinneth, it shall die.” “For the wages of sin is death.” “In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.” A dead soul is a soul cut off from God, but not a soul incapable of exercising its faculties. We read, in Ephesians 2:1-3, “And you hath He quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience, among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.” Here we have men dead in trespasses and sins walking and conversing. Both of these terms denote action. The faculties of the dead soul are active in sin. If they can be active in sin, why can they not be active toward God? They can be and are. The man who is dead in sin can repent and he can believe; and he must be regenerated.

“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.”

Men are not saved by the sovereign act of God and then afterward repent and believe; but by an act of their own will they turn to God in repentance and faith so that God can impart regenerating life to them. This does not cleanse those faculties, but it takes them from under the control of the devil and places them under the control of God. “To whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey.” Yield yourself to the devil and the faculties of your soul are cut off from God. Yield yourself to God and the faculties of your soul are cut off from the devil. This is regeneration.

And justification, which is a change in God's record book, is a blotting out by God of every charge against one at the court of heaven. How can He do that and still be just, when He has demanded the penalty of death for sin? “To declare, I say, at this time His righteousness: that He might be just, and the justifier” (Rom. 3:26) How and of whom? “Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus” (Rom. 3:24). Who? He who believeth in Jesus. What a truth! God gave a law founded on eternally right principles, with the penalty of death attached for breaking it. Man broke it.

God could not forgive by prerogative. Had He done so, His government

6. THE CONDITION OF ISRAEL BY ELECTION

Romans 9, 10

There are two kinds of election spoken of in the Bible. There is the election of grace and the election of purpose. The election of grace is taught in Romans 8:30: “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.” “For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate.” To understand the doctrine of predestination one must distinguish between the foreknowledge of God and the forewill of God. God is omniscient and knows all things from eternity to eternity. He, therefore, knew any individual who would accept Him. He did not know it because He had chosen some to be saved and some to be lost. Anything less than a whosoever gospel would be beneath God. He never chose anyone to be lost. He has no pleasure in the death of the wicked. His pleasure is that all men should repent and turn to Him. “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). But from other Scriptures, it is clear that His foreknowledge enabled Him to know just who would accept Christ and be saved and who would reject Him and be lost. This knowledge did not deter Him from offering salvation to all men and commanding us to preach the gospel to every creature. To be the God of eternity, He must be able to stand above accusation before all devils, all angels, and all men. No

would have fallen. There had to be satisfaction to the law and to God. Who would make that satisfaction? There was only one in the whole universe who could; that was the Second Person of the Trinity. He volunteered to be the mediator between God and man. He first went to the offended party, God, and proposed to take, for man, the punishment, which is death. The means or instrument had little to do with it. It was His death and blood that paid the penalty and satisfied the demands of God and His law. God accepted His proposal and He voluntarily carried it out. No one took His life; He voluntarily gave it. “He gave His life a ransom for many.” He said, “I lay down my life that I might take it again.” Why He chose the cross as a place to die seems too profound a question. That His hands should be pierced and His side riven was foretold long before it took place. Whether it was told because this was the choice of God or the foreknowledge of God it is hard to say. “Cursed is everyone that hangeth on a tree.” This statement was made long before He hung on the tree. Just why one hanging on a tree would be a curse is hard to say. One theory is as good as another; but we do know He was under the curse of sin as He hung on the tree. “For He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin.” After dealing with the offended God and having His approval on the scheme of redemption, and after accomplishing that redemption on the tree, He now appeals to the offender, man, “Be ye reconciled to God.” There is one mediator between God, and man, the man Christ Jesus.

By accepting Christ as man's substitute, the law was satisfied, God's word was upheld, God's government was kept in force, and God could stand just before angels, devils, and men; and, through the blood of the substitute, He could become the justifier of all men who will accept the substitute.

This experience of the new birth brings great changes in the life of the beneficiary. It brings peace with God. “Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God” (Romans 5:1). It brings access into establishing grace.

“By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand” (Romans 5:2). It gives us hope of a hereafter. “And rejoice in hope of the glory of God” (Romans 5:2). It makes one more than conqueror. “And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also” (Romans 5:3). It saves one from wrath. “Much more then, being now justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him” (Romans 5:9). It reconciles us to God. “For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His son” (Romans 5:10). *It brings us into contact with the source of life.* “Much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life” (Romans 5:10). It puts us where, though once sin abounded, grace now abounds. “But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound” (Romans 5:20). What an experience, to be obtained just by naked faith!

one must be able to accuse Him of unfairness. His foreknowledge enabled Him to know all who would accept Him. With this knowledge He could not only predestinate to salvation those whom He knew would accept Him, but He predestinated them to “be conformed to the image of His Son.” Therefore, all whom He knew would accept Him He provisionally called, justified, and glorified.

There is also the election of purpose. This kind of election is taught in Romans 9:9-18: “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.” In fact, the entire ninth chapter of Romans deals with the election of purpose. But the verses cited are definite. Here we have election without choice. “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.” Here we see election of purpose, God making choice of a child to be used for His purpose before the child was born.

What was that purpose? It was to bring upon the earth a people through whom the plan of redemption could be given to the world. They were to be known as Israelites, or Jews. They were to be the channels for truth about salvation. The Greeks gave mankind literature and art. The Romans gave law.

But “salvation is of the Jews”; and although Israel as a nation fell, “The fall of them be the riches of the world” (Romans 11:12); and “through their fall salvation is come unto the Gentiles” (Romans 11:11). They were broken off, [“Some of the branches be broken off” (verse 17)] and were cast away. “The casting away of them be the reconciling of the world” (verse 15), yet as God’s people they are still the chosen race and are still elected and predestined to fulfill His purpose. When they were cut off because of unbelief [“Because of unbelief they were broken off” (Romans 11:20)], God turned to the Gentiles to get out from them a people for His name’s sake (Acts 15:14). He has grafted them into the old root from which He cut off the Jews. “And if some of the branches be broken off, and thou, being a wild olive tree, wert grafted in among them, and with them partakers of the root and fatness of the olive tree; boast not against the branches” (Romans 11:17). Don’t boast because the Jews are cut off and you have been given an opportunity to have salvation.

Remember, that they were broken off because of unbelief, and that you can remain grafted in only by faith. “Because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith” (Romans 11:20). Therefore pride is to be feared and avoided. “Be not high-minded, but fear: for if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest He also spare not thee” (Romans 11:20-21). The only way the Gentiles can save themselves from the same fate the Jews met and suffered for nearly two thousand years is by obedience and faith in Jesus Christ. “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” (Romans 11:22).

God’s purpose in Israel, according to election, has not yet been fulfilled.

He is still working on His plan. During the interim, while the Jews are cut off as a nation because of unbelief, both Jews and Gentiles are being saved through faith and predestined to be conformed to His image through the

7. CONSECRATION AND CRUCIFIXION

Romans 6

In the former chapters we have seen the difference between sins as actual transgressions and the sin as an inborn condition. We have seen how this inborn condition controlled and dragged man, both Gentile and Jew, into idolatry and the most degrading sins. We have seen its subjugation under grace through regeneration. In a climactical statement on the subjection of this nature, Paul cried, “Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound” (Rom. 5:20). Where sin once reigned, grace now reigns.

In this sixth chapter Paul is writing about the sin and the possibility of deliverance from it. He opens the chapter with the statement, “What shall we say then? Shall we continue in the sin that (this abounding) grace may abound? God forbid” (Romans 6:1).

They had been delivered from their actual transgressions and were living above sins of commission. But Paul asks, Is there no deliverance from this sin principle? Must we continue to live in this all of our lives? Must we ever hold it in check that grace may abound? Thank God, we do not have to; for provision has been made for deliverance from it. In this chapter Paul makes clear the provision and condition for deliverance. He asks the great question, How shall we that are dead to the sin live any longer therein?

election of grace.

“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” (Rom. 11:1-5).

This reveals that not all Jews are cut off. The door is open for them to be saved by faith now as well as the Gentiles. All Jews in all ages, if saved by grace through faith, will be in the bridehood company the same as a Gentile saved by grace. It is only a remnant of the Jews, however, that will be saved by grace in this age. The rest have been cut off. “What then? Israel hath not obtained that which He seeketh for; but the election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded.” If God is to work out His purpose in the Jews as a nation, then there must come the day when they shall become a nation owned of God. They must be grafted in again to the root from which they were broken off. Will it ever come? Thank God, it will. “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 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.” When the fulness of the Gentiles be come in and the Gentile age is closed, then the Jews will be gathered to their own land and formed into a nation. God will then give them another chance as a nation to accept Christ as their Saviour and King. They will be saved when they look on Him whom they have pierced. They will be saved as Paul was saved, by a divine revelation that Jesus is the Christ. Blindness in part has happened to them now, but their eyes will be opened. How much like Paul’s conversion as an individual will be that of the Jewish nation. Does He not imply that, when He says, “He was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time,” or, as one before my time? And do we find running all through his writings the thought that as he was saved by divine revelation when he saw Christ on the road to Damascus, so the Jews as a nation will be saved when they look on Him at His revelation and He is revealed to them as their Messiah. God’s plans may be thwarted by man’s carnal nature and delayed by the devil, but they will all reach a glorious consummation in the end as He planned that they should.

When, then, did we die to the sin?

Provisionally, we died to the sin in Jesus Christ on the cross. “Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with Him” (Romans 6:6). The “old man” here, no doubt, covers sin in its entirety, both actual and inbred. Paul implies this in Colossians 3:8, 9, “But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth. Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds.” When Jesus died on Calvary, not only were our actual transgressions nailed to the tree with Him, but also the sin, called inbred sin, inborn sin, and carnality. That being the case, provisionally, our carnal nature was crucified with Him.

Actually and personally, it is accomplished in us when we meet the condition which makes the provision operative in us. The provision was, “that the body of sin might be destroyed.” This is not counteraction or suppression. This is destruction by death. “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” (Romans 6:3, 4). This is a baptism into His death, where we die to sin in Him and where we can

realize that “He that is dead is freed from sin” (Romans 6:7). “Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him” (Romans 6:8). When He died on Calvary He made provision for the destruction of the sin principle in us. When we accept that provision, the sin principle in us dies as far as we are personally concerned. We can then reckon ourselves “to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God.”

What are the conditions which make the provision operative in us? The first is a revelation of the need. This can come through heart hunger, or something longed for. “Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.” Or it can come through a revelation of the sin working in the heart. Paul said, “Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof.” You have discovered that the sin is there, but don’t let it be your master. It may create desires that are wrong, but don’t yield to those desires. Don’t yield your

8. DELIVERANCE IN CHRIST

Romans 7

It seemed the Jews were so married to their law that they could not think of giving it up for a personality, even though that personality was the Son of God. In the first part of this chapter Paul is pointing out to them that a woman is bound to her husband by the law as long as the husband is alive, but that when he is dead she is at liberty to unite in marriage with another. Just so, He is telling them that Christ fulfilled the obligation of the ceremonial law and that it was finished when He died on the cross. He tells them they are now to be married to Christ. They seemed to desire a dead law in preference to a living Christ. “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” (Romans 7:1-4).

He goes on to explain to them that their law had no power to save from sins or to cleanse from sin. It was not given for that purpose, but was given to reveal sin and to lead men to a deliverer.

As has already been pointed out, sin was in the heart of man before the law was given, and brought forth fruit in actual transgression. But it did not appear to them as sin; neither was it imputed to them by God as sin. Let us study this chapter a little.

“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” (Romans 7:5).

Paul here is saying, I felt that being dominated by carnality (or the flesh) and allowing it to work through my members was all right until the law was

9. CONDITION OF THE CLEANSED

Romans 8

This eighth chapter of Romans pictures the highest experience one can have this side of heaven. It reveals the sanctified man under all conditions of life as a victorious man. The first verse rings the bell of liberty and victory.

“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). Here is a soul no longer buffeted about by a double nature; no longer with a spirit in opposition to the law of God; but a soul following one Master, and He the Spirit of God.

Up until this time two great principles embodied in laws have been working

members as instruments of unrighteousness. What should we do? Yield yourselves unto God as those that are alive from the dead. You are no longer dead in trespasses and sin. You have been made alive from the dead. The divine life in you would have you yield yourselves unto God and your members as instruments of righteousness unto Him. When that is done it takes one clear out from under the domination of sin in any way. “For sin shall not have dominion over you.”

You may call this consecration or crucifixion, but it is a different yielding than that yielding when one is justified. The yielding of a sinner to be saved is on the basis of demand. The yielding of the believer to be sanctified is on the basis of love. When this consecration, or yielding, is complete, and faith is exercised, then we are “made free from sin” and have our “fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life.”

given; and then I saw that what I was allowing would bring death. “For I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died” (Romans 7:9). Is the law, then, sin? No. He said, “I had not known sin, but by the law” (Romans 7:7). I had not known these wrong desires were sin but by the law, “I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet” (Romans 7:7).

When the law was given it revealed in me a living principle that had been running wild and uncontrolled. Before this, I was dead to what I had in my heart; but the law revealed all kinds of concupiscence (ie: lust, covetousness, and inordinate desire -see also Col. 3:5) there.

“But sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence. For without the law sin was dead” (Romans 7:8).

The law which the Jews thought was given to bring life, he found revealed to him (Paul) only death; for it was ever saying that if you do what your nature desires to do it will bring death.

Was the law, then, wrong? No. “Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good” (Romans 7:12). Was, then, that which is good made death? No. It revealed the sin working through them that brought death. (See Romans 7:13). The law made him realize that he was “carnal, sold under sin.” (See Romans 7:14).

He cried out, The law is spiritual; the law is holy; the law is good. I want to live up to it; but I cannot, for I find working in me another law. “I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me” (Romans 7:21).

And what I want to do, I cannot. When I would do good evil is present with me. I see it is not I, for I want to do good; but it is the sin principle in me. “O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” (Romans 7: 24). I have tried the law. I have tried my own strength. But to no avail. This thing in me is like a dead body strapped to me, and it will bring death. There is deliverance. “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” (Romans 7:25).

against each other, bringing wretchedness into his life. (See Romans 7:21-23). Now another law comes in and takes over. It is “the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus,” and it has delivered from both the law which revealed sin and the law which brought death.

The law of God which was holy, just, and good, by its restraints was always trying to make men holy; but because of carnality it could not. What the law could not do, Jesus Christ has done by condemning to death that which opposed the working of the law of God in man’s life. “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). That sin in the flesh is the carnal nature. Why did He condemn it (“it” -the carnal nature -not you) to die? Because it was a murderer, killing the influence of men and the life of God in their souls. Because it was a thief, stealing man’s spiritual joys, his spiritual intelligence, and his spiritual manhood. It hindered him from grasping spiritual truth and kept him in babyhood. (John 16:12-13; Hebrews 5:11-14). Because it was an enemy of God and must die, or God’s work in the souls of men could never be worked out. Because it was an outlaw, and nothing in the universe could completely control it. Decency, refinement, culture, law or grace, all combined, could not always keep it in check. “It is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be” (Romans 8:7). Anything that man, law, or God cannot control must die, or God must eventually be dethroned. It must die because it is directly in opposition to holiness; and every law God has ever given to man demands holiness. “That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit” (Romans 8:4). This carnal nature must be destroyed. It must be destroyed so that man can please God; for as long as they have it they cannot please Him. “So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God” (Romans 8:8). Death to carnality does not dehumanize one. It does not destroy any human faculty God ever gave man. It cleanses the dirt of carnality from those faculties and makes them channels for the Spirit. “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” (Romans 8:9-10).

It does not put one where He will not have to keep His body under. “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” (Romans 8:13).

It does not put one where he will not ever again have to suffer; but it does give Him a hope in his suffering. “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” (Romans 8:18).

It does give him hope that some day his suffering will all be over.

“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 first-fruits 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 doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it” (Romans 8:19-25).

It does not save one from infirmities. “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” (Romans 8: 26). But it does give him a source of help in his infirmities.

It does not save from temptation. Temptation is constitutional, not vocational. We are subject to temptation because we are human, not because of any particular occupation or environment. No degree of grace to which we may attain will ever lift us out of this realm. There is a grace, however, which will give us complete victory while we are going through it. It is no sin to be tempted; the sin is in yielding.

It does not save us from native timidity. Perfect love does not cast out all kinds or degrees of fear. It does cast out fear of the judgment and of meeting God. It does cast out fear for physical needs in the tomorrows and stops worry over one’s future security. It does not cast out fear of animals, death, or some men. Some men are naturally bold. They never see a stranger or fear any man, although they do not have grace in their hearts. There are others who live very close to God, who fear and tremble at the thought of meeting, or speaking before men, and who suffer with such torments all of their lives while at the same time obeying God without reserve. Native timidity is no sign of a lack of grace, and native boldness is no sign of any degree of grace.

It does not save us from being different from those with whom we associate in our formation or expression of ideas.

It does not save us from being different from others in our demonstrations.

Joseph Smith used to tell of a time when John Inskip and Dr. S. A. Keen held a camp meeting at Pitman Grove, N.J. After the meeting they journeyed to Penns Grove, N.J., where they boarded a ferry boat for Philadelphia. On the trip Brother Inskip was blessed and ran up and down the deck of the boat shouting the praises of God. Dr. Keen, being rather reserved, stood leaning against the rail of the boat watching Him, with tears running down His face.

After the shouting ceased they were sitting in deck chairs conversing about it. Dr. Keen said, “Brother Inskip, when you came down the deck the last time shouting and praising God, I said, ‘Lord why did you not make me like Brother Inskip so that I could shout like He does?’” Brother Inskip said, “Dr. Keen, when I came down the deck the last time, and saw you leaning against the rail of the ship with the tears running down your face, looking like a monument of divine grace, I said, ‘Lord why did you not make me like Dr. Keen, so I would not have to shout like this?’” Each man desired to be like the other. God desires our own personality through which to channel Himself, and when one deliberately tries to mimic another he blocks the channel and thwarts the plan of God in his life.

It does not save one from being unethical. Many times we expect it to do so, but are disappointed to find that it does not. Ethics are in the realm of education, not salvation. The most godly people may at times be guilty of doing the most unethical things.

It does not save one from imperfect actions—while possessing perfect intentions. Actions may be colored by circumstances, early training, mental attitudes or physical disability, while the intentions are perfectly pure.

It does save one from all sin, both actual and inborn, and provides a settlement of the sin question in Jesus Christ and His blood.

10. THE CONDUCT OF THE CHRISTIAN

Romans 12

The relationship among believers is depicted most beautifully in the twelfth chapter of Romans. There it teaches that the difference between a pagan sage and the Christian saint is the “mercy of God.” Here Paul is beseeching them to do certain things because of “the mercy of God.” Sainthood is built upon the idea of will worship. Sainthood is built upon the idea of being God-possessed: abiding in God.

In this chapter Paul is saying that because of the mercies of God believers are to present their bodies a living sacrifice to God. The sacrifice is to be holy, when presented, and acceptable to God. It pictures a surrendered soul presenting a gift to its God on the grounds of love and gratitude. It reveals an internal condition by an external act. The result is a transformation and a

transfiguration. It does not come by an act of the will, but by the urge of an inner power. It is accompanied by a revelation of the perfect will of God.

“That ye might prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God.” There are several rules mentioned in this chapter which, if followed, determine our relationship to fellow members in the church.

The first is true humility. The use of the term “true” would imply that there is a false show of humility. That is a possibility, and too often is an actuality.

Men of talent many times belittle their gifts when speaking to others about

them, while their hearts are puffed up with pride because of their abilities.

Sometimes men refuse to take hold of certain lines of church work, stating that others can do it so much better than they. But down in their hearts there is a feeling of pride in the thought that they are considered capable. In reality they would like to try the work. They seem to wish their pride to be fed by a little coaxing and flattery. Then there is that person who outwardly will act as if He is taking slights, insults, and neglects humbly, when in His heart there is something like a boiling caldron of resentment and self-pity.

Paul, in verses three through eight of this chapter (Rom. 12), is warning against a real pride and false pride. He warns those who have been endowed with gifts and talents above others not to be puffed up about it, for whatever one has in that line, he has only because of the grace of God. If that is so, then anyone so endowed with gifts and talents is under infinite indebtedness and can pay only by placing every talent, native and acquired, at God's disposal for all time and to the fullest extent. If they have been given by God, and one has returned them to Him for His use; wherein is there any ground for glorying or boasting when He uses them? On the other hand, Paul warns of belittling the gifts and talents which God has placed in one's possession. Use them at every opportunity and give God all the glory if success is attained. Whether one's gift is prophecy, or ministry, or teaching, or exhortation, or giving, or ruling, or just showing mercy, he is to use such gifts with real humility and sober, unbiased thinking; for Paul says we should "think soberly" about our own gifts, as well as the gifts of others. One should not let it unduly disturb him if others are much more talented. Remember, "Unto whomsoever much is given, of him much shall be required."

Besides being humble in his relationship with fellow believers, the saint must be sincere. "Let love be without dissimulation." In dealing with each other, saints should always deal on the basis of right principles and truth.

Whenever there is a deviation from right principles and truth in one's dealings with another, confidences (trust) are shaken. The fact that one loves a brother is no reason to stand by Him if He is wrong. In fact, fellowship between the members of the church of Jesus Christ is dependent upon whether or not all are in Him. If all members involved are in Christ, truly their dealings with each other will always be in truth and on right principles; and when any party ceases to deal with others on this basis, He places himself outside of that fellowship which is in Christ Jesus. Every saint of God stands for truth before the world; and when anyone ceases to stand for truth He ceases to be a saint.

There must likewise be classified expression. "Abhor that which is evil." Abhor is a term stronger than the term hate, and yet it has been taught that all hate is taken out when one is sanctified. However, here is something stronger than hate which is enjoined upon the sanctified. One can hate without expression, hence the term used at the beginning of this paragraph, "classified expression."

When an expression of abhorrence is directed toward the act of an individual, it in no way should be implied that the person expressing such a feeling is either lacking in love or controlled by carnality. In fact, it reveals just the opposite. Not to abhor evil is to sanction it, and soon may mean to fellowship it. Wherever wrong is found it must be abhorred, whether in high places or in low, whether in the haunts of vice or the places of the holy, whether in clerical leaders or laymen, whether in the successful or among those considered as failures, whether in the talented or the mediocre, whether in the literate or the illiterate, whether in the influential or the obscure. God is no respecter of persons, and in that His saints must be like Him.

Then, there must be concession. "In honor preferring one another." What a beautiful grace that is, and what a wholesome influence it creates when it is exercised! It is the height of Christian courtesy. It is putting into practice the art of real living. It should be practiced in the home as well as in the church, in business as well as in religion. It may cost one a great deal in what the world calls values, but not as heaven values things.

There must be communication. "Distributing to the necessity of the saints; given to hospitality." This was one of the great characteristics of the early church. They sold their possessions and divided the proceeds. Then they appointed seven men full of the Holy Ghost, to look after the needs of the

widows. Paul was constantly exhorting the people to give for the necessity of the saints.

This grace is almost lost to the church. Lodges, charitable organizations, and the government have taken over much of this kind of work, and the church has been the loser in spiritual returns.

Saints must be compassionate. They must be able to enter into the life of each other. The church is not united like so many sticks tied together, but the union is like that of the different members of the body. The same life flows through all of the members and one cannot suffer without all suffering. The saints of God are to rejoice with others in their rejoicing and to weep with others when they weep. This is not just an outward show, but something which springs from the heart. It is a sympathy that enters into the sympathy of others and a joy that is caused by the same thing which causes the other members to rejoice. How free from envy and jealousy such a person must be.

There must be condescension. "Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate." The sin of having respect of persons is possibly one of the most subtle of all sins. It makes one honor, unduly, people of wealth and learning in the church. Because this verse has not been practiced, the church of today may be facing a crisis, as Communism sweeps through the ranks of the working classes. Jesus said one of the signs of His divinity was that the poor had the gospel preached to them. To follow His footsteps in this line may not bring great popularity here, but it will enrich heaven and that is what all saints are working to do. Lincoln said, "God must love the common people; He made so many of them." If God loves them, why should not the church? Is not one soul worth as much as another in the sight of God? Then why should the church discriminate? Jesus addressed His ministry to the poor; and what a ministry it was! General Booth condescended to the outcast; and what a reward his will be at that great day! Jerry McAuley stooped to the lowest of men; and what a harvest He gathered! Who ever condescended more than Christ, and are His followers better than He? May God save the church from its financial, intellectual, and talent-glorifying cliques!

The foundation for Christian fellowship is Jesus Christ. The common ground for communion as Christians is not denominational affiliation, nor denominational standards, but Jesus Christ. Denominations have their place.

God uses each in His own way. Each one is a little different in its approach to truth, and the various statements of doctrine have no doubt given to the world a broader view of that truth than it would have received had there been but one denomination. The competition between them has no doubt been a great factor in keeping Christianity from total corruption. Church history would seem to prove that point. Every denomination has a right to set certain standards for its own communicants to live by, but it has no right to unchristianize those who do not join. In a denomination there is fellowship on the grounds of unity in doctrine and standards of practice. In the universal church of Jesus Christ our fellowship is in Him alone. This is taught very clearly in the first chapter of Paul's first Corinthian epistle. There the apostle rebukes the people for saying, "I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ." He asks, "Is Christ divided?" In the ninth verse of this chapter it is stated that their fellowship is in Christ. One should be able to learn the basis of communion in the universal church of Jesus Christ and the basis of communion in his own denomination, and then be loyal to each one as long as He is in them.

"We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves" (Romans 15:1). It reveals a weakness of character when one is always seeking to please himself. It uncovers a streak of selfishness, a carnal self-love, a bigoted and childish spirit. In things that are not sinful and things that do not involve the compromise of right principles, one should always seek to please His brethren in the Lord. The art of good living involves the sparing of others' feelings; and if one can do this by pleasing them, even though it means the giving up of a fond and cherished hope or desire he should do it. "For even Christ pleased not Himself; but, as it is written, The reproaches of them that reproached thee fell on me." "Let every one of us please his neighbor for his good to edification." In another place Paul wrote, "I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some." Paul was not a compromiser. By the above statement he did not

mean to indicate that he had stooped to sinful or questionable things in order to win men to Christ. For on one occasion he pointed out that his enemies slandered him by saying that he did evil that good might come. He was, no doubt, dealing in the realm of scruples and nonessentials when he said that he became all things to all men. It is in the realm of scruples and nonessentials, after all, that Christians have so much disagreement. Where principle is involved it is sin to give in; but it is better to have harmony, where no principles are involved, than to have one's own way with broken fellowship. Someone may ask, "Must I always give way to others?" The answer is, "Just about always." In fact, one will find he will have to give way more than he will be given in to; and if one must contend for his own way about nonessentials until it hurts his own spirit and grieves his brethren, he had better always give up his own way. In the long run, the person who maintains the right spirit will show more strength in losing than the person who wins the battle in the wrong spirit. "He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city."

Christian tolerance is at a premium in many places. Jesus never compromised with sin. He was the most radical preacher who ever lived. He cried out against sin wherever He found it, in high places and in low. Paul followed close in His footsteps—so close, in fact, that he could say, "Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ." No preacher hit sin harder than he. He not only preached holiness as a doctrine, but also as a practice. In no uncertain tone He dealt with everything in practice relative to home life, citizenship, community life, social life in general, thought life, business life, pleasures, conversation, dress, church life, and even eating and drinking. But no preacher was ever more tolerant when dealing with nonessentials. Hear him: "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 faileth." While one is criticizing, and finding fault with him, God is blessing him. It says he shall not fall under one's faultfinding, for "He shall be holden up: for God is able to make him stand." There is real truth in the rather common saying, "Others may; you cannot." There are things some people can do and still keep victory, while others would be under condemnation for doing the same things.

There are two kinds of light. One is general and the other is specific.

General light is always on the main line. All Christians should agree in the matter of principles, although they all may not have light in the same measure. This kind of light covers conviction for sin, repentance, consecration, sanctification, profanity, stealing, gambling, drinking, immodest dressing, adultery, fighting, murder, and all other things on which there are direct statements in the Word of God. Then there are things covered in the Scriptures by inference, upon which it would seem all Christians should agree, such as dancing, the use of tobacco, attending the theatre, church suppers, etc. There are no direct statements in the Scripture

which cover these things, but the inference of Scripture is very strong against them.

Take tobacco, for instance. There is no direct statement in the Bible against the use of it, but there are a number of Scriptures which would cover the subject by inference. Two of those references are: "Let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit," and "Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread?" These would certainly cover tobacco by inference.

There is no direct statement in the Scripture on attending the theater. But certainly Scripture infers it when it says that one is to have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness. There is no direct statement against church suppers. But does not Scripture infer it when it says, "Jesus went into the temple of God, and cast out all them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the moneychangers, and the seats of them that sold doves"? And Jesus states definitely, "My house shall be called the house of prayer." That is a positive statement, and anything deviating from that violates God's purpose.

General light should come not only from direct statements of Scripture, but also from inference. Specific light, if it can rightly be called light, comes from three sources: first, from impressions; second, from conscience; and third, from early training. All impressions should be carefully considered before being acted upon, for the devil can give impressions, as well as God.

Conscience, which is largely influenced by education, cannot always be trusted to radiate light on the main line. Early training, however good, may not be a safe channel through which to disseminate light. If the training has been wrong, the light will be off color, and will not be safe to follow. There is, no doubt, a specific light which comes directly from God. It is given by God as one is able to take it, and fits him for God's special use. While it will deepen one in God as he walks in such light himself, it can become very dangerous and disastrous if he insists upon it as a requirement for others.

Outside of the realm of light is the realm of notion. One may have these today, and tomorrow discard them, and it will not in any way affect his spiritual life. If one finds they are a hindrance to others, he can discard them for their benefit and, by so doing, bring glory to God. Paul was writing about this in Romans 14:13-15: "Let us not therefore judge one another any more: but judge this rather, that no man put a stumbling-block or an occasion to fall in his brother's way. 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." Here is the place where one's own idea enters into the picture. It was not wrong to eat any kind of meat, but to anyone who esteemed it to be wrong, it was wrong. However, Paul goes on to say, "But if thy brother be grieved with thy meat, now walkest thou not charitably.

Destroy not Him with thy meat, for whom Christ died." "Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend." I can afford to give up anything, even though I see no harm in it, rather than continue in it, and thereby damn others.

11. THE SAINTS RELATIONSHIP TO CIVIL AUTHORITY

Romans 13, 14

In the last chapter it was pointed out why the term saint seems more preferable for a child of God in the present day than the very common and more general term Christian. At that time the matter of the characteristics of saints in their mutual relations received consideration.

We purpose now to show the relationship of the saint to His government.

This is a very controversial subject. Nevertheless, it is one which has been dealt with very definitely in the Scriptures. One should not be afraid to meet whatever is scriptural on scriptural terms. Every real saint wishes to know his duty, under God, relative to everything that concerns his life. A real patriot wishes to know and perform his duty to his nation, and every saint is a real patriot. There is a vast difference, however, between patriotism and politics, and between a patriot and a politician. A real patriot may be classified as neither a Prohibitionist, Democrat nor Republican. He may

vote with one party one time and with another party the next time, or he may not vote at all.

If he does vote, he will vote for whom he thinks to be the best candidate for the office, regardless of party lines. One can corrupt a politician, but not a real patriot. One can buy a politician, but a real patriot is never for sale. A politician will sell His country for a few paltry dollars or a little fame, but there is not enough money on earth to cause a real patriot to sell his country.

A politician will do all in his power to save his own position, but a patriot places his all at the disposal of his country. A politician may make laws that he never intends to keep. A patriot will do all in his power to keep the laws of his country, even though he may not have helped to make them. He may not understand the laws or see any reason in them, but he is a law-abiding

citizen and he does not intentionally break them. Someone may excuse his disobedience to established law by saying that the laws are nonsensical, and that the men who make them are so ungodly that there is no reason to believe that God expects one to live up to them. Such, however, is not the attitude of a patriot.

God is a God of Government

Everywhere we look, we behold order in God's creation. The psalmist said, "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth His handywork." And where is there greater order than in the starry heavens? For ages the planets have been following their orbits without a collision. Seed time and harvest, winter and summer, follow in their order without a break.

The laws of God in the rocks are perfect; the laws of God in gravitation are without a flaw; and the laws of God in man's physical nature are dependable.

If there seems to be a weakness, it is because of man's failure to cooperate with the laws of God. All of God's creatures are under government. The angels were placed under government and in different ranks. What are now known as demons were once under government and no doubt had their ruler.

In the beginning of the remade earth the animals were ruled by man. Before nations were born, there was a paternal government in the home which was recognized by God. God said of Abraham, "I know him, that he will command his children . . . after him." That was during what is known in dispensational truth as the age of human government. Down through all ages the hand of God is seen in the government of the nations through men, whether the governments have been based upon patriarchs, judges, or kings; whether they have absolute or limited monarchies, democracies, or military dictatorships; whether Fascist or Communistic. Rulers have sometimes been good men and sometimes wicked, but always in the background is seen the hand of God. In a monarchy, kings are said to rule by divine right. In a democracy men are said to rule by the will of the people. In a military dictatorship, men are said to rule by force. But in God's Word it is said that all men rule by the will of God. In Romans 13, Paul, in writing about government, says, "Let every man be subject to the higher powers. For there is no power but of God. The powers that be are ordained of God." He was living under a dictatorship, and his own people, the Jews, were subjected under that dictatorship; yet Paul said, "The powers that be are ordained of God." Some Americans feel that only democracy is ordained of God; but the Bible teaches that any government under which a man lives is recognized by God, and God expects that man to be subject to the government under which he finds himself a citizen.

The Purpose of Government

The main purpose of government, of course, is for the good of all its subjects. Governments are not a terror to good works. It may seem that at times they are working against that which is right, and against God's people, but upon closer study one finds that this is not the case. When Pharaoh subjected the children of Israel to hard, cruel bondage it looked, on the surface, as if the government were trying to crush the good; but was not the hand of God working through the government to bring about His purpose? When Nebuchadnezzar sent the Hebrew children to the fiery furnace and Daniel to the lion's den, was it not the hand of God moving men in world affairs, as men move checkers on a board to win the game; and did He not win? Can not one easily trace the workings of God through the Roman government, as He prepared for the fulfillment of prophecy in the birth of His Son?

Paul says rulers are not a terror to good works but rather to evil. That is, they are to keep down evil that the good might grow and develop. This does not seem possible when one looks at conditions obtaining in the world today; but take away all law enforcement and good things could not prosper for six months.

The Christian's Responsibility to Government

Paul says, "Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God." Men will break the laws of the country in which they live because they say they are made only by man. Others contend that so many laws are so unreasonable that they can be broken without incurring the disfavor of God. But God says men are under obligation to keep the law. Someone may ask, "Did not Daniel resist the powers of his day and disobey the king's decree?" No. He chose penalty rather than obedience, because there was a moral issue at stake. To obey the king meant to disobey God, and God's direct laws supersede all other laws.

They must be obeyed at all cost. It is evident, however, that Daniel was not a slinking coward. He did not refuse to obey the king's decree, and then hide for fear of being caught and punished. He threw open His window toward Jerusalem and prayed in the sight of the people as usual, and then took the consequences. Peter and John chose to obey God rather than man, and said, when warned not to do it again, "We ought to obey God rather than man." They took a beating for their decision, but took it with joy. They did not go out and condemn the government or the rulers. God admonishes His people to be careful what they say about those who are their rulers. Whenever the laws of the government conflict with the laws of God, then a Christian must obey the laws of God. Whenever the laws of a government do not so conflict, then God expects His people to be loyal citizens. Jesus summed it up, when He said, "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's."

The Result of Disobedience

"They that resist shall receive to themselves damnation." Paul could not mean that they shall be damned in hell eternally for breaking the laws of man, for some of these have no moral foundation; but he does mean that they are guilty and will be punished here. For the minister of God "beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon Him that doeth evil." He further states that one should obey not simply because of wrath or punishment, "but also for conscience sake," or, in order that he might keep a clear conscience. "Render therefore to all their dues; tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour." God further warns that if one disobeys, he puts himself in debt, or under obligation; but He admonishes His people to live by love. To so live will mean that one is not, then, in debt to anyone. When a man loves God with all his heart, soul, mind, and strength he will not be held in debt to God. When one loves his neighbor as himself, he will never be in debt to His neighbor. When a man loves his wife as Christ loved the church and gave himself for it, He will never be in debt to his wife. When one loves his nation or government as a true patriot and a true Christian, he will fulfill His obligations to it.

Love can be imposed upon, it is true, and it can be conscious of the imposition; but it still fulfills the law or the demand made upon it. Therefore, as a child of God one is to fear God, honor His rulers as officers of God, obey every ordinance of man that does not conflict with the Word of God, pay tribute that is lawfully levied, pray for one's rulers, and live by the law of love. Then one can have peace in his soul while hell rages all around.

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