











# **STUDIES IN ROMANS**

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## LESSON 1

Though Romans was written near the close of Paul's missionary ministry, reasonably, because of its being a fuller and more systematic discussion of the fundamentals of Christianity than the other Epistles of the New Testament, it is placed before them. Paul's earliest writings, the Thessalonian letters, written some five years before Romans, reasonably, because they feature Christ's second coming and the end of the age, are placed, save the Pastoral Epistles and Philemon, last of his fourteen Epistles. If Mordecai, without explicit evidence, believed it was like God to have Esther on the throne at a most crucial time (Esther 4:14), why should it be "judged incredible" that God had something to do with this arrangement of his Bible?

The theme of the Bible from Eden onward is the redemption of fallen man. Romans begins at man's end of this long, difficult way up from darkness to light, and portrays him as "having no hope and without God in the world." Ephesians begins at God's end, and declares that in past eternity before the foundation of the world, God purposed and planned to descend to earth as man that he might redeem man from ruin. Both of these ends are found in both books, but each book treats one of them with special emphasis. In both books, God and man starting, so to speak, from their opposite ends meet in Christ, the God-man.

### *Commendations*

Biblical scholars have heaped many tributes on Romans. Martin Luther wrote: "This Epistle is of the New Testament, the purest gospel. The more time one spends on it, the more precious it becomes." Luther's English contemporary, William Tyndale, ninety per cent of whose translation of the Bible was incorporated nearly a century later into our King James Version, said: "No man verily can read it too much, or study it too well . . . The more it is



chewed the pleasanter it is, . . . so great treasure of spiritual things lieth hid therein." Coleridge, poet, philosopher, theologian, regarded it "the profoundest book in existence." Codet called it "The greatest masterpiece ever conceived and realized by the human mind." David Bacon wrote: "The faith of Christendom in its best periods has been more indebted to this Epistle than to any other portion of the Living Oracles." F. W. Farrar: "It is unquestionably the clearest and fullest statement of the doctrines of sin and deliverance from it, as held by the greatest of the apostles." These encomiums are cited to show what learned, pious men have thought of Romans, and perchance thereby to whet our appetites for its study. Undoubtedly, the roots of the Protestant Reformation grew up out of the deep, rich soil of Romans and Galatians.

If gifted, godly men over the centuries have found matter and inspiration for deep, prolonged study of Romans, the book must merit, require, and reward such study. It is not a book to be only tasted, or hastily swallowed: it is a book to be "chewed and digested." It cannot be read as mere pastime; it is not designed to be a substitute for a game of canasta, or an after-dinner cigar. Romans is meant for serious, eager, earnest students of the deepest and the highest things in life—things "that do often lie too deep for tears."

### *Methods*

About fifty-five years ago, I was a member of a small class in the old Nashville Bible School, studying Romans under James A. Harding. As our final examination, we were seated in a row on the stage of the little chapel one night to repeat from memory, each student a verse at a time, round and round the class (In such manner classes recited the multiplication table in those days as some of my readers recall, "If they be willing to testify"), the entire book be-

fore a room full of listeners. I memorized the words of Romans in that class, but most of what I know of its teachings has been learned since. At the same time, I had a class, which required no memory work, under David Lipscomb. While in these classes, I thought a combination of the two methods would be an improvement on either method. A little later when I began to teach Bible myself, I used Harding's way for a few years more than Lipscomb's. Gradually, however, as my grasp of the principles of the Bible as a whole grew clearer and firmer, I swung toward Lipscomb's method, and probably went too far before my retirement.

For nearly thirty years, some periods rather intensely, I have been studying Romans that I might teach and practice its great doctrines more effectively. I now have a class studying the book each Sunday morning in the College Church. In this series of essays just beginning in the Firm Foundation, I hope to use what I have gleaned from commentaries and all other sources. Since I have class notes, accumulated over the years, some of which do not always adequately indicate quoted material, I shall sometimes be unable to give credit where it is due. I am profoundly grateful for all the helps to which I have had access, however, and when possible and helpful shall be happy to give credit for quotations.

### *General Survey of Romans*

#### *Theme: Christian Philosophy*

1. Philosophy of Christian Birth. 1-5  
Condemnation and Justification
2. Philosophy of Christian Maturity. 6-8  
Sanctification and Glorification
3. Philosophy of Christian History. 9-11  
God created Christianity, past, present, and future,

according to his sovereign will and grace, for man's salvation and his own glory.

4. Philosophy of Christian Behavior. 12-16

Relationship of Christians to the church, to the world, to the state, and to fellow Christians.

Although this skeletal outline is very inadequate, it gives an airplane view of the entire book, which will be a good guide in our study, and help keep truth in perspective. God grant that our walk with each other, and with him, through this grand "Cathedral of Christian Truth" may prove to be electrifying and sublimating to us all for time and for eternity.

### Questions

1. What is the general theme of the Bible as a whole?
2. State the difference in method between Romans and Ephesians of handling this theme.
3. Suggest a reason for placing Romans, in order of arrangement, the first of New Testament Epistles.
4. What does the fact that many a learned and pious man has spent many years eagerly studying Romans imply?
5. What end does a skeletal outline of a book serve a student of the book?
6. What four subjects, according to our outline, does Romans develop?
7. If you had an opportunity to choose between possessing a "good memory" or a cogent reasoning faculty, which would you choose?

## LESSON 2

Paul's salutation to the church in Rome, one long sentence of seven verses, is his longest and richest salutation. It sweeps a vast horizon and contains much fundamental Christian truth. First, Paul himself is Christ's love-slave and apostle, "Separated unto the gospel of God," which fulfills all scriptural Messianic prophecy. Christ's created human life is of David's lineage; of his uncreated divine life it is witnessed: "In the beginning was the Word . . . and the Word was God" (John 1:1). Some think that "the spirit of holiness" refers to the Holy Spirit, but it seems that Paul is thinking of Christ's dual nature—his humanity and his deity. Christ is neither Deity diluted to humanity, nor humanity exalted to Deity. His superhuman power over death, particularly his own unique resurrection declares him "to be the Son of God with power."

The salutatory sentence closes with Paul's usual, "Grace to you and peace from our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ." Grace the root and peace the fruit of Christianity. This is Paul's salutation in eleven of his epistles. His two letters to Timothy add "mercy" to make the triad, "grace, mercy, peace." Hebrews has no salutation, but it closes with Paul's uniform, "Grace be with you," an ending only by Paul and John in Revelation. In this earnest, purposeful manner, as befits a servant of Christ, Paul addresses the church in imperial Rome.

*Personal Matters (8-16)*

As these verses are largely personal, to begin with, Paul fittingly, in the words, "First, I thank my God," shows that God is very individual and personal to him. Every Christian should meaningfully say, "My God." As a Roman citizen, Paul knew that the life of the Roman Empire, comparable in area to our United States, was but the pulse beat of its capital city, Rome, "The mistress of the world." After

planning for years to see Rome, his plans, even as the plans of other men, so far had gone awry; still, he hoped "by the will of God" to visit them. He was too good a general and statesman not to consolidate, by building a strong, Christian citadel in Pagan Rome, what had been captured from "The prince of this world." He was pining to impart "some spiritual gift" to them, and to edify and establish them. In transparent sincerity, and with consummate tact, relative to his visit, he writes: "That I with you may be comforted in you, each of us by the other's faith, both yours and mine." Thus, we see that a gifted, spiritual man, realizing that he owes everything to God's grace, can be gracious with his brethren. Is it not good that diversities among members of the church are such that no member is either so strong or so weak that he may not both edify and be edified?

Paul felt that since he was born in debt to God (Gal. 1:15), and that since he had been entrusted with the universal gospel, he was debtor to God and to all men no matter what their race, language, mental ability, culture or religion. He knew that humanity was one, and had one corrupt heart, which only the gospel could purify. Judging from what he writes, we wonder if godless pride, the rudimentary sin of angels and men, which later grew to such huge proportions in Rome, was not already so working that they felt peeved at his prolonged absence. Were they saying that he was ashamed to come to Rome with the cross, "the emblem of suffering and shame" and weakness? In any event, in harmony with the universality of the gospel, Paul, a Jew, writes in Greek to Romans: "As much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you also in Rome. For I am not ashamed of the gospel."

Instead of being ashamed of the gospel, Paul "despising shame" as had done his Master, gloried in it. He had seen

and felt its power; it could snatch others, as it had snatched him, from eternal night. It was nothing to be ashamed of, or distrusted, anywhere; it could do something for Rome which her wealth, culture, and world-wide law and power had not done, and could never do. Paul always lived as he later wrote: "For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind. Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord" (2 Tim. 1:7, 8). No. Christians are neither ashamed of, nor a shame to, the gospel. In this manner, Paul portrays himself to be a thankful, prayerful, purposeful, honorable (feels his debt), energetic, humble, brave man.

### "A Righteousness of God"

Romans is an exposition of, "It (the gospel) is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth . . . For therein is revealed a righteousness of God from faith unto faith." A study of only three key terms is now possible.

First, the gospel *salvation* is good news from abroad. That is, it is not founded on man's doing; it is God's achievement and revelation, not man's invention and attainment. It is not primarily good advice, of which the world is full; or lessons to be learned from Christ's life; far more and far deeper than these, it is life through his death. It is certainly not bad news to be feared and spurned, but unspeakably good news that just anybody, even "a nobody," can hear.

Second, *righteousness*. The Greek word translated "righteousness" may mean either righteousness or justification. The several times the phrase, "Righteousness of God," appears in Romans, the context plainly requires the meaning: God's way of making sinners righteousness—that is, God's justifying righteousness, or practical justification. "God's righteousness," meaning an attribute of God's personal character, is found twice in Romans 3. The correct inter-

pretation of "A righteousness of God," as found in this verse, is, I think, God's personal righteousness in action, resulting in the justification of sinners.

Third, *believeth*. God, who "abideth faithful" (2 Tim. 2:13), provides righteousness and promises to make it over to men on condition, not of law and self-righteousness as they expect, but on the condition of faith. "Righteousness which is of the law" and "Righteousness which is from God by faith" are thrown into sharpest contrast in Phil. 3:9. It must never be forgot, however, that "faith apart from works (of obedience) is dead" (James 2:26), as the phrase "obedience of faith," found twice in Romans makes plain. The expression, "from faith unto faith," a moot Scripture, means, I think, that the faithful God so designed and created the gospel that on the human side, it must begin in the principle of self-emptying faith rather than in human wisdom and worth; so made it that it can be revealed only "unto faith"—that is, only to men who have faith; or only "to every one that believeth." Instead of the Old Testament opposing this, it supports the doctrine is is evident from, "The righteous shall live (be made to live) by faith," not works (Hab. 2:4).

### Questions

1. According to Romans 1, is the relationship between the Old Testament and the New Testament one of conflict or continuity?
2. Comment upon Christ's dual nature.
3. Why did Paul so much wish to visit Rome?
4. Why was Paul not ashamed of the gospel?
5. Why is Christian salvation such universal good news?
6. Comment upon the meaning of the phrase, "A righteousness of God," as it is used in Romans.
7. What is the difference between a righteousness which is of the law and a righteousness which is of faith?

## LESSON 3

Paul's readiness to go to Rome is in marked contrast with Moses' unreadiness to go to Egypt. Moses, even after his "heavenly vision" at the bush and other miracles, reluctant to undertake freeing the Hebrews from bondage, so multiplied excuses that God became angry with him: whereas Paul, "obedient unto the heavenly vision," which he saw near Damascus, asked at once, "What shall I do, Lord?" After Moses had timidly taken up the task, and after his first attempt had but increased the miseries of the slaves, how he complained against God! with his wail: "Lord, why hast thou sent me? For since I came to Pharaoh to speak in thy name, he hath dealt ill with this people; neither hast thou delivered thy people at all" (Ex. 5:22, 23). How does this compare with Paul's, "I am ready?" or with his, "But thanks be to God, who always leadeth us in triumph in Christ?" As natural men, both Paul and Moses were very superior. The chief difference between them was in their religion—the difference between the law and the gospel. Paul was "in Christ." Inasmuch as Romans makes much of this difference further on, study of the matter is deferred until later.

*"The Wrath of God"*

Centuries after God had said he could "by no means clear the guilty (impenitent sinners)" (Ex. 34:7), he reaffirms his unchanging nature in the statement, "The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hinder the truth in unrighteousness" (Rom. 1:18). Ungodliness and unrighteousness are terrible opposites of the two tables of the Decalogue, and of Christ's double commandment (Love for God and love for man) upon which "The whole law hangeth and the prophets" (Matt. 22:40).



God's wrath is no mere sentimental passion; it is his eternal, legal, judicial decree against lawlessness. It is as inherent in and as essential to his nature as is love; indeed, love and wrath are the poles of God's holiness. Of Christ, it is written: "Thou hast loved righteousness and hated iniquity" (Heb. 1:9). God abhors sin worse than a very temperamental musician abhors discord. God's love does not violate equity; the hand that offers forgiveness must dispense justice as well. "Righteousness and justice are the foundation of thy throne" (Ps. 89:14). Without stern aspects, nothing loftier than facile good nature and guilty indifference to sin is possible. In maintaining moral order in the universe, God's wrath is inevitable and inexorable. God's wrath is God's love smitten with a dreadful sorrow—his love in agony. A mother loves a good son in joy; she loves a bad son with a love that hurts. So God. He is the God of both Esau and Jacob. Goethe said that were he God, sin would break his heart.

Should God clear the guilty, would not he himself break the deepest moral law? The divine love and law at the heart of the universe are stern, splendid things—deep and tragic. God is good, but he is not goody-goody. He has irrevocably decreed that "The wages of sin is death," and as long as he reigns wilful sinners must pay and pay both before and after death. Were it otherwise, God would be a God, not to love and trust, but to fear and dread. May it not be said that the wrath of God is his righteousness apart from Christ?

### *Responsibility of the Heathen*

In unfolding the philosophy of Christianity, Paul begins by showing that all men, Gentile and Jew alike, are "by nature, children of wrath" (Eph. 2:3), under condemnation, "fitted unto destruction." This makes sense, for unless men are universally condemned, to provide universal

salvation would be as useless as to build a great bridge where there were no river to cross.

Romans 1:18-32 concerns the responsibility, guilt and punishment of heathen Gentiles. Paul argues that visible things in nature since the creation of the world are proof of God's invisible attributes, "even his everlasting power and divinity." Instead of this Scripture teaching that the divine unity, almighty power, and infinite goodness and faithfulness of the Creator as seen in nature are sufficient and final for all of man's religious needs, it teaches that man, created in the likeness of God, has lying at a deeper level than his susceptibility to nature, a spiritual nature and conscience, fitted to hear God's moral voice as is his ear to hear sound, and that, therefore, he should be thankful for, but not satisfied with, nature; and consequently follow on, ever seeking more of God's invisible traits. If men, being what they are and seeing what they see, so constituted and so circumstanced, do not glorify and thank God, it is because they "hinder the truth in unrighteousness" and insincerity. Truth that is not lived out honestly in the life cannot continue to live in the mind.

Man's moral nature is the basis of all religion. His capacity for discerning God, more than any other human gift, distinguishes him from the animals. In fact, this is the only absolutely differentiating faculty, for animals, though they are not qualified for religious experience, do in a measure feel, remember, and think. Without this human endowment, men could never receive either law or gospel from God. But they are born immutably religious. The most benighted peoples of today have a concept of a supreme deity, and of immortality; they have moral standards, which none of them profess to attain. Hence, their altars, priests, and sin offerings. Whether Paul preached to barbarians at Lystra (Acts 14), or to Greek philosophers

at Athens (Acts 17), he preached primarily to their conscience, for it is God's point of personal contact with his human creatures.

Men who refuse to acknowledge their knowledge of God, close the two eyes (worship and praise) for seeing and knowing God better, and turn their back on light to walk in their own shadow are "without excuse" for their ignorance and sin. Of course, inasmuch as fidelity to opportunity is the measure of responsibility, if they had never had any knowledge of God, their status would be different. But, if rejecting even what is revealed of God in creation and conscience does not make men inexcusably guilty, Romans 1 has no meaning. Verily, sin is not a chance, but a choice. Moreover, that God from the very first supplemented this rudimental testimony with personal instruction and communion emphasizes God's fidelity and man's infidelity. For one to remember that Lamech, Noah's father, was born before Adam died makes him wonder if the flood might not have been averted by oral teaching and tradition. Nature reasons well in her domain, but in the higher domain of personal, maturing religion, she must be content to be only handmaid.

### Questions

1. Account for the fact that Paul was a much more confident, ready man than was Moses.
2. Account for the fact that man is the only animal that has direct, moral responsibility before God.
3. May men without the Bible learn enough about God from nature and their conscience, if they do not glorify and praise him, to condemn them?
4. According to Romans 1, sketch the origin and development of idolatry.
5. Explain how God punishes sin with sin.
6. How is it that God's love and God's wrath are compatible?
7. Are men in heathen lands today lost primarily because they do not know Christ the Savior?

## LESSON 4

God's justifying righteousness is revealed only in the gospel of Christ. But from the creation, his wrath "against all ungodliness and righteousness" has been revealed in various ways. Because they work against the grain of eternal truth and law, sinners always encounter the wrath of God. "Every one that doeth sin doeth also lawlessness; and sin is lawlessness" (1 John 3:4). When Eve and Adam disobeyed the law of God, they were denied access to the tree of life, and consequently became subject to death. Their posterity became more and more lawless until God in righteous wrath destroyed the world of law breakers in the flood. Only a few centuries after the flood, Sodom and Gomorrah became so lawless that God consumed them with fire. All secular history agrees with Biblical history that lawlessness leads to ruin. In fact, secular history, when we climb high enough to read it correctly, is a continued story of God's wrath against sin, demonstrated over the earth in disorder, disease, decay, and death. "Righteousness exalteth a nation; but sin is a reproach to any people" (Prov. 14:34). Moreover, man's conscience tells him that sin deserves punishment. But the climax of the revelation of God's penal wrath against sin is the cross of Christ.

*"They Became Fools"*

Through physical nature, human nature, and personal revelation combined, God sufficiently revealed himself to primitive men to test their attitude toward him. The test proved them to be so ungrateful, irreverent, and self-sufficient that they thought they could get along better without him. They did not discard God because of a lack of knowledge, but because their affections did not keep pace with their knowledge. "Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools." Nothing can so warp reason, darken the

“senseless heart,” demoralize the whole man, and defeat known truth as do depraved affections, perverted will, and corrupted life. What men love influences their lives and destinies more than does what they know. Made in the likeness of God, designed to be dependent on God, and required, “having heard the word, (to) hold it fast . . . in an honest and good heart,” man is verily a presumptuous fool to think that apart from God he can live morally any more than he can physically. When men think that human wisdom is supreme, they have reached the pinnacle of folly.

Satan’s lie to Eve, “Ye shall not surely die,” but “Ye shall be as God,” by convincing her that the forbidden fruit held the key to some knowledge which God had no right to withhold from her so shattered her confidence in her Maker that she spurned creatural faith, and deified herself. Her disloyalty was the very essence of sin, for “sin is lawlessness;” her relationship to God became ungodly. Men must accept the distance between Creator and creature, or else they die. In both nature and religion, they live by faith, and must allow God to know some “secret things” (Deut. 29:29), which he withholds from them for their good. Since “Now we see in a mirror, darkly,” and “know in part,” only (1 Cor. 13:12), we must trust God to be infallibly strong, wise, and good. From the creation until today, mankind has been allergic to all such “forbidden fruit.”

With Romans 1 declaring that heathen peoples are responsible, reprehensible, and reprobate, who can declare them innocent? Of course, they are not guilty because they do not accept Christ of whom they have never heard, but because they lack moral integrity, and fail to use the knowledge they do have. They are not expected to know the Trinity, but the Godhead. Monotheism was the premeval religion, and got the start of polytheism. The Bible makes no

mention of idolatry before the flood. Joshua's farewell address to the Hebrews, warning them that their ancestors worshiped idols, is its first mention. Instead of man struggling slowly up out of savagery, he from the beginning struggled against God, and consequently fell into savagery. If man has the principle of organic evolution inherent with him, and if he had evolved much by Paul's day, why have not heathen people continued to evolve since then? If man has ascended from the beasts, why are heathens today sub-bestial in some respects, especially in their nauseating abuse of sex? "What fools these mortals be" (Shakespeare's Puck).

*"God Gave Them Up"*

After men and women gave God up, God in retributive wrath "gave them up . . . that their bodies should be dishonored among themselves." The moral world is so constituted that renouncing God is self-avenging. By dishonoring God, men dishonor themselves—mind and heart (21) and body (24). According to this chapter, God punished idolatry in descending steps, avenging sin with sin. Since men by nature must worship, when they ceased to worship God, they worshipped "an image of corruptible man." Then follow abominable, elaborate systems of worshipping images "of birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things" (23). The Apollo of Greece, the eagle of Rome, the cow of Egypt, and the serpent of Assyria are all here. The boasted wisdom of the Euphrates and the Nile, and the proud learning of Hellas and Rome are summarily dismissed with a word—"learned ignorance." In this downward plunge, unnatural prostitution became prevalent, all restraint of animal passions being lost, and finally moral distinctions were obliterated and all ethical codes and "natural affections" were violated (28-32).

This snapshot of heathen life shows man helplessly wallowing in the filth of the flesh, reconciled to his own sin and encouraging sin in others, although he knows both his sin and his death sentence. Such men are already in the suburbs of hell. When God gives men up, what may they not become! None of the purity and goodness now on earth is due, primarily, to human nature. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh" (John 3:6), and Romans 1 shows what the flesh is.

Is it not fair to judge God by what happens to men who respectively obey or disobey him? If his friends are not blessed above his foes, is he not a fake? That Paul's picture of lust-sick, sin-sunk heathenry is still true, not a color too dark, is granted by all who know heathenry first hand. As he was in Corinth, notorious throughout the Roman Empire for its hideous social vices, when he painted it, he had not far to seek his colors. It faithfully portrays the world Christ came to save. Any religious message that does not begin with man's ruin and deep, hopeless need is not from God. Of all religions, only Christianity, because it has the specific for sin, does not minimize sin.

### Questions

1. What does God's definition of sin, namely, "Sin is lawlessness," reveal the nature of sin to be?
2. Is it true that human apostasy began in the love of forbidden knowledge and continues in the love of forbidden ignorance (John 3:19)?
3. Does what men know, or what they love, more influence their life and destiny?
4. What is the summit of human folly?
5. Why was the Flood in Noah's generation a moral necessity?
6. Judging by what a religion, or a philosophy, does for men, how does pure Christianity compare with other religions and philosophies?
7. With this divinely painted picture of the fleshly man in Romans 1 before him, can anyone have "confidence in the flesh," and in human righteousness and goodness?

## LESSON 5

Atheistic historians know that after nations flourish for a time they decay and die to be supplanted by other nations. Though these historians know that the clock of civilization runs down periodically, they do not know the real cause of its so doing. Superficially and little to the point, they talk about "a natural moral balance" that must be maintained, meaning that, when the immorality and corruption of a race ends in racial extermination, a more wholesome race takes its place to restore, temporarily, "a natural moral balance." Following this cycle, authorities say that a score of civilizations have perished.

Only historians who believe the Bible can know that the appalling pagan morals described in Romans 1 and this flux of civilization are the result of God's wrath against men who "refuse to have God in their knowledge." To believers, faced with general biblical teaching such as, "The Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will, and setteth up over it the lowest of men" (Dan. 4:17); and such as, God "made of one every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, having determined their appointed seasons, and the bounds of their habitation" (Acts 17:26); and faced with the particular examples of the Noachic flood, Sodom and Gomorrah, and many similar things, the conclusion is inescapable that God deals personally with individuals and with nations, both for blessing and for cursing.

Inasmuch as all nations that dishonor God go the same route, the fate that has always overtaken godless nations must befall modern nations (nay, is already befalling them), for they are drifting away from God and his word. Many of the shocking, abhorrent sins of the flesh, which Paul says are an outpouring of God's holy wrath upon those who reject him, are not strangers in America today,



even in some of her churches and institutions of so-called higher learning. And of course the defaulting nation with the most light is the most culpable.

### *Humanity on Probation*

If Psa. 115:16, "The heavens are the heavens of Jehovah; but the earth hath he given to the children of men," seems to teach that man alone is responsible for earthly history, Psa. 103:19, "Jehovah hath established his throne in the heavens; and his kingdom ruleth over all," expands the former truth into the fuller truth that God from heaven "ruleth in the kingdom of men." Man is God's responsible, probational steward of earth, and must account for his trust.

Within the framework of God's will, man has a certain freedom. God will not and Satan cannot invade and violate human freedom in the crucial choice of a man's entire life, namely, the master whom he will serve. Since man is under compulsion to decide between the mutually exclusive God and Satan, he is not as free as some think. With this choice, his liberty ends, for God controls the issue. That a man after choosing to put his hand into fire can, then, choose to escape injury is no more false than that he after choosing to sow to flesh can, then, choose to escape corruption. "God is not mocked" in either nature or religion. Only when the initial choice can be changed, can the issue be changed. Without man's consent and cooperation, even God, during the period of probation, will not change the direction of earthly history. Man has been given the initiative of action on earth, and must answer to God for what happens. Man's fidelity as God's steward is the very quintessence of an orderly, moral world.

### *God's Judgment of His Steward*

The proud, sensorious Jews heartily approved the condemnation of the Gentiles recorded in Romans 1, but they

did not realize that they themselves also stood condemned. Therefore Paul begins in Romans 2 an argument, which runs through 3:20, to convince them that they are even more guilty than are the despised, abominable Gentiles. To avoid unnecessarily arousing their pride and prejudice, he gradually approaches his frontal attack upon their empty pretensions and bigotry. From this tactical approach (2: 1-16), we get our fullest and profoundest knowledge concerning God's judgment of Christless men of all time. In it are found the four fixed principles upon which this judgment rests.

The first principle is, God judges "according to truth." To Paul, this principle is self-evident; hence he makes no effort to prove it. God's estimate of men depends upon their moral fidelity, integrity, and reality, according to enlightenment, not upon their rituals and pretensions. Obviously, Paul has the Jews in mind, and is warning them against storing up wrath for themselves "in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God," by, instead of being led to repentance by God's goodness, hardening themselves against it.

The second principle is, "God will render to every man according to his works." Another axiomatic truth. On the basis of works, men fall into only two groups, namely, well-doers and evil-doers. The former choose God and receive his reward; the latter reject God and receive his curse. To God human works are either white or black, not different shades of gray. If Paul seems here to favor salvation by works, wait till you hear his whole argument. But mark well that the judgment unto condemnation of these verses does justly turn on human character.

The third principle is, "There is no respect of persons with God." That is, God's judgment ignores incidentals of birth, such as race, caste, and culture. This is not so self-

evident; therefore Paul lingers for a few verses to argue the point. He shows the Jews that, if they are safe before God merely because they possess his law, the Gentiles are equally safe, because they too by nature possess God's law. This proves too much for the Jews. Thus, Paul adroitly turns the Jews against themselves, makes them ridiculous, and hopes thereby to get an honest hearing for the remainder of his honest argument.

The fourth principle is, "God shall judge the secrets of men." Christ the appointed Judge says: "There is nothing covered up, that shall not be revealed; and hid, that shall not be known" (Luke 12:2). Recall that while Christ lived among men, he often surprised them by revealing their inmost thoughts, for "He himself knew what was in man" (John 2:25). Every hypocrite is to be exposed, every slandered innocent is to be vindicated, and every dark thought is to be dragged out into light. And this is the test each of God's stewards, ancient and modern, unless he has the Christ as Pleader, must pass with a perfect score to escape condemnation. "Think on these things," my readers.

### Questions

1. In what sense is the human race God's steward?
2. Why does the clock of human civilization periodically run down?
3. Is a man compelled to choose between God and Satan as his master?
4. What limitation on a man's freedom does becoming Satan's servant impose?
5. Why and how does Paul shift the discussion from Gentiles to Jews at the beginning of Romans 2?
6. State the four universal principles upon which God judges, or tests, men regardless of race, caste, and culture.
7. What chance do Christless men have of passing this test?

## LESSON 6

According to Paul, the alphabet of all moral and religious truth and life lies within the human soul. How could men without natural "conscience . . . accusing or else excusing them" (Rom. 2:15) be responsible, moral beings?

Conscience is one of man's built-in faculties. It is his innate consciousness that he should be honest with himself. Its office is to see that he does what he thinks he ought to do and refrains from what he thinks he ought not to do. It is the very core of his moral being, and, being infallible and final in its domain, it must be respected. One who is willing to disobey his conscience is willing to be a sinner whom neither law nor gospel can reach. For a man to trifle with his conscience is to sin against his very soul.

It is possible for one through lack of knowledge to do dastardly deeds in good conscience. Paul himself is the classic example of this major tragedy. Despite his persecuting the church before his conversion, he said some twenty years after that event: "I have lived before God in all good conscience until this day" (Acts 23:1). Paul's conscience worked as well before as after he became a Christian, therefore needed no change at his conversion. However, not being legislative, but regulative of conduct, the conscience can neither make law nor alter truth. Does a child's conscientiously believing that thirty inches make a yard shorten the yard? Moreover, Paul's conscience could work only within the framework of what he knew. Does the conscience of a savage hurt him because he does not go to church on Sunday? When Paul learned the truth about Christ, his honest conscience made him accept Christ. To be conscientious, as noble and indispensable as it is, is not enough. Energy, piety, zeal, observing ordinances, and good-conscience all combined cannot take the place of knowledge. Though Christ forgave Paul, we gather from

Paul's writings that he could scarcely forgive himself for his ignorant, "conscientious" sin.

Conscience is an exceedingly searching and rigorous test of conduct. Both its restraining and constraining power is great. No greater terrors and tortures than the fires of a guilty conscience are known to men. But "A good conscience is the sweetest meal to which men ever sit down." In common with other delicate and valuable things, conscience is easily abused and damaged. As the compass of a ship may be so deflected by metal on board as to cause the loss of the ship, so the conscience of well-meaning men may be so deflected by tradition, prejudice, indifferent ignorance, or personal preference as to wreck a soul. Here lurks a subtle, powerful, prevalent foe. Conscience cannot be burglarized from without; nor must it be bribed by inclination from within. If conscience, the core of personality, be wrong, what can be right? After searching the Bible and learning truth, "This above all: to thine own self be true."

### *Jewish Pride Punctured*

In the second paragraph of Romans 2, Paul applies the four principles of the first paragraph upon which God judges humanity to the Jews in particular. These principles are the major premise and this second paragraph is the minor premise of the conclusion in the third chapter, namely, that every man, Gentile or Jew, is condemned by law—that is, legal justification is an illusion.

Paul had been "a Hebrew of Hebrews" himself, and knew all about Jewish arrogance and exclusiveness. He begins by granting the Jews five real advantages (vs. 17, 18), but charges that they have perverted these advantages into racial pride and religious bigotry; and that in spite of their greater light, as compared to Gentiles, they are guilty of the sins of heathenism. In three short, sharp questions,

cracking like a whip, involving the classes of sin among the Gentiles according to chapter 1, namely idolatry, sensuality, and ethical wrongs, he indicts them, though they make high boasts of being "a light to them that are in darkness," of the same three sins, only in reverse order: "Dost thou steal?" and "Dost thou commit adultery?" and "Dost thou rob temples?" To praise virtue, but practice vice always leads to the death-cell of hypocrisy. Thus, Paul convicts the Jews of being mountain climbers who cannot climb. "Josephus records much Jewish history that reads like Gentile criminality." The arrowhead of the indictment is that their transgression of the law, after their glorying in its possession so haughtily, doubly dishonors and blasphemes God before the heathen.

The Jews were so smug in their ritual and "form of knowledge and of the truth" (v. 20) that they were imperious to spiritual truth. The fact that it is all but impossible for men who are steeped in self-esteem and clothed in respectability correctly to appraise themselves explains why Paul so roundly and uncompromisingly strips the Jews of their morals and religion, and sets them among the heathen. Having corrected their error that religion is merely intellectual by declaring that it requires ethical expression, he proceeds in the last verses of the chapter to correct their error that religion is merely ritualistic by teaching that it is essentially spiritual. To be told that circumcision was useless unless they kept the law must have amazed the Jews. That circumcision was contingent on anything was a brand-new idea to them. They were dumfounded to hear that a devout Cornelius was more pleasing to God than was the impious Caiaphas; stunned that "neither is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh: but he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, not in the letter; whose praise is not

of men, but of God" (vs. 28, 29) ; insulted that circumcision "a seal of righteousness," not to be effected by a rite. The Jews must realize that where ore is mined, or who owns it, is ignored at its assay.

In this manner, Paul drives home to the Jews that they cannot pass the test of God who judges according to reality, without respect to persons, and turns one inside out down to his deepest secrets. He would have them see that God, since his fenced vineyard has produced no better grapes than the wild land, is removing the fence. But how could mankind have ever been convinced that no choice fruit could be produced by law, had the experiment not been made?

To modernize this doctrine by substituting "baptism" or "Lord's supper" for "circumcision," surely warns us of the perpetual danger of formality supplanting spirituality, and encourages us to be spiritual in our worship and work.

### Questions

1. What is your conscience?
2. Why was Paul's continuously unchanging "good conscience" from his youth inadequate?
3. Why is trifling with the conscience such a serious matter?
4. Why is legal justification for men impossible?
5. Give the substance of Paul's indictment of the Jews.
6. What was his grand purpose in thus denouncing them?
7. How may the church today fall into the fatal error that characterized the Judaism of Paul's day?

## LESSON 7

Three questions, which Paul deems of sufficient importance to justify a suspension of his argument on universal condemnation long enough to consider, are found in Rom. 3:1-8. These questions grow naturally out of Paul's withering castigation of the Jews, and should be taken as Jewish protests against his teaching. However, they involve much vital, changeless truth.

First question: If Jews are equally condemned with Gentiles, what is the profit in being a Jew? This question betrays fleshliness, for the one who asks it sees profit only in what contributes to his pride and self-importance. Paul answers that the primary advantage of the Jew is that he is "intrusted with the oracles (utterances) of God." This advantage leads into countless other advantages, several of which he names in Romans 9:4, 5.

Second question: Does God's fidelity depend upon man's fidelity? The immediate import of this question is: since God is bound by covenant to Abraham and Moses to bless Israel, will he not violate his covenant if he condemns Jews? Therefore, unless God be a covenant-breaker, unfaithful Jews will be blessed because they are of the covenantal people. With this same old sophistry, which John the Baptist and Christ labored to correct, the Jews try to refute the charge that they are condemned. They forget that God promises to curse unfaith just as he promises to bless faith; and that fidelity to his word requires him to fulfill both promises. Paul, jealous of God's honor, shrinks from the very thought of God's being unfaithful in the cry, "God forbid," and quotes David to the effect that he confessed himself to be a liar that God's justice in punishing him might be manifest. Hence, men in justifying, or excusing, their sins dishonor God!



Third question: If sin shows up God's righteousness, is not God unrighteous in punishing sinners? This question gives Paul a chance to teach some deep moral lessons, which our modern world needs. As he has already shown the Jews that, inasmuch as Gentiles also have law (2:15), their contention that mere possession of law is sufficient proves too much; likewise, again this proves too much; it makes the Jews themselves ridiculous, for it blots out all moral distinctions, even unto saving the heathen world. How the haughty Jews would toss their heads and fume under this boomerang! In truth, could this question be answered in the affirmative, not universal condemnation, but universal salvation would follow, for God restrains the sin that does not praise him (Psa. 76:10).

Paul's unqualified answer to the question is that sin is wholly without merit; that it is evil not only in consequences, but its nature is lawless, and evil; that it remains evil even when God overrules to bring good out of it, as in the case of Joseph and his brothers. That sin commends God's righteousness is incidental; expediency can never justify a thing that is sinful. God does not need sin in operating his universe, and when he weaves it in, he but demonstrates his sovereign righteousness, unity, wisdom, and power. To make a sin a virtue tumbles the moral world upside down into chaos.

As a triumphant climax, Paul tells the Jews their reasoning is so foolish and morally crooked that they unwittingly vindicate him. That is, if Paul's false doctrine gives them their occasion (as they say it does) to uphold God's covenantal truth, Paul is not guilty, for by their reasoning his unrighteousness is commending God's righteousness. Paul concludes his answer to the quibbles of the Jews by cleverly reminding them that their logic which would justify him if he taught it were all right to "do evil that good may

come," is so utterly false and wicked that those who slander him are justly condemned.

Three lofty, abiding truths emerge from these parenthetical verses: first, by giving primacy to "the oracles of God," they help us properly to evaluate and appreciate the word of God; second, by giving permanency to the wholly admirable exhortation, "Yea, let God be true, but every man a liar," they magnify God's unvarying, eternal truth and trustworthiness; third, by teaching that men who say, "Let us do evil that good may come," deduce an immoral conclusion from false premises, slander godly men, and deserve condemnation, these verses declare the reality and penalty of sin, and the stability and grandeur of the moral order.

### *Argument for Condemnation Concluded*

(3:9-20)

In Rom. 3:1-8, Paul answered the Jews who believed, since they were sons of Abraham, they were not condemned along with all the other nations of men. Now in these verses, he shows them that their own sacred scriptures teach the condemnation of all men, especially of the Jews because they have the advantages of possessing "the oracles of God." His first quotation from David gives God's verdict of universal sin, not on Jews only, but "upon the children of men" (Psa. 14:2, 3). God's appraisal of mankind just preceding the Flood, "The end of all flesh is come before me; for the earth is filled with violence through them," is the same when he speaks much later through David, Isaiah, and Paul. And still "That which is born of the flesh is flesh—the flesh profiteth nothing" (Jesus).

With scriptures from David and Isaiah, Paul makes a mosaic of man with respect to both his nature and his practice. Men are "by nature children of wrath" (Eph. 2:3), fallen, decayed, and rotten at the core. As there are no

good fallen angels, just so there are no good fallen men. "None is good, save one, even God" (Jesus). "The heart is deceitful above all things, and it is exceedingly corrupt; who can know it?" (Jer. 18:9). The citadel of human personality is in the hands of the enemy. God cannot use natural men in his spiritual kingdom until they become spiritual men by a spiritual birth. Men need to repent of what they are as well as of what they do (vs. 10-12). With respect to practice and conduct, men are in *word*, corrupt, deceitful, uncharitable, and blasphemous (vs. 13, 14); in *deed*, murderous, destructive, cruel, and warmongers (vs. 15-17).

In verse 19, 20, Paul holds his just completed graphic picture of man's depraved nature working itself out through his bodily members up before the Jews and asks: "Do you see what your law does for you?" He tells them what law can, and cannot, do. It reveals wounds for which it has no remedy; it smites, but cannot heal. When he tells them law has neither office nor power to justify, he demolishes their last refuge, and hopes to move them to plead guilty and throw themselves upon the clemency of their beneficent Judge.

### Questions

1. How does Paul answer the contention of the Jews that they cannot be condemned because they are children of Abraham?
2. Wherein does the logic that it would be inconsistent in God to punish men, who give him an occasion to show his righteousness, prove too much?
3. Why cannot Christians ever say, 'Let us do evil, that good may come'?
4. Show that Romans 3:1-8 upholds the nature and the reality of sin, and the stability and grandeur of moral law.
5. According to the Old Testament, what is God's general appraisal of the human race?
6. More specifically, what are men with respect to their nature, their words, and their deeds?
7. What can law do for men? What can it not do for men?

## LESSON 8

According to our outline of Romans, condemnation and justification compose the first section of five chapters, namely, "Philosophy of Christian Birth." In this article, we are passing out of condemnation into justification. Paul has established the truth that no man is able to pass God's test of four points, and is therefore, being condemned, in need of justification. If Christianity is thought of as a great cathedral, condemnation (1:18-3:20) is clearing off the building site; justification (3:21-5) is the deep, solid foundation the building requires; sanctification (chapters 6, 7) is the body of the building; and glorification (chapter 8) is the dome. Condemnation under law is an irrefutable argument for its opposite, justification under grace.

If it has seemed at any time in Paul's discussion of condemnation that he thinks it possible for any man to escape condemnation, he is thinking of an ideal case that might have been had any man never violated his own sense of right or wrong. The violation of conscience is the crux of responsible sinning. Paul knows that, instead of pretending to be sinless, all men have their altars, priests, sin-offerings, and he can therefore write: "We before laid to the charge of both Jews and Greeks, that they are all under sin" (3:9); and again: "All have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God" (3:23).

Thus closes Paul's account of universal human failure. The tale of man under law has been told. Law is a mirror to reveal men's sins unto them, and to bring out the need of justification, but it cannot forgive sins. As it is impossible to touch stars from the deepest valley or the highest mountain, likewise the mouths of the worst and the best men are closed in dumb despair before their Judge. With respect to condemnation, men cannot be divided into big and little sinners, for one breach of law condemns.

Paul, at the midst of his condemnation-justification argument, looks both backward and forward. From the ruin of the race under law, the result of God's wrath against men for flying off the beam which he flashed them, Paul turns with an almost audible sigh of relief in his, "But now apart from the law a righteousness of God hath been manifested," to a better prospect. The clause just quoted is the beginning of a long sentence comprising six verses, which holds a summary of divine wisdom and goodness—"The very marrow of the gospel." The sentence involves problems, which, because they transcend and baffle the cold, metaphysical searchings of our minds, all the better enlist our heart's deep, humble trust and warm affections. Let us now try to take the massive, sublime sentence to pieces in order better to appropriate its unspeakably rich treasures.

Note that the righteousness which God gives is, though apart from law, not contrary to law, for it is "Witnessed by the law and prophets; even the righteousness of God through faith in Christ Jesus unto all them that believe." All the countless Messianic promises, types, and prophecies in the Old Testament underlie this "righteousness of God." There can be nothing unlawful or unjust about it, for according to the eternal Gardener's purpose from eternity past, his bud is opening into its flower after its kind.

"Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus" (v. 24). To know the meaning of "justified," used for the first time in Romans, is necessary. It is a legal term which means that God in his sovereign right, not by a process, but by a judicial decree proclaims that in his reckoning all condemned men are acquitted immediately upon the "obedience of faith." *Freely*. Inasmuch as justification is out of man's reach except as a gift, God, as a gracious act, gratuitously gives it to penitent sinners. *By grace*. God justifies, not on the ground

of human merit or legal justice, but on the ground of his own personal kindness and pure goodness. *Through redemption.* Redemption always carries the idea of purchase price, ransom, and restoration. Grace the source, redemption the means, and freely the manner of justification.

After saying that redemption is in Christ, Paul concludes his mighty sentence by telling much more about redemption . . . about its *how* and *why* (vs. 25, 26). First the *how*: "Whom God set forth to be a propitiation, through faith, in his blood." This means that the death of the willing Christ is the sin-offering to God for the condemned-to-death human race. God's purpose is to propitiate (win good will cooperation) men in order that the proper relationship between him and them may be restored. Only in this way can he satisfy the deep yearning of his heart to redeem mankind. "We have redemption in his blood" (Eph. 1:7). Redemption is free to men, but not to God or Christ, "Christ gave himself (the absolute ultimate in giving) that he might redeem us from all iniquity" (Titus 2:14). "The dominant color in redemption is blood."

Now, the *why*: ". . . to show his righteousness because of the passing over of the sins done aforetime, in the forbearance of God, . . . that he might himself be just, and the justifier of him that hath faith in Jesus." Before the cross, God neither punished nor forgave sins fully (Acts 17:30; Heb. 9:15). Saints of the Old Testament times were all sinners, yet God accepted them. Probably, angels wondered why, for "God spared not angels when they sinned." Satan and his dupes were eager to slander God as a Compromiser, tolerant of sin. God's holiness and moral integrity were at stake! But the cross clears up all of this. After God goes to the extreme of the cross in his war against sin, can he be tolerant of sin? The cross proves forever that God will not trifle with moral realities. It stands between the two covenants and vindicates God's

character throughout them both. The cross is a demonstration of God's righteousness, and a propitiatory sacrifice for man's unrighteousness; it satisfies God and expiates man, so they cry in unison: "Thou, O Christ, God-man, art all we need."

It is reported that Socrates said: "The gods may forgive sin, but I do not see how." To his great mind, the majesty of law and the acquittal of law-breakers were irreconcilable. This scripture is our fullest treatment of the overwhelming problem. Though we may never know all about it, we do know, by faith, that God is "Just, and the justifier of him that hath faith in Jesus." This suffices.

### Questions

1. Consider Christianity to be a cathedral, and assign each of its four great parts (Condemnation, Justification, Sanctification, and Glorification) to its proper place in the building.
2. Explain the statement that, though Justification is apart from law, it is not contrary to the law of Moses and the prophets.
3. Define Christian Justification.
4. Why may Romans 3:22-26 be called "The very marrow of the gospel"?
5. Comment upon the sentence that, because grace is the source of Justification, blood the means, and free gift the manner of bestowment, all human boasting is eliminated.
6. How were the saints of the Old Testament blessed by Christ's death?
7. How did the cross of Christ vindicate the justice and moral character of God?

## LESSON 9

We now leave the sublime scripture (Rom. 3:21-26), which, as a key fits its lock, meets our exceeding need, with profound gratitude that God did not take the easy way out by simply and justly committing all sinners to hell forever. That would have been no problem at all. His highly complicated problem was to judge sin in such a way as to cleanse and restore the sinner. As only God could, he solved it by the glory, mystery, and power of the cross. Since justification must be on righteous grounds, Christ had to die to make it right for God to justify sinners. A cheap justification would have been unworthy of God.

An analysis of the rest of the third chapter yields three things.

First: Since condemned sinners receive justification as full, free pardon, they have no ground for boasting. Could a justly condemned convict, whose pardon had been effected by the substitutionary death of an exceptionally good friend, go back to his home town bragging about his pardon? What could so exalt God and humble man as does Christianity? Should a few choice souls climb up to heaven over a ladder of meritorious works, pride in their unique achievement would make them as unfit for heavenly society as were the angels whose pride lost them heaven. Justification is not a work for men to do, but a *word* about a work, already done by another on the cross, to believe. Men who try to earn heaven do but waste their effort fumbling with the wrong key about the keyhole of a door that is wide open. Only "The way of the cross leads home."

Second: Paul's argument here, based on the absurdity of having two ways to justify sinners, since it implies two Gods, should have had much weight with the monotheistic Jews. Paul reasons that the one God will no more limit the blessings of Christianity to the Jews than he does the bless-



ings of nature; reasons that it is ridiculous to think that the Maker and Father of all mankind in dispensing Christian benefits will forget the Gentiles, because for adequate reasons of his own, he did not give them a written law.

Third: To the objection that justification "apart from law" annuls the law, Paul replies somewhat brusquely and very firmly, "Nay, we establish the law." Since the law was not given as a means of justification, but for another purpose, its being useless as a means of justification does not even militate against it. How does the gospel establish the law? "Through the law cometh the knowledge of sin" (3:20). Since the chief function of the law is to make men conscious of their sins, work self-condemnation, and send them in despair to Christ for refuge, whenever it does these things, it justifies and establishes itself. Does not God's law still speak in thunder to sinners? Moreover, Christians in fulfilling the law through love (Rom. 13:10) establish the law as being "spiritual" (Rom. 7:14) and Christian. The law cannot justify, but justification issues in the fulfillment of the law. Instead of teaching that the gospel means the death of law, Paul teaches that men must die to law as a means of justification before they can become Christians (Gal. 2:19). Indeed, Christianity is God's effectual and final way of moving men to live lawful lives. Furthermore, nothing can give divine sanction to the law and uphold its authority and majesty as the cross does. That Christ had to endure the cross to pay the penalty for man's breaking the law, certainly establishes the law as being inviolable, "holy, righteous, and good" (Rom. 7:12). Does seeding a field cancel an earlier plowing?

### *The New Testament Witnessed by the Old Testament*

We have just considered some general suggestions as to how the gospel establishes the law. We are now ready to see how Paul continues the subject with express documen-

tary evidence from the Old Testament. He illustrates his former statement that Christianity is "witnessed by the law and the prophets" with respective incidents from the lives of Abraham, the father, and David, the greatest king, of the Hebrew people. In effect Paul is saying: "If you Jews would study your Bible more honestly and deeply, you could see the unity and agreement that exists between the Old Testament and the New Testament.

While Abraham was yet childless, God told him that his seed should be as numberless as the stars. "And Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned unto him for righteousness" (4:3). That is Abraham's faith so pleased God that God, as a favor, counted his faith unto him for justification. Paul universalizes that principle by saying: ". . . to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is reckoned for righteousness. Even as David also pronounceth blessing upon the man unto whom God reckoneth righteousness apart from works" (vs. 5, 6). After repenting of his base crimes, David's conscience ceased to smite, and he joyously stated this truth negatively: "Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered (atoned for). Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not reckon (count) sin" (vs. 7, 8). Blessed indeed! What can "the ungodly" under law apart from grace ever do with their past?

Jews, thus forced to admit by their own scriptures that Abraham was justified by faith apart from works, would counter: "Yes, but he was circumcised." Paul's simple, double-pointed answer that Abraham lived centuries before the law was given (Gal. 3:17), and that his circumcision was "a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had" (v. 11) years before he was so circumcised, so cleverly and so completely demolishes the position of the Jews that they become ridiculous; to get their argument, they have to invert the plain facts of history.

Paul's shattering answer shows that Abraham was justified before there were any Jews "That he might be the father (pattern man) of all them that believe," both Jews and Gentiles. The pride of the Jews should be lowered, therefore, and the Gentiles need not despair; either can be justified by faith, but neither without it. Thus the whole Mosaic covenant of works becomes a parenthesis within the Abrahamic covenant of promise which continues in Christ. The reasoning of the Jews is turned upside down, for instead of Gentiles being justified by Jewish law, Jews, if they are to be "Abraham's seed" and have "The righteousness which is from God by faith in Christ" (Phil. 3-9), must be justified apart from the law of Moses and circumcision as was Abraham. That partisans can be so foolish and dishonest is truly amazing!

### Questions

1. Why did Christ have to die in order to make it right for God to justify sinners?
2. Explain how it is that Christianity is so perfectly adapted to humble and reconcile condemned men.
3. State the argument based on "God is one" which Paul makes to vindicate the salvation of the Gentiles.
4. Though law cannot justify, how is it that justification by grace issues in the fulfillment of law?
5. How does Paul use the religious history of Abraham to prove that he was justified apart from law and circumcision?
6. Explain the statement that the Mosaic covenant of works was a parenthesis within the Abrahamic covenant of promise, which continues in Christ.
7. What warning should we get today from the partisan Jews with whom Paul had to deal?

## LESSON 10

After declaring in Romans 3:25 (“The Acropolis of the Christian Faith”) that faith is the condition upon which Christ’s atoning blood is appropriated, Paul devotes the next chapter to an exposition of the nature of faith. This fourth chapter nobly proves from the life of Abraham, the grand, fundamental doctrine of the entire Bible, namely, that “the ungodly” are justified “by grace . . . through faith.” It tells much about the faith of this remarkable man, who is the prototype of all believers since his day about 2000 B.C. The fact that his religious experience in considerable detail, the first such experience so recorded, is concluded before the middle of Genesis is reached emphasizes the truth that the elements of religion—God’s grace and man’s faith—remain unchanged throughout the Bible. This story in Genesis opens its mouth to proclaim once for all the manner in which a sinner becomes “the friend of God.”

The first chapter of Romans deals especially with the Gentiles. Although the truth involved in Rom. 2:1 through 4:16 is universal, Paul is trying to show especially the Jews that their Sinatic covenant was a divinely-necessary stage in the development of the older, larger, everlasting covenant of promise made to Abraham; and that their covenant of law, as God marched royally onward through the centuries, burying generation after generation of workmen, in order to fulfill his promise to Abraham, “In thy seed, which is Christ” (Gal. 3:16); “Shall all the families of the earth be blessed” (Gen. 12:3), served its purpose and contributed its part to God’s ever-unfolding design until, according to his timetables, Christianity supplanted it. Surely the Jews, who have “in the law (only) the form of knowledge and of the truth,” can be shown the folly of sitting longer by their burnt out crater. Paul’s meager

success with them, however, warns all men of all races to tread softly and fear lest they too get but a shallow, partial, distorted view of God's deep, vast, eternal whole.

*"Heir of the World"*

In our latest "study" we found that Abraham was pronounced righteous on the ground of faith apart from works and rites (4:12). Now, we come to another great blessing which he obtained in like manner: "For not through the law was the promise to Abraham or to his seed that he should be heir of the world, but through the righteousness of faith" (4:13). Approximately two thousand years after God made this promise to Abraham, Christ repeated it to his disciples: "Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth."

Paul's argument for the next few verses consists of several points. Abraham could not inherit the world through law because the law in affording a better "knowledge of sin" (3:20) deepens sin into transgression with its accompanying wrath and condemnation; hence, inheritance, as well as justification, is out of the reach of law—law does not invest with heirship. Again, if the inheritance be through law, "faith is made void, and the promise is made of none effect." What is of desert cannot be of gift. Moreover, the promise is "of faith that it may be according to grace." Faith and grace are counterparts. Finally, the promise is "according to grace; to the end that it may be sure to all the seed," both Jews and Gentiles. "The gifts of God . . . are not repented of."

This reasoning makes it crystal clear for all time that faith and grace are mutually dependent and work together to a common end. Was Naaman's healing any the less by grace because his faith led him to the Jordan? And the argument is equally clear that faith and grace nullify law and works. Paul's grand, twofold conclusion thus far in

Romans 4, therefore, is that Abraham, the pattern man of faith, was both justified and made heir of the world by faith apart from law.

Note that Paul teaches the heirdom, because it is rooted in God's promise instead of man's merit, is sure. If it depended primarily upon man, how insecure it would be! He grows very emphatic about this surety in a parallel scripture: "God, being minded to show more abundantly to the heirs of the promise the immutability of his counsel, interposed with an oath; that by two immutable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, we have strong encouragement to lay hold of the hope set before us" (Heb. 6:17, 18).

### *The God of Resurrection*

The rest of Rom. 4 continues the exposition of the nature of faith by a further use of Abraham's history. To Abraham, old and dead in parental faculty, God promised a son by aged Sarah, barren from maidenhood. With second causes against this preposterous promise, Abraham after some misgiving, finally, ceasing to hang in suspense, "waxed strong through faith." Then, years after the promise was made, Isaac, the promised child, was born. Abraham was not a thoughtless man; he weighed all the difficulties, yet believed "giving glory to God, and being fully assured that what he had promised he was able also to perform." Here is a simple and sublime description of both faith and omnipotence.

But a harder test was to come. Years later, when it seemed that Isaac might naturally become the blessing to many, this fleshly hope was rudely shattered by God's requiring him as a burnt-offering. This created greater perplexities than ever. Besides being against every sentiment of a father's soul, the command made God self-contradictory: were Isaac offered, how could he become the blessing! All faith could do was to obey, "Accounting that

God was able to raise up even from the dead" (Heb. 11:19). By using his experience as a springboard, Abraham was able to see that the God who could give Isaac could perpetuate him, and dared leap by faith the hitherto uncrossed chasm to the Resurrection. Ever living at the growing edge of real, live faith, he ever found God, too, alive and real. Thus, Abraham lived his way progressively into new truth, and went on continuously with God, out and up. Pray what is faith but the mixing in human life of God's faithfulness and man's fidelity? When does faith cease to grow and produce fruit?

Abraham's life is a supreme example of faith as a personal trust in the personal God. Paul wrote this passage "for our sake also" that we might know the simplicity, difficulty, opportunity, and blessedness of faith. To Abraham God was greater than nature. Will not such faith help us in our problems concerning prayer, God's special providence, and the resurrection? The great truth in all such matters is that a personal God and Father lives, loves and works beyond and above nature, self, and all other second causes. May not our faith in nature and self sometimes be only so much disbelief in God himself?

### Questions

1. Has God changed his way, essentially, in justifying men since the days of Abraham?
2. Name a great promise, in addition to his justification by faith, which God made to Abraham.
3. Why cannot law invest with heirship?
4. Why cannot a blessing be received by both law and gift?
5. Name two events connected with Isaac that progressively tested and developed Abraham's faith in God himself.
6. How was Abraham led to believe that God could even raise the dead, a truth which lies at the very root of Christianity?
7. Does a personal God and Father live, love, and work beyond and above nature, men, and all other second causes?

## LESSON 11

Inasmuch as Abraham does not appear again in Romans, let us take another look at him to encourage the modeling of our lives after him instead of after Aristotle or Caesar. We are loath to part with an extraordinary man, who, the better he is known, grows in solitary grandeur. When he was about 75 years of age, his faith in God's call tore him from settled life in Ur of Chaldees to become a stranger and pilgrim in Canaan, where the Hittites called him "a prince of God" (Gen. 23:6). For 100 years he pitched his tent and built his altar in various places, refusing riches from the king of Sodom (Gen. 14:21-24) and even a grave for Sarah from Ephron (Gen. 23:3-16) as gifts lest he dishonor God by distrusting his promise to give him the whole land in his own time and manner. He never betrayed the sign (circumcision) of his separation unto God, nor ever centered his mind on self in anything, any more than he did in the matter of Isaac's birth. The fidelity of such men as Melchizedek (Gen. 14), Abraham, and Jethro (Ex. 18), living in the midst of heathenism, teaches us that heathen peoples are not guiltless. They could do better.

The truth that the power which was able to give Isaac an existence was also able to raise "Jesus from the dead, who was delivered up for our trespasses, and raised for our justification," closes Romans 4. The death and the resurrection of Jesus are the two hinges upon which the door of salvation turns. The two prime articles of the gospel—man's sin that slew Jesus and God's power that raised him—focus in the cross and the empty tomb. Christ pays the full debt at the crucifixion, and God, fully satisfied, receipts in full at the resurrection. The blood removes the penalty of sin, and the resurrection opens up the power of the risen Christ for the enabling of his people. Moreover



Christ's resurrection, since he has "been raised from the dead, the first fruits of them that are asleep," is the certificate of the resurrection of all who sleep in him.

A paragraph about the way Paul and James use Abraham. As we have seen, Paul uses him to show that "the ungodly are justified, apart from religious works and rites, by faith in the propitiatory blood of Christ." Characteristic of Paul, he digs down to the deepest roots of Christianity to show that it is grounded in Christ, and that meritorious works apart from faith in Christ are dead and powerless to justify sinners. James does not have this matter in mind at all. His chief purpose is to show especially Jewish Christians, who have brought Jewish legalism, ritualism, and traditionalism over into the church, that faith in Christ is dead and powerless to justify Christians unless it is perfected in Christian work. Paul and James are writing about the opposite ends of Christianity, and use the words, "justify" and "faith" and "work" in different senses. In his argument Paul sets Christian faith over against all other faiths and works, whereas James contrasts dead and live Christian faith. Paul teaches that works apart from faith in Christ are dead, and James adds, with Paul's full approval, that even Christian "faith apart from (Christian) works is dead." James expects Christians who begin in Paul's faith to continue and finish in his works.

### *Christian Assurance*

The first four chapters of Romans establish the truth that, though all men are hopelessly condemned by law, they may be justified by grace through faith. If some legalist fears that Christianity may not endure and succeed because it asks so little of men themselves, and is too easy to challenge men of mettle, in a passage (5:1-11) that revolves around peace and hope, Paul drowns all his fears in

a veritable flood of joy and assurance. There is scarcely another Scripture so brimful of the infinite resources of Christianity to make men strong, courageous, steadfast, fruitful, joyous, and invulnerable.

This passage pertains to Christians of course, and with respect to time covers past, present, and future. The *past* (a look backward): Christians are justified. Their initial justification is always past, never to be repeated. It settles the sin and condemnation question forever. Hostilities are over; the peace treaty is signed. Christians do not come into judgment with Christless men (John 5:24), but answer to God for only their lives and labors (1 Cor. 3:8; Rev. 22:12). The *present* (a look around): Christians stand squarely on the ground of grace, reconciled to God, crying "Abba, Father," being indwelt by the Holy Spirit who sheds the love of God abroad in their hearts. The *future* (a look forward): "We rejoice in the hope of the glory of God." This is anticipating the risen, glorified bodies in which we shall enjoy "An inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away . . . ready to be revealed in the last time."

To be taught reliably that peace with God gives both hope of future glory and ability to "Rejoice in our tribulations: knowing that tribulation worketh steadfastness; and steadfastness, approvedness; and approvedness, hope; and hope putteth not to shame" is solid ground for assurance. Then, when we go into the furnace and come through the fire more steadfast, confident, and hopeful, the experience increases our assurance and courage. To learn experimentally that Christianity is actually so marvelously adapted to our deepest spiritual needs that somehow when the chastening hand of our Father lies heavy upon us we, though bruised and broken, creep, trusting and hoping, a little nearer to his side all the while is the sunlit summit

of assurance, approvedness, and hope. Tribulation may be a bitter, but not a barren, tree; it produces; behold its fruit!

As human love at its highest, rarely someone may be ready to die for a strong, good man. In strongest contrast, God commended his love to the world by giving his beloved Son to die for weak men who were all ungodly sinners, and enemies. The love that lays a foundation like that may be trusted to the very end with uttermost assurance. The passage begins and ends with the phrase, "Our Lord Jesus Christ." "For if, while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, shall we be saved by his life." It is no more true that Christ died to "redeem us from all iniquity" than it is true that in his risen, glorified body, he ever lives to plead for us at heaven's court. Furthermore, through the Holy Spirit, he at the same time lives "Bound in the bundle of life" with us, the life and light of our lives. "Because I live, ye shall live also" (John 14:19).

### Questions

1. What light do the lives of such men as Melchizedek, Abraham, and Jethro throw upon heathen life?
2. Explain Paul's statement that Christ "was delivered up for our trespasses, and was raised for our justification."
3. Show that Paul and James teach the same gospel.
4. Verify the statement that Romans 5:1-11 revolves around peace and hope, and show the significance of the fact that the passage begins and ends with "Our Lord Jesus Christ."
5. What does this Scripture teach about the love of God and the work of the Holy Spirit?
6. Apply this doctrine of Christian assurance to past, present, and future.
7. What does the statement that "Tribulation may be a bitter, but not a barren, tree" mean?

## LESSON 12

The book of Romans is our deepest and fullest exposition of the philosophy (working principles) of Christianity. The first four chapters show man's need of redemption and give God's provision for this need—human redemption and divine justification. These chapters leave us looking backward to the cross of Christ with humble thanksgiving and praise, and forward to his throne above, where he is our priest, advocate, and very life, with assurance and hope.

*Adam*

“Therefore, as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin; so that death passed unto all men, for that all sinned” (5:12). Since this verse states that sin and its offspring, death, entered the human race, without going into detail about how they entered, speculations concerning the *how*, which add nothing to Paul's history of religion, have always been rife.

However, taking this categorical statement “that all sinned” in its context, plus relevant Scripture, it seems to me an inescapable conclusion that Adam, as federal head and representative of mankind, which is an organic whole, when he revolted against God's authority in Eden, passed the deadly virus of sin on to his posterity, and took it down with him in ruin. “All sinned,” therefore, representatively in Adam, and along with him lost the source of life. “It is appointed unto men once to die” (Heb. 9:27); “In Adam all die” (1 Cor. 15:22). An example of the working of the solidarity of humanity is seen in Levi's paying tithes to Melchizedek through Abraham, his great-grandfather, even though Levi “was in the loins of his father” (Heb. 7:9, 10) at the time. Does not David bear witness to this truth when he writes: “Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me” (Psa. 51:5)? And

Paul when he says that Jews and Gentiles alike "were by nature children of wrath" (Eph. 2:3)? Whatever change Adam's nature sustained in his fall was transmitted to Seth, whom he "Begot in his own likeness, after his image" (Gen. 5:3). Men are shackled with a chain, too strong for them to break in their own strength, reaching back to Adam.

Paul knowing that it is hard for men to accept their state of entailed, racial sin pauses to explain before going on with his main argument. He first explains that the universal cause of the universal death between Adam and Moses, since there was during that time no law that imposed the death penalty, was Adam's sin. If Adam had never committed another sin after his first transgression, his posterity, on the organic principle that a diseased tree can bear only impaired fruit, would have shared his mortality with its attendant ills and subsequent death. What other solution of the deep, sad problem of suffering childhood and of imbeciles? What thoughtful, pious man can wish, until men, especially infants, cease dying, to do away with race sin? Its elimination could but make more and greater problems. This entailment applies to Adam's race with its corrupted nature, not to men's individual sins. There is no intimation in the Bible that men die a second death, a spiritual death, for Adam's sin. It is *appointed* that men die only *once* for his sin. It is not for Adam's sin, but for their own personal sins that men are lost eternally in hell. "Every man is the Adam to his own soul." If only Adam's sin is to be judged, universal, eternal salvation is true.

If we shrink from this doctrine, probably it is because we do not understand the real nature of sin, and its power to pollute. The facts of life proclaim the same solemn, stern truth. I have read of a physician who gave up his Christian profession because he could not see how a just God

could allow so much suffering in the world. He went on in his unbelief for a time, but in his practice he came to know so certainly that the iniquities of fathers are visited upon their children that he gave up skepticism. What he had rejected in the Bible pursued him so relentlessly in life that he for the sake of consistency went back to his early faith. What sort of a world would it be without suffering any way? For one thing, it would have no Christ or mothers. Perhaps suffering is not as bad as we may sometimes think. "There is a cross at the heart of the universe." Can we not trust "our Father" beyond our own creatural faculties?

*"Jesus Christ Our Lord"*

"For if, by the trespass of the one, death reigned through the one; much more shall they that receive the abundance of grace and the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one, even Jesus Christ our Lord" (v. 17). A comparison of Adam, "a figure" of Christ, and of Christ, "the last Adam" (1 Cor. 15:45), in their resemblances and disparities, is found in Rom. 5:12-21. Both are representative men whose acts—Adam's disobedience and Christ's "obedience even unto death"—are imputed, respectively, unto those whom they represent. Adam is a fountain of evil; Christ of good. Sin, condemnation, ruin and death follow in Adam's train; justification, righteousness, redemption, and life in Christ's.

Respecting disparity, Christ does not merely take Adam's defaulted place in order to restore the status quo. As a statue always surpasses its model, five times over the chapter declares that benefits in Christ "much more" than compensate for losses in Adam. The poison of Adam has a "much more" potent antidote in Christ; the stream of grace runs stronger and deeper than the stream of sin. Indeed, the supreme doctrine of the passage is that good

in Christ "much more" than counterworks evil in Adam; that God is "much more" ready to impute eternal life in Christ than temporary death in Adam. (The principle of imputation as it applies in both Adam and Christ, however, is repudiated by self-sufficient and impenitent men). Without choice, all men die in Adam; without choice, all men are restored to life at the resurrection. This balances the scales. The "much more," that is, to "Reign through righteousness unto eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" is a matter of free will and personal choice. Do men, even Christian men, appreciate this amazing superabundance of grace that grants them this unutterable favor of choosing this incomparable gift?

Romans 5:12-21 lays bare human history at its root. This sketch of the religious history of the race is the key to some of the mysteries of divine government. Should we not thankfully and faithfully use it lest we fail to know ourselves and consequently miss some of the essential secrets of life? Without this key the next three chapters do not give up their sweetness and strength.

### Questions

1. In what state of mind should students of Romans be when they have reached the end of the fourth chapter?
2. In what sense do all men sin in Adam?
3. Do secular history and life support the doctrine of hereditary sin?
4. Can you explain why the collision of love and sin results in a cross?
5. What does "Every man is the Adam of his own soul" mean?
6. What does "The poison of Adam has a much more potent antidote in Christ" mean?
7. Why is Romans 5:12-21 of supreme importance to students of history and of religion?

## LESSON 13

With the dark, bloody reign of sin through Adam in contrast with the reign of grace through Christ, Romans 5 closes. "The law came in besides that the trespass might abound" (5:20). Adam, Moses, and Christ correspond to the three respective stages in man's religious history. Adam, promise made (Gen. 3:15; Moses, law given; Christ, promise realized. Because men between Adam and Moses had no written law by which to judge conduct, they did not know how lawless and immoral they were. The law came in to convince men that, inasmuch as they were unable to live up to its requirements, the utmost possibility under the law was the reign of sin in death until the promised seed of the woman came. This proves that the law of Moses was an essential factor in the development of Christianity.

*Justification and Sanctification*

With Chapter 6, Romans passes out of justification (a divine work *for* us), pertaining to becoming a Christian, into sanctification (divine work *in* us), pertaining to living the Christian life. "Justification makes saints, and sanctification makes saints saintly." God first justifies, that is, cancels the guilt and penalty of past sins; then, the justified progressively grow in purity and sanctity throughout present life; and finally the sanctified mount to glory for future eternity. Justification, sanctification, and glorification are not disconnected states; rather they lie, respectively, one above another, blended into one grand whole. Paul has just laid the deep, solid foundation (justification) of human redemption, and now, for three wonderful chapters, he builds thereon the magnificent superstructure (sanctification and glorification).

The doctrine "Where sin abounded, grace did abound more exceedingly" (5:20) may be perverted into let us



“continue in sin that grace may abound” (6:1). But instead of grace granting license to sin, it establishes law by providing for its fulfillment. “Grace is opposed to sin and devours it” (Luther). Sin belongs to sinners, not saints. For Christians to treat God worse than they would human friends, by thus distorting the gospel and thereby taking advantage of his goodness; to think so ignorantly and unworthily of him; and to act so utterly contrary to the spirit of grace moves Paul to the resolute outburst “God forbid.”

### *Twofold Identity with Christ*

That Christians are dead to sin is Paul's first reason why it is morally impossible for them to continue to sin. “We who died to sin, how shall we any longer live therein? Or are ye ignorant that all we who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him through baptism into death” (6:2-4). Paul is saying to the Romans in effect: “Our baptism pictorially sets forth the doctrine of the gospel; if we are not baptized into Christ's death, that is count his death to be our death, our baptism is meaningless—a mere mockery. Just as it is physically impossible for a friend who died and was buried years ago still to walk about among us, just so it is morally impossible for our old man who was crucified with Christ to be still alive and dominate our personality as he did before his crucifixion.”

A Christian's death throughout this passage (6:1-11) is a single past event, for he died representatively with Christ when mankind's death penalty was executed on him at the cross. God reckoned us all, as we must reckon ourselves, on the cross with his Son. Paul says of himself what every Christian must say: “I have been crucified with Christ” (Gal. 2:20). After sin had once caused Christ's death, he was forever beyond its claim, dominion, and doom. Chris-

tians are identified with him in death and share his grave with him; their death must be as certain and final as was his. They are no more certainly "baptized . . . unto (eis) the remission of sins" than they are "baptized into (eis) his death." The supreme weakness and tragedy of the church has ever been, even until now, the unwillingness of Christians to be identified with their Lord in death. All Christians today, in the Christian sense, died nearly 2000 years ago. When temptation assails us, we should say: "No, we cannot hear and feel your appeal and power, for we have been dead ever since we became Christians."

"For the death that he died, he died unto sin once (for all time): but the life that he liveth, he liveth unto God. Even so reckon ye also yourselves to be dead unto sin (once for all), but alive unto God in Christ Jesus." Christian conversion involves a catastrophic upheaval in a man's life. "If any man is in Christ, he is a new creature: the old things are passed away; behold, they are become new" (2 Cor. 5:17). Do not forget what conversion did to Paul! It is such a revolutionary change that Christ describes it as being "born anew." It is similar to rising from the dead: "If we have become united with him in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection; knowing that our old man was crucified with him." God's wisdom is seen in the perfect dramatization in baptism of one man's dying and being buried, and of another man's being born. Wonderfully, baptism proclaims our twofold identity with Christ.

### *"Our Old Man"*

Who is "Our Old Man?" Romans seems to teach that he is our heritage from Adam—not the guilt, but the consequences of Adam's sin. Do not the neglected children of a drunkard suffering hunger as a consequence of their father's drinking illustrate in part, at least, this truth?

And may not the children get as another consequence a warped nature that makes them susceptible to intoxicants? It seems to me that the Bible, behavior of small children, and all history teach that children are born with a sin-bent nature, somewhat as a carnivorous animal is carnivorous by nature before it eats flesh. Who but Adam could have remained sinless? It is not a theory, but an indisputable fact, no man has lived a sinless life. Does not this call for fundamental, universal cause?

Romans 6, 7, and 8 are rooted in the last paragraph of Romans 5, where condemnation is traced back to the first Adam, and justification to Christ, the last Adam. As the word "sin" is used several times in these chapters, it cannot refer to deeds of wrongdoing, but must refer, I think, to the sin-biased nature of Adam's race. "Our old man," linked with Adam, must be crucified together with Christ, that a new man may be "raised together with Christ," in whom mankind gets a new start. This is the pivot upon which man's redemption turns.

### Questions

1. What service does Moses render as a necessary stepping stone from Adam to Christ?
2. How are Justification, Sanctification, and Glorification related to each other religiously?
3. What perversion of Christian doctrine was responsible for Paul's vehement "God forbid"?
4. In what sense is Christ's death a Christian's death?
5. Is an old man's being dead to youthful follies a good illustration of a Christian's being dead to sin?
6. Explain how baptism proclaims a Christian's twofold identity with Christ.
7. Who is "our old man"?

## LESSON 14

We learn from Romans 3:8 that some distorted Paul's doctrine of grace into the slander, "Let us do evil, that good may come." Legalists could argue plausibly from the statement, "Where sin abounded, grace did abound more exceedingly," the more sin the better, for then God would have more opportunities to exhibit his forgiving grace. Or ask: "Why need Christians work, since sinners can be justified without it?" By such babble, partially converted men, still under Adam's reign and therefore still trusting human merit instead of divine grace, could twist Paul's gospel into a deadly perversion. No wonder Paul recoiled in holy horror. To get something for nothing is so contrary to fleshly economy that to get, according to gospel economy, everything for nothing is just too much and too good for all except the wholly converted. Here is the solid core of gospel repentance, which, at its deepest level, is absolute turning away from defunct Adam to Christ. "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish" (Christ).

The imperative transition from ruin in Adam to new life and another chance in Christ is the crux of Christianity. To realize that Romans 6 is an inspired commentary on an intensely personal verse Paul wrote the Galatians helps: "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I (Adamic Paul) that lives, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh (mortal frame) I live in faith, the faith which is in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself up for me" (Gal. 2:20). According to this, Paul reckons that his old man in Adam is an executed criminal, and that he is a new creature in Christ, who lives in him to body forth himself to the world—"The old shack under new management." In distilled essence, with even more emotional appeal and Christian motive, Romans 6 is all here. This verse is the key that unlocks Paul's con-

ception of Christianity, and the secret of his own enigmatic, extraordinary life. A surrendered life gives Christ an outlet for his grace and power.

### *King and Subject*

“Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body” (6:12). That this exhortation leans back on the first part of the chapter is shown by the “therefore.” The connection is, now, since you reckon yourselves to be identified with Christ in his death and resurrection, make this faith an experimental reality in your lives; that is, reduce your faith to practice. Why this plea to Christians, if they have no choice in the matter?

Though saints by God’s decree are dead to sin, sin itself is not dead. Instead of Paul’s saying that sin is dead he says, “Reckon (believe what God says about it) ye also yourselves to be dead to sin.” To make this death to the power, pollution, and practice of sin, which are as real and tenacious as are its guilt and penalty, and actuality, saints must resist, learn by experience, and grow strong. To lift them immediately above the reach of sin would be contrary to the principles of moral and spiritual growth, and would therefore retard their Christian progress. God gives justification immediately, but he gives sanctification by another method. In men who refuse to leave Adam for Christ, sin reigns in death, as sailors who refuse to leave a doomed ship for a lifeboat drown; but sin in men who desert Adam for Christ is so counterworked and outlawed that it cannot be king and tyrannize over them. Although the Adamic nature is not extirpated in men so long as they live in mortal bodies derived from Adam; and though the flesh and the Spirit, “contrary the one to the other” (Gal. 5:17), both live in a Christian, the flesh need ever reign, nay, can never reign, until his will goes along with the solicitation to evil.

Does not this throw light on 1 John 3:9: "Whosoever is begotten of God cannot sin?" A Christian is judicially and ideally dead to sin; if he sins it is against his will and endeavor. His heart is too tender toward Christ to hurt and grieve him by ingratitude and disobedience. He cannot callously and habitually sin; sin is a false note in his life and peace. Sin reigns over sinners, but not over Christians. Sin will pursue saints even unto the tomb, but they are always enabled to escape it.

All this underlies Paul's second reason in Romans 6 why saints cannot sin, namely, "Sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace" (v. 14). Justification is a gracious, divinely wrought change in the lives of those who are justified. Since law effects no such change in relationship, cause for the consequent change in life is lacking. Law can make subjects and slaves, but it cannot soften hard hearts, break stubborn wills, and generate gratitude and love, as grace does. That his plea for Christian living may be effective, Paul roots it in divine grace, not in law and "will of the flesh." To lift men out of sin, they must be brought into a realm where grace, not law, is the constitution. Law and fear are not comparable to grace and gratitude in the power to purify.

### *Master and Slave*

When men hear the gospel, they must choose between the two Adams. Paul thanks God that the Romans have made this crucial choice correctly. The language in which he describes this pregnant change, "Obedient from the heart to that form of teaching whereunto ye were delivered," reinforces the first part of the chapter. Christianity is not a moral code given to be lived up to in order to please God: rather, it is built on the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ which serve as a pattern for men's use in fashioning their Christian lives; that is, what Christ experienced

bodily, they must experience spiritually. Nor does choosing a new Master exhaust human freedom. That Christians are still free to determine their course is shown by Paul's exhorting them to present their bodies, not to serve sin which leads to death, but to serve God which leads to eternal life—something no man can earn or give. Though Christians have a new Master to serve in a new kind of slavery, they are "called for freedom" (Gal. 5:13). And, strange paradox, they alone are "free indeed" (John 8:36).

The chapter closes with the third reason why saints cannot sin: sin is too expensive; no man can afford it. Its seed is in it to bring forth fruit after its kind; it is a short circuit that wastes life. Sin is a faithful paymaster, but "nobody can live on the wages it pays." "The wages of sin is death" eternal.

### Questions

1. What does gospel repentance involve?
2. Compare the respective methods by which men are justified and by which they are sanctified.
3. Does Christianity propose to extirpate a Christian's fleshly nature so that there will be no conflict between the flesh and the spirit?
4. Sin is not dead, and never will be in this world; but Christians are dead to sin. What is the difference?
5. Why are men under grace expected to resist temptation and sin more successfully than if they were under law?
6. Does the expression "the old shack under new management" describe a Christian's experience and life?
7. Christians must not sin purposely and regularly, and let sin reign over them, for sin belongs to sinners; and the fact that they are under grace is a powerful incentive to sinless living. Now what third reason does Romans 6 give why they cannot afford to sin?

## LESSON 15

The discussion of Justification closes with Rom. 5, and the discussion of Sanctification follows in the next three chapters. To keep this and the fact that Romans was not divided into chapters until about 1250 A.D. in mind will help in studying these profound exceedingly important chapters.

As we have seen, Rom. 6 teaches that sinners upon becoming identified with Christ in his death, burial, and resurrection are justified, and dead to sin. No matter how Christians feel about it, or what their experiences may be, they are to believe and count on these two things unfalteringly. They know by faith that they are justified, that hostilities between them and God have ceased, that the peace treaty has been signed, and that they, reconciled to God, are standing in grace. Therefore, their roots having struck down to living water, their souls, rejoicing in the hope of the glory of God, are at rest. Any doubt, or uncertainty, about free, full pardon, and death to sin, betrays a defective faith that prevents going on with God in assurance, and at least retards, probably defeats entirely, Christian sanctity, peace, and service. It dishonors God to remember and worry about what he forgets and expects us to forget; moreover; it is foolish, for it means frustration, unfruitfulness, and unhappiness.

*Law and Gospel*

Paul has made three statements in Romans concerning the relationship that exists between law and grace, which the Jews in their ignorance, pride, and prejudice considered very derogatory to their law. First: "By the works of the law shall no flesh be justified in his sight; for through the law cometh the knowledge of sin" (3:20). 'The Jews twisted this into meaning that Paul taught the



law itself was sinful. Second: "The law came in besides that the trespass might abound" (5:20). To the Jews, this questioned the priority and moral utility of their law; such they could not tolerate. Third: Christians "Are not under law, but under grace" (6:14). Paul's enemies slandered him by accusing him of teaching that Christians, because they were not under law, had license to sin. That these are the objections to which Paul replies indicates that the Jews made them.

To orthodox Jews, Paul was a great heretic. Even to many Jews in the church, he was either a heretic, or dangerously near being one. The mere thought of the time when these "false brethren" (Gal. 2:4) who followed Paul over Asia and Europe doing their utmost to pervert his work, and Paul meet for judgment at Christ's coming is enough to make all Christians exceedingly "slow to speak." Paul earnestly wrote such men: "Wherefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and make manifest the counsels of the hearts; and then shall each man have his praise from God" (1 Cor. 4:5). Even, were Paul's foes honestly mistaken, will they on that great day be like Paul the apostle, or Saul the persecutor?

Paul had not stopped to explain fully these statements, but, now in chapter seven, he is ready to discuss all three. Let no man think that an understanding of the difference between the respective working principle of law and grace is of small importance. Law is man-centered and turns on human wisdom, effort, and merit; grace is God-centered and turns on divine wisdom, love, and activity. Under law, justification depends upon desert; under grace, it is conferred as an undeserved gift. These two kinds of religion (they exhaust the category) are poles apart in power, manner of working, and results. The church had never committed her greatest sin and blunder, nor suffered her

greatest failure and defeat had she not faithlessly combined the principles of law and grace to concoct a law-gospel, which is neither law nor gospel. Paul's description of this bogus gospel reads: "Which is not another gospel: only there are some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, should preach unto you any gospel other than we preached unto you, let him be anathema" (Gal. 1:7, 8). Rom. 7 might disclose to Christians today, who little suspect it, that they are afflicted with man-centered law-gospel, which is a deadly foe to sanctification and holiness.

### *Christians Are Dead To Law*

We are beginning a new chapter, but not a new subject. That men in becoming Christians are set free from one master, not to be idle, but to serve a new Master is taught in Rom. 6. By changing from slavery to marriage, because it better shows the nature and function of law, Paul teaches the same lesson in 7:1-6. The two metaphors are united in the slave-wife verse six.

With a rhetorical question first, Paul emphasizes the common knowledge "That law hath dominion over a man for so long time as he liveth." Then, further to emphasize the truth that death ends the claims of law, he introduces his figure of marriage. This figure in its application, though a mixed metaphor according to many commentators, makes clear to all commentators, so far as I know, Paul's point that death dissolves legal obligation. He wants the Jews to see that sin and law are so closely interwoven that they cannot die to sin without at the same time dying to their law also. To the Galatians in plainest language, without metaphor, "For I through the law died unto the law, that I might live unto God. I have been crucified with Christ" (Gal. 2:19, 20), Paul writes in this most personal way the

same thing. Thus, he unequivocally teaches, once for all, that men cannot be alive to both God and a legal system at the same time.

Paul in Romans uses the simple truth that when a wife is left a widow, though dead as wife, she survives as woman, and is free to marry again to convince the Jews, especially, that in becoming Christians all men must die to law as well as to sin. Inasmuch as wives do not marry law, and instead of law dying, Christians die to law, to make law the first husband seems unwarranted. Although the argument does not require that the first husband be identified, it seems to me that to make him "Our old (natural) man (that) was crucified with him" (6:6) is consistent with the context and with Christian truth. In both wedlock and Christianity the emancipator that liberates from the law and gives freedom is death. "Wherefore, my brethren, ye also were made dead to the law through the (slain) body of Christ that ye should be joined to another, even to him who was raised from the dead, that we might bring forth fruit unto God" (7:4).

### Questions

1. What causes a Christian who has been baptized into Christ to doubt his justification and death to sin?
2. How does a Christian's lack of assurance about his justification effect his joy and spiritual growth?
3. Are the religion of law and the religion of grace so different that they will not blend into one religion?
4. Name two particulars in which the Jews perverted Paul's teaching. Can you account for these errors?
5. What truth does Paul illustrate by the use of the figure of marriage?
6. In what literal language does Paul write the same thing to the Galatians?
7. As Paul used the comparison of marriage, who is the first husband?

## LESSON 16

To disregard the chapter bar between Rom. 6 and 7 helps one to appreciate the coherence and fullness of Paul's argument on Sanctification. For instance, the representation of Christ and saints as King and subjects suggests *warfare*; as Master and slaves, *service*; as Husband and wife, *fruitfulness*.

*Nature of Law and of Man*

"When we were in the flesh, the sinful passions which were through the law, wrought in our members to bring forth fruit unto death" (7:5). This verse, adding to the thought of earlier statements in Romans about the law the expression, "the sinful passions which were through the law," is the basis of the discussion on the nature of law and of man which follows in verses 7-24. From this passage, we may learn what both law and man are. In moral value, it far outweighs all merely human books ever written on law and psychology.

After stoutly denying that his gospel implies that the law itself is sinful, Paul adds: "Howbeit (nevertheless) I had not known sin, except through the law." Paul has been saying "we" in this chapter until now. I think he narrows down to "I" (used about thirty times) for the rest of the chapter, with one exception in verse 14, in order to present in the liveliest way possible an elemental Christian truth, namely, that every man must be translated out of a man-centered kingdom into a God-centered one—out of Adam into Christ. In this chapter, we have our best opportunity to look down into the deep purposes and workings of law, and into the abysmal deeps, both conscious and subconscious, of our own personalities. Faithfully, should we study this great Scripture.

Paul says there was a time when he, unconscious of any sin in him, was satisfied with himself. But that when he

came to see that the commandment, "Thou shalt not covet," was meant to forbid all self-centered desires (Christ so interpreted Moses), he realized that the very impulse of his nature was unlawful. Sin, the seed of the Serpent (Gen. 3:15), which was lying dormant within, under the quickening touch of law crawled up into consciousness and fatally stung his self-satisfaction. The word "sin" occurs thirteen times in these verses, but the word "sins" is not found. This Scripture digs down deep to the sin-nature which expresses itself in sins. That no flesh is righteous before God becomes evident under law, the infallible detector of man's inborn evil propensities.

Whence come the proclivities of children to sin? Not from Adam as God made him. We need ever to remember that we are Adam's descendants after he became unfit to live with God. Children at a very tender age rebel against parental law, and guilefully try to hide their lawlessness. Were they left to themselves, would they ever know what is wrong with them? Apart from law, Paul would never have become conscious of his sin-warped nature. Men cannot get from Adam to Christ without Moses. The better one knows the law, the better he knows how great a sinner he is. Moreover, the essence of sin is rebellion, and prohibitions of law irritate tainted human nature and inflame it unto "all manner of coveting . . . that through the commandment sin might become exceeding sinful." Law intensifies human lawlessness. After the law had thus revealed Paul unto himself, he lost his good opinion of himself, and became a self-condemned sinner. Certainly, this could not have occurred, however, had he been "totally depraved."

"For sin, finding, occasion, through the commandment beguiled me, and through it slew me." As Satan beguiled Eve (Gen. 3:1-6) through the lie that she could better her condition by eating the forbidden fruit, so he still through

the lie that pious men can improve themselves by observing ordinances, and by using the law as an immediate rule of life, beguiles and betrays them. The trick is that men never obey God's law. Rather than improvement, therefore, all sorts of lawless desires are produced in them. Witness the Pharisees of Christ's time, including Saul of Tarsus. Thus, the law, by bringing the deep, unknown abscess at the root of human nature out to light, does its designed holy work of preparing honest men, despairing of legal advancement, to accept in genuine repentance the gospel of grace.

Note how Paul vindicates law through all this chapter. Law, which in its deepest and broadest sense represents the mind, will, and character of God, is co-eval with God. Without disturbing the legal status of Gentiles, God added, for Jews, a national, provisional law to his universal, human law. The annulment of this Jewish law, when it had served its purpose, put Jews back under universal law again: but with the superlative gain of an opportunity to both Gentiles and Jews for justification, sanctification, and glorification in Christ. It is absurd to blame law for revealing man to himself in his inherent inadequacy as it is to blame a microscope for revealing germs in drinking water. That sin gets worse when treated with the perfect remedy, law, proves its desperate nature. Should it not crush down man's pride and self-sufficiency to learn from his friendly, faithful Maker and Redeemer that his state is such by nature that all merely human struggling after reformation only deepens his misery?

### *Paul's Three Men*

Rom. 7 has been called the problem chapter of the book. Expositors vary much about its autobiographic nature, and about whether the speaker is unregenerate or regenerate; some think that he passes from the former to the latter

within the chapter. Since the main lesson, namely, that neither Paul nor any other man, whether unregenerate or regenerate, can in his own native strength redeem himself from racial ruin, can be learned without solving these problems, probably they have received more attention than they deserve.

About the same time at which Paul wrote Romans, he gave the Corinthians an exhaustive, threefold analysis of humanity as follows: natural men and spiritual men, with the latter subdividing into carnal and mature Christians (1 Cor. 2:14, 15; 3:1). One commentator very plausibly suggests that Rom. 7 and 8 are built around these three men, and that Paul as representative man describes himself as successively experiencing all three. According to this, the natural (unregenerate) man appears in 7:7-13; with the change from past to present tense, the carnal Christian (unnecessarily prolonged babyhood in Christ) appears in 7:14-24; and the spiritual Christian in Rom. 8:1-17.

### Questions

1. What was Paul's reaction to the thought the law itself is sin?
2. Can the word "sin" and the phrase "law of sin" used repeatedly in Romans 7 refer to sinful acts?
3. How did law convince Paul that human nature has "sinful passions" lying dormant within it? Is law to be blamed for revealing the fact that man has an inherent, sin-warped nature?
4. Unless man as a child of Adam is alive to sin, why does holy law increase human lawlessness, and work "all manner of coveting" in men?
5. How does law, which is the power of sin (1 Cor. 15:56), enable sin to beguile and slay men?
6. What attitude does Paul throughout Romans 7 hold toward law, toward sin, and toward man, respectively?
7. Suggest a way in which Paul's teaching in Romans 7 is probably related to his three men of 1 Corinthians.

## LESSON 17

Bear in mind that the subject of Rom. 7 is, not Justification, but Sanctification—not how to obtain pardon for past sins, but deliverance from present indwelling sin. “Sin” is not evil deeds, but an evil principle, even “The law of sin which dwelleth in my members”—not primarily what men do, but what they are. It is a power, which impregnably entrenched in human nature, has “reigned in death” since the race, on probation in Adam, was “sold under sin” in Adam’s fall.

Paul’s “I of myself” is the key to his inability to find deliverance from the power and bondage of sin. His disability which causes the stern inner conflict and chaos, with its bewildering meeting of two seas of good and evil impulses and its pathetic “I would” and “I would not,” so dramatically depicted, is the lack of *power* to do what his reason, will, and conscience, all, insist that he should do. “So now it is no more I that do it (what I hate), but sin that dwelleth in me. For I know that in me, that is in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing.” Surely, if it can be put into human speech, here is a man handicapped with a radical defect in nature, yea, an inherent evil tendency in his flesh that counterworks his earnest spiritual strivings, which he can neither eradicate nor master by himself—the animal runs away with the man. Paul is here laying the foundation for his teaching in the next chapter that, instead of Christians struggling in their unaided natural strength to take sanctification by force, they are to continue to take God’s gifts, in God’s way, as they have already done in the matter of justification. As for Paul himself, the carnal Paul of Rom. 7 grew into the spiritual Paul of Rom. 8 before he wrote the book of Romans.

*Paul’s Religious Evolution*

Paul, who enters the Bible as an abettor of Stephen’s



martyrdom, is soon the determined, unflinching Jewish persecutor of the church. On his way to destroy the church in Damascus, he was apprehended by the glorified Christ speaking unto him out of heaven saying: "I have appeared unto thee, to appoint thee a minister and a witness both of the things wherein thou hast seen me, and of the things wherein I will appear unto thee" (Acts 26:16). Christ said of Paul at this time: "He is a chosen vessel unto me" (Acts 9:15), to preach and to learn suffering.

We learn from these two statements by Christ that communication between him and Paul was to be maintained. After Paul's conversion, Acts reports five more miraculous appearances to him. These appearances, however, thrust no magical spiritual growth upon him; his personal character grew, as do the characters of all Christians, according to mental and moral law. Paul's epistles allude to "visions and revelations of the Lord" as if they were not unusual; he describes one revelation in which he was "caught up into Paradise" for a most intimate, personal interview (2 Cor. 12:1-4). From the biographic and autobiographic matter in Acts and Paul's letters, respectively, we learn vastly more about him—his views of life, death, the future; his purposes, labors, prayers; his fears, joys, tears; his sufferings, tribulations, burdens, and buffeting his body to keep it in subjection—than about any other early Christian.

By combining Acts 9 and Gal. 1, we learn that Paul began preaching in Damascus "straightway" after his conversion, and that his ministry there was broken into two periods of time by a visit into Arabia. Why this Arabian interruption? I think the logic of life and truth makes plausible the inference that, when Paul encountered the inevitable opposition, he, but a babe in Christ honestly mistaken, tried to meet it, as he had always met opposition, in his own superior natural strength ("I of myself"); and that Christ to forestall this wrecking of Christianity and

to season Paul for his chosen work, sent him, willing to learn, into Arabia as a fit place to guide him into a better understanding and assimilation of his new religion. "Visions and revelations" in Arabia are not improbable. Like wrestling, striving Jacob of old (Gen. 32:22-32) Paul had to come to an end of himself before he could be "a prince of God."

To convert a learned, proud, respected, self-occupied Pharisee, who had been laborously "blameless" in all the more than six hundred laws and traditions of his party for some twenty years, into a Christ-occupied man, which meant becoming "the filth of the world," was a catastrophic dissolution and re-creation. The evolution of Saul into Paul was a tremendous achievement, utterly beyond all human working, but possible "Through faith in the working of God" (Col. 2:12). Probably it took the time in Arabia plus a few years of Paul's relative obscurity as apostle before he began his mission travels, or even longer, to bring him up to the spiritual elevation where he could say: "I have learned . . . the secret both to abound and to be in want . . . I can do all things in him that strengtheneth me." His going up to Paradise occurred during these obscure years.

When the extreme difficulty of any man's, especially a man of Paul's natural strength and background, renouncing flesh and legal righteousness; and of realizing that should his striving eventually lift him to the pinnacle of human morality and religion, even there, the wrath of God awaits him—when these things, and the fact that so few Christians ever learn suffering and self-abnegation for Christ's sake, as Paul did, are taken into consideration, the inference I think, becomes all the more reasonable. Certainly, it is not "contrary to the doctrine" we have learned. As it has benefited me, may it benefit others.

### *Paul Chosen as Apostle and as Pattern*

Paul's wholly yielding himself up to Christ's making gave Christ a fit instrument to demonstrate what he can do for in, and through men who do not mar their making by trying, in their own fleshly strength, to help him out. God cannot save men until they cease trying, by law and unaided self-effort, to save themselves. Christ chose Paul Gentile apostle and Christian pattern because he knew what he could make out of capable, willing, suffering, cooperating Paul. This explains, I think, why Luke and Paul himself were moved by God to write down so fully Paul's case history. "It was not written for his sake alone . . . but for our sakes also." Five times, Paul exhorts his "children" to "imitate" him—a thing no one of the other seven writers of the New Testament does even once. How profoundly interesting and profitable when an earnest, experienced, wise "man of God" unlocks to others, in so far as is possible, the secrets of God's dealings with him.

#### Questions

1. Name and define the general subject Paul is discussing in Romans 7:7-25.
2. When Paul says, "I know that . . . in my flesh dwelleth no good thing," what does he mean by his flesh?
3. What is the "sin" which Paul says dwells in him and defeats his good intentions? Is "the law of sin" in his members, warring against the law of God and bringing him into captivity, the same thing?
4. Can the stern moral struggle depicted in this Scripture occur in a man who is not a Christian?
5. Why does it ever occur in a Christian?
6. State some of the hurdles which Paul cleared as he grew into a pattern saint.
7. Summarize the view of "Paul's religious evolution" presented in this "Study" and tell what you think of it.

## LESSON 18

Paul's history of Redemption has reached near the close of Romans 7 the point where Christians who, after having accepted justification as a gift from God, have struggled in their own natural strength to live the Christian life only to know the self-contradictory life described in the chapter, and therefore have been driven to acknowledge they lack power to do what they will to do.

At this crisis in their lives, three courses are open to them. First: unaware of the help at hand, they may, disillusioned and discouraged, give up the unequal, nay the impossible, struggle and drop back into the world. Second: while "first love" oozes away as it oozed away at Ephesus (Rev. 2:4), they may settle placidly to the mechanical routine of church-going with its cold, dead formalities, and to a life of holding to fixed partial truth and party as the best they may expect. Paul would ask them as he asked the Galatians: "Are ye so foolish? having been in the Spirit, are ye now perfected in the flesh?" (3:3). As if to say, it is the height of folly when Christians presume to disregard any part of Christianity as being unnecessary. Third: they, knowing that the God who provides the Blood of Calvary for pardon does not stop there, but goes on to provide also the necessary power of Pentecost to enable them to live sanctified, spiritual lives, may go on and up to climb the heights of Romans 8.

The failure of Christians to understand the design and the inner workings of their religion, thereby causing them to stick between Calvary and Pentecost, futilely trying to stretch the natural up to the supernatural, often prevents their entering upon this third course. It is so much in the blood of natural men to be self-sufficient that it is most difficult even for Christians to realize that sanctification is no more by struggling self-effort than is justifica-

tion—that both are by faith. Christians who think they can live unselfish lives without continued and continual superhuman aid do not know how deeply sin has wrecked their nature, and therefore are not fully convicted of sin, thoroughly humbled in the flesh, and genuinely “poor in spirit.” Could such but take God’s verdict upon “flesh” (Gen. 6:4), throughout the entire Bible, they would see that, instead of suffering from a slight functional disturbance, they are mortally stricken with a deep organic disease beyond human treatment. Not until men know how desperately and hopelessly sick they are, can they, in despair, with the faith of a child, yield themselves over wholly and finally to the Great Physician. The heresies that plagued the early church, beginning even in the days of the apostles, pertained largely to the nature of Christ. There was but little trouble over the nature of man until Pelagius in the fifth century, questioning “original sin” and its consequences, taught that men needed no blood atonement, for they were able to work out their salvation by themselves.

Surely, the fact that many Christians only partially learn this essential lesson of Romans 7, and consequently never cease trying to conquer the sin that dwells in their flesh by their own fleshly strength and character accounts for some of the worldliness, discouragement, and lukewarmness in the church. God in wisdom and kindness, eager to help saints of all time learn this self-effacing truth, had Paul, his pattern saint, sprinkle, generously, over his writings the manner of his coming by this hard-learned, cardinal principle of Christianity.

#### *Law Fulfilled in Christ (8:1-4)*

Coming out of Romans 7 into Romans 8 is coming out of storm into calm. “I of myself” has disappeared, and Christ through the Holy Spirit takes his place. The Spirit wholly absent in seven, dominates eight. Now, the ineffectual

struggling Christian settles quietly into Christian gears, and works smoothly and efficiently. In this unspeakably important and rich chapter, Christians learn how to keep sin from having dominion over them (6:14).

“There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus.” This conclusion, based on the close of chapter 7, is also cumulative, and really gathers up the doctrine of the entire book thus far. Saints identified with Christ in death and resurrection life, as members of the human body are identified with the head, are no more condemned than Christ is condemned. This verse gives the position of Christians, standing and rejoicing in grace.

“For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus made me free from the law of sin and death.” In this verse, “law” does not mean a code of precepts, but an operating principle, or force, such as is the law of gravitation. “The law of sin and death” cannot be God’s law, “Which is unto life . . . holy, and righteous, and good.” It is “A different law . . . bringing me into captivity under the law of sin which is in my members” (7:23). It is the inherent evil force that dwells in fallen men to drag them down to death. “The law of the Spirit of life” is the operative force that resides in the gospel. Just as blood is the redemptive price, the life-giving Spirit is the redemptive power.

“For what the law could not do . . . God sending his Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh.” “Law” here is the law of Moses, which ever condemns, never gives life. Paul is careful to say that Christ was only “in the likeness of sinful flesh.” “The first man Adam” was sinless flesh until he disobeyed God. “The last Adam,” having never disobeyed his Father, did not lose his sinless flesh. His propitiatory death, “As of a Lamb without blemish and without spot,” “condemned sin

in the flesh," and paid the penalty for the whole condemned race of men.

"That the ordinance of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." Paul expresses the same thought when he says, "Love worketh no evil to his neighbor: love is therefore the fulfillment of the law, something law could not do. Christianity is God's way to lead men to be lawful like himself. Only Christians can know the flood tide of the conjunction of grateful love and "The power of the Holy Spirit" within to induce and sustain yearnings after holy and legal living.

### Questions

1. What point in the history of redemption has been reached at the close of Romans 7?
2. At this crisis in a Christian's life, state three courses, one of which he must take.
3. At this juncture, what often prevents a Christian's taking the correct Christian course?
4. Are justification and sanctification equally above the reach of purely human working?
5. Account for the new atmosphere encountered in coming out of Romans 7 into Romans 8.
6. Contrast the workings of "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ" and "the law of sin and death" in the flesh.
7. Of all the men who have lived, how many of them at any time during their lives have ever possessed sinless flesh?

## LESSON 19

As a Jew, Paul thought he had to obey law in order to be saved. As a Christian, he learned he had to be saved before he could obey law. That is, he had to become a Christian by a supernatural spiritual birth, and then go on to use the enabling supernatural Christian means in order to live up to the requirements of God's law; had to die to law as the immediate means, and be alive to the mediate Christian means, ever to attain "The sanctification without which no man shall see the Lord." In order to make this supreme truth of Romans 6-8 clearest and most compelling, Paul tells his own experience by way of example. The tragedy of the church has been (and is) that too many Christians, instead of following Paul's example, have regarded Christianity largely as another legal system to be fulfilled chiefly in "the will of the flesh." As a consequence, they have continued to be almost as self-centered and legally minded after as before baptism. Legalism, because it is man centered and presupposes a human power and merit which natural men do not possess, must ever fail.

*"The Flesh"*

"The flesh," found in the last line of Romans 7, is found twelve times (about the same number as its opposite, "The Spirit,") in Romans 8:1-13; thus the two chapters are bound together. The better we understand this term, the better can we understand, appreciate, and appropriate Christianity.

In his statement to Nicodemus, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit," Christ sets the flesh and the Spirit over against each other as mutual opposites. He fixes such a gulf between them that the flesh can never evolve into spirit. According to this, men are either fleshly or spiritual, never



both. Christ repeatedly makes this two-fold classification of men. He parabolically divides soil into productive and nonproductive, nations into sheep and goats, trees into good and corrupt, and ways into broad and narrow. He says to the multitudes, "He that is not with me is against me;" and to sectarian John, "Forbid him not; for he that is not against you is for you" (Luke 9:50). Thus, Christ divides humanity into two broad classes, without the possibility of a third class—the once-born and the twice-born. The disposition either to add a third class or to run these two classes together into one class is unmoral, ungodly, and anti-Christian.

Of course subclasses exist. In the parable of the sower, there are three kinds of productive and three kinds of unproductive soil. The broad road to destruction has a dirty and a clean side, as is illustrated by the two brothers in Christ's story of the Prodigal. If the elder brother is on a higher rung of the ladder of human responsibility and merit, the trouble about that is the ladder never reaches heaven. Church and world here; heaven and hell after here.

Did God create "the flesh"? No. He created Adam innocent, with sinless nature, or flesh, and Adam by his ungrateful rebellion perverted himself into "sinful flesh." His treachery shifted the moral center from God to man, which upset the delicate unity and balance of his nature and personality. After this treason, he and his posterity, "begat in his own likeness," constitute "the flesh." The body is "the body of sin" because sinful flesh uses it as its agent.

God prepared a body for Christ (Heb. 10:5), and he "became flesh and dwelt among us." However, as he never disobeyed God, he was only "in the likeness of sinful flesh." Unlike Adam, he repulsed Satan's temptations, and therefore never lost his sinless flesh. Flesh as God made it is "very good." But of all men, only "the first man Adam,"

for a time, and Christ, "the last Adam," for all time, have possessed such flesh. "The flesh" and equivalent phrases such as "the old man," "the natural man," "I of my self," "sinful flesh," and "this world" denote the God-discarding, Serpent-following, man-centering (remember Eden) part of humanity that never finds deliverance from condemnation in Adam to justification in Christ—Christians and "the rest" of men (1 Thess. 4:13).

### *"The Spirit"*

The Holy Spirit enters the Bible in Genesis 1 as the power to perfect creation, and continues throughout the Bible as power. We read that "the Spirit of God" spoke through false men such as Balaam, king Saul and Caiaphas, and worked through judges, kings and prophets. John the Baptist was "filled with the Holy Spirit" from birth. God must have wanted readers of the Bible to get the impression that the Holy Spirit, without the violation of mental or mortal law, has access at will to human minds.

At the baptism of Jesus, the three Persons of the sacred Trinity are distinguished—Jesus being baptized, God speaking from heaven, and the Spirit descending and abiding on Jesus. Mark says, "And straightway the Spirit driveth him forth into the wilderness" for Satan's temptings. The Spirit came and "abode upon him" during his life and work. "God anointed him with the Holy Spirit and with power: who went about doing good" (Acts 10:38). Christ's whole ministry is a commentary upon this verse. He cast out demons by the Spirit of God.

Throughout the Bible superhuman power is associated with the Spirit, as blood is with Christ. Inasmuch as it would be unlike God to waste power as he marches on to establish his redemptive kingdom, Christ shares the Spirit with his disciples, preparing them for their duties after his death. According to his last speech to the apostles (John

13-17) the Spirit was to abide with them and to be in them to comfort, refresh their memories, guide them into new truth, and convict the world. The idea of the Spirit's abiding with and being in the whole community of God's people, as distinguished from the world, for an age, was new. After his resurrection, Christ told his apostles to tarry in Jerusalem until they were clothed with power from on high (Luke 24:49). At his ascension, he said to them: "But ye shall receive power, when the Holy Spirit is come upon you" (Acts 1:8). The Spirit came in power on Pentecost, "And with great power gave the apostles their witness." Would not the poor, beaten Christian of Roman 7 be profoundly grateful that his religion provided power beyond his own?

### Questions

1. What change in Paul's means for living a lawful life did his becoming a Christian make?
2. Why must any religion based on law (legalism or legality) fail to produce men who keep law as Christ interprets law?
3. Suggest a reason why Paul's religious case history is given with exceptional fulness in the New Testament.
4. By using equivalent terms show in what sense the Bible uses the phrase, "the flesh." What, then, is "the flesh"? Did God create it?
5. How do the happenings at the baptism of Christ show that the Holy Spirit is a distinct Person, just as God and Christ are distinct Persons?
6. Prove by Christ and Paul that "the flesh" and "the Spirit" are mutually antagonistic and exclusive, and that flesh can never become spirit.
7. Should a reader of the Bible get the impression that the Holy Spirit, without violating human freedom, may directly influence men's minds?

## LESSON 20

We live in a power-conscious age—mechanically, economically, and politically. A competitive race to make machines of more horsepower, corporations of more economic power, and states of more political power is on among the nations. Power is so highly valued by men that Satan, the wily adversary, can use this craze for counterfeit power as a most deceptive, disastrous tare. True power, however, is the ultimate test of religion. The powerless Christian of Romans 7, was not a success. That spiritual power is contingent upon the Christian functioning of the Holy Spirit is taught throughout the New Testament. Christ's sermon in the Upper Room is the basic teaching on this subject. Next in fullness and importance, probably, is Romans 8. "Anyone who wishes to know the New Testament connotation of Spirit must use his concordance also for the term 'power' which is its chief content" (James Denney).

*"In the Flesh" verses "In the Spirit"*

"The mind of the flesh is death; but the mind of the Spirit is life and peace; because the mind of the flesh is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can it be: and they that are in the flesh cannot please God. But ye are not in the flesh but in the spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you. But if any man hath not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his" (8:6-9). No passage in the Bible paints the flesh in darker colors than this one does. It makes the mind of the flesh and the mind of the Spirit utterly exclusive of, and hopelessly antagonistic to, each other; and makes the possession of the Spirit the dividing line between the two ways of life. The natural man not only does not, but cannot please God. He may be rich, cultivated, likable, and pleasing to others, but without the Spirit he is none of Christ's and therefore cannot please God.

“There is therefore a sin of our nature as well as personal transgression . . . Our nature was corrupted by the fall of Adam before it was transmitted to us; and hence that hereditary imbecility to do good, and that proneness to do evil, so universally apparent in all human beings . . . All inherit a fallen, consequently a sinful nature, though all are not equally depraved” (Alexander Campbell, *Christian System*, page 30.). Campbell also says: “It is impossible” for “man in his present preternatural state . . . to do anything absolutely pleasing and acceptable to God.”

Though God in Christ condemns sin in the flesh, he does not extirpate it abruptly as if by magic. In this world, he proposes to see that Christians “no longer be in bondage to sin,” and under the tyranny of the flesh, in which still “dwelleth no good thing.” Of course, he does this only with the full consent and faithful cooperation of Christians, who, instead of struggling directly with the flesh, “present” themselves unto God for him to deal with it in his own way. Almighty God, an infinitely wise and gracious Father, knowing that his bruised human children are unable to break the octopus grip of sin in their unaided human power, infallibly gives superhuman Power so as best to promote victory, strength, and spirituality in them. The Christian who tries it finds that it works, for his mind and his will remain his own; and his whole personality grows ever stronger, purer, sweeter, and more trustful until he can say, “We know that to them that love God all things work together for good” (8:28).

### *“The Body of This Death”*

And if Christ is in you, the body is (still) dead because of sin; but the spirit is life because of righteousness” (v. 10)—primarily Adam’s sin and Christ’s righteousness. This teaches, I think, that a man’s being a Christian does not prevent his dying. And that when his condemned body

goes to the grave, his redeemed spirit, unbodied, goes to "be with Christ" (Phil. 1:23) to wait reunion with the redeemed body at the resurrection. "But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwelleth in you, he that raised up Christ Jesus from the dead shall give life also to your mortal bodies through his Spirit that dwelleth in you" (v. 11). These unbodied saints will be with the Lord at his coming, and get their redeemed, glorified bodies, marvelously changed in substance but seemingly not in appearance, back to live in forever (1 Thess. 4:12-18). Christ's resurrection is the firstfruits of our resurrection (1 Cor. 15:23), and therefore our risen bodies will be like his risen body (1 John 3:2). According to Thessalonians, the generation of Christians who are living when Christ comes will be delivered "out of the body of this death" by way of instantaneous translation (1 Cor. 15:52), as Enoch was translated (Heb. 11:5); and "shall together with them (the risen) be caught up . . . to meet the Lord in the air."

"Satan, the deceiver of the whole world" (Rev. 12:9) wrecked triune man—body, soul, and spirit. That God's redemption of triune man culminates in the resurrection of the body 1 Thess. 5:23 teaches: "And the God of peace himself shall sanctify you wholly; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved entire, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." And thus either by resurrection or by translation final deliverance of all saints "out of the body of this death" is achieved. Of these two ways for saints, "preserved entire," to enter the "new heaven," Paul, according to 2 Cor. 5:1-10, certainly preferred translation. But it was not so to be, and Paul has been with Christ, which "is very far better" (Phil. 1:23) than remaining in a dying body, all these centuries "waiting for . . . the redemption of his body" (Rom. 8:23).

Who can envision the rapture with which Paul will again

live in his redeemed body that in some way inscrutable to men preserves, as new wheat preserves the identity of seed wheat (1 Cor. 15:35-49), the identity of the body in which he so long ago lived and suffered?" "Our citizenship is in heaven; whence also we wait for a Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: who shall fashion anew the body of our humiliation, that it may be conformed to the body of his glory, according to the working whereby he is able even to subject all things unto himself" (Phil. 3:20, 21). "Wherefore comfort one another with these words."

### Questions

1. What connection does James Denney see between the Holy Spirit and power?
2. What did Alexander Campbell think about Adam's tainted nature being passed on to his posterity, and about fallen man's ability to please God?
3. Why is it that "the flesh" never does, and never can, please God?
4. What constitutes the dividing line between fleshly men and spiritual men—between the world and the church?
5. Name the two distinct ways by which the bodies of Christians will get into heaven at last.
6. Does Christ's being the firstfruits of our resurrection mean that our risen bodies will be like his recognizable risen body?
7. On what condition is the Holy Spirit to be used in the resurrection of our bodies?

## LESSON 21

“So then, brethren, we are not debtors to the flesh, to live after the flesh: for if ye live after the flesh, ye must die; but if by the Spirit ye put to death the deeds of the body, ye shall live.” These two verses are the conclusion of Paul’s teaching on the two ways of life (Rom. 8:1-13), dealing with the inveterate conflict between the flesh and the Spirit decreed by God at the beginning of human history when he cursed the serpent, saying: “I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between her seed and thy seed.” Not only Paul and his contemporary brethren, but also all Christians of all time, know by experience this deep, continual warfare between the flesh and the Spirit.

In this conclusion, Paul reminds Christians that since “The mind of the flesh is enmity against God” (v. 7), and can therefore never bring anything but death, they certainly owe it nothing. He also focuses the cardinal Christian truth that the flesh is such a curst, powerful, determined foe that only “By the power of the Holy Spirit” can Christians ever escape defeat and death.

*Working of the Holy Spirit*

His workings in our behalf, according to Rom. 8, are as follows:

1. Delivers us from the law of sin and death (2).
2. Indwells us and enables us to make judicial death to sin even more and more a practical reality. This progressive spiritual growth culminates in even spiritual bodies at the Lord’s return. In this manner, the ravages of sin are completely abolished (3-11).
3. Leads us as sons of God (14).
4. Gives us the spirit (not of legality) of adoption as mature sons (15).



5. Witnesses with our spirit concerning our sonship and heirship (16, 17).

6. Prays for us with unutterable groanings (26, 27).

In the only verse of Romans that mentions the Holy Spirit before this Spirit-filled eighth chapter, if found another of his works in and for us, namely: "The love of God hath been shed abroad in our hearts through the Holy Spirit which was given unto us" (Rom. 5:5). The context shows that this is the love of God for us. Of innumerable corroborative Scriptures, two must suffice. First, Paul's prayer for the Ephesians: "That ye may be strengthened with power through his Spirit in the inward man that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith ("According to your faith be it done unto you") . . . Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto him be the glory." Second, Jews and Gentiles are a temple "builded together for a habitation of God in the Spirit" (Eph. 2:21, 22).

The fact that these passages teach that God, Christ, and the Spirit all three reside in Christians sheds light on the nature of both God and Christianity. It took "The three-personal God" a long time to build his church. After working some 4000 years as Father, especially, he had things ready to proceed by working as Son, too, and therefore brought Christ actively into his redemptive scheme with the announcement, "This is my Son, my chosen; hear ye him." Finally, all things were ready for the Father and the Son working together as Spirit to proclaim on Pentecost, "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear what the Spirit saith." This method is suggestive of the method of the relay footrace.

Ever since Pentecost, the Spirit's work has been the Trinity focused and at work saving men—the Father *for* us,

the Son *with* us, and the Spirit *in* us. The Spirit's saying "come" is the Trinity's saying "come"; the Spirit's dwelling in us is the Trinity's dwelling in us. This mutual interdependence and essential oneness of the Trinity (though the three never merge into one Person) is implicit in all the Bible. Especially, is it taught explicitly in Christ's farewell address to his apostles (John 13-17), and in Paul's writings. By virtue of God's drawing nigh to us in his Son and dwelling in us in his Spirit, we may become partakers of the divine nature, which is the end of the redemptive process for this age. By grace we are related to God in Christ through the Spirit.

### *Christ Dishonored*

To give the Spirit prominence over Christ, as some cults do, is a fatal perversion of the gospel. The verse, "No man speaking in the Holy Spirit of God saith, Jesus is anathema; and no man can say, Jesus is Lord, but by the Holy Spirit" (1 Cor. 12:3), shows that one's attitude toward Christ is the test whether or not he really possesses the Spirit. Just as Jesus declares and glorifies God, so the Spirit declares and glorifies Christ. "He (the Spirit) shall not speak from himself; but what things soever he shall hear, these shall he speak . . . He shall glorify me . . . All things whatsoever the Father hath are mine; therefore said I, that he taketh of mine, and shall declare it unto you" (John 16:13-15). God in the Son, in the Spirit, through the word is the cumulative divine order.

The word as seed is "perfect and entire, lacking in nothing." As in nature, seed, under the genial powers of soil and sun, springs up and grows, man knows not *how*: "So is the kingdom of God" (Mark 4:26-29). In both the natural realm and the spiritual realm, seed, instead of being an end within itself, is an indispensable means unto harvest. To hostile Jews, Christ said: "Ye search the

scriptures, because ye think that in them ye have eternal life; and these are they which bear witness of me; and ye will not come to me, that ye may have life" (John 5:39, 40). Hence, doctrine about Christ does not give life; it takes Christ himself to do that. Of course, without seed it is equally impossible in nature and in religion to reap; nevertheless, the seed is not the harvest. Christians in whom the Lord dwells richly will be "filled with joy and the Holy Spirit" (Acts 13:52).

It is not necessary to explain "the mystery of godliness." Christianity can not be proved rationally because it meets us above human reason and scientific measurement. If it is anything, it is superhuman and supernatural. If Christians lose the mystic element of their religion, they of necessity become mechanical, and run into a dead end. When men cease to wonder, they cease to worship and pray. Were everything known, where were the occasion or the need of faith? Faith and reward suffer no damage in either nature or religion when truth, though not fully understood, is believed and obeyed. By faith is human reason put to its divinest use.

### Questions

1. Why do men owe the flesh nothing?
2. When and how is man's rescue from the ravages of sin completed?
3. In what way may the building of the church be compared to a relay race?
4. Enlarge upon the statement that since Pentecost the Spirit's work has been the Holy Trinity focused and at work saving men.
5. With respect to the relationship between Christ and the Holy Spirit, how do some cults dishonor Christ and pervert his gospel?
6. Does doctrine about Christ within itself give life?
7. Do Christians necessarily lose anything because they cannot understand everything intellectually?

## LESSON 22

The solidarity and the interlocking works of the Holy Trinity throughout the universe (one turning), both physical and spiritual, are cardinal doctrines of the Bible. A good example of such working is Christ's resurrection being attributed to God (Heb. 13:20), to Christ himself (John 2:19), and to the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:11). Not only does the Spirit reveal and glorify Christ, but Christ also holds the Spirit in high reverence and honor. Take for instance, his solemn statement: "Every one who shall speak a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him; but unto him that blasphemeth against the Holy Spirit it shall not be forgiven." And his, "The Spirit of truth . . . abideth with you, and shall be in you . . . It is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I go, I will send him unto you," to show Christ's reliance upon the Spirit's supplementary, climactic work.

The Spirit in no sense supplants Christ. His dispensational work is to communicate Christ to us. It is our privilege and responsibility to enter into vital, personal relations with the Spirit, Christ's personal representative, yielding to his leadership, support, and comfort, both externally and internally for his service on our behalf is not limited to bearing "witness to us" (Heb. 10:15), fundamentally, but also includes bearing "witness with our spirit that we are children of God." In that measure that these relations are established, we shall be conscious of Christ's presence, have his mind, be occupied with him, and be conformed to his image—Christ in us through the office of the Spirit by virtue of which we share one life with Christ. The Spirit's ministry is fulfilled as Christ is made known, believed on, obeyed, worshipped, and appropriated.

However, we may so ignore and depose the Spirit as to strive and live on a merely human level, as does the Christian in Romans 7. A brother wrote years ago: "Today, when we baptize, we might better perform the ordinance in the name of the Father, the Son, and the word." Extreme, no doubt. None the less, we must remember the Spirit's warning against resisting, grieving, and quenching him; and that nothing less than the possession of the Spirit himself is God's Christianity.

### *Mode of the Spirit's Ministry*

"Ye received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father." A parallel verse reads: "God sent forth the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father" (Gal. 4:6). The fact that the cry is attributed to both the Holy Spirit and the human spirit in these verses throws light on the problem of how the Spirit continues to lead Christians, to bear witness with them, and to pray for them, as Romans 8 says he does, after they, by obeying his written requirements for becoming Christians, have opened up the way for his entrance and ministry.

Additional light is found in Acts 16:6-10. Paul being forbidden by the Holy Spirit to preach in Asia, assayed to go into Bithynia, but being again forbidden by the Spirit, he went to Troas, where in a vision a man of Macedonia invited him over into Europe. Paul, "concluding" ("assuredly gathering" K. J. V.) that God was leading, went to the new continent. This synthetic mosaic divine guidance is most instructive. Even in the days of miracles, the Spirit did not make mere puppets of those whom he led. Later, Paul wrote: "The spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets" (1 Cor. 14:32). Just as we do today, Paul had to do his own divinely supervised reasoning and "concluding." He could have wilfully decided not to go to Macedonia. Incidentally, this blending of the divine and

the human, as it is in Christ and in the Bible also, explains why Romans 8 does not always clearly distinguish between the Holy Spirit and human spirits.

It is not true only that "Men spake from God, being moved by the Holy Spirit" (1 Pet. 1:21), but true also that Christians are "Strengthened with power through the Spirit in the inward man" (Eph. 3:16). That the Spirit's manner of entering, permeating, impregnating, and identifying himself with human spirits, both to write and to cry "Father," so that the result is the joint-product of the two, is not a logically demonstrable matter, transcends our present comprehension, and is not fully revealed, affords rich, deep soil for simple faith and honest trust. Is it not enough for us to know that the Holy Spirit, without violating human nature, can make our surrendered spirits, to their great enrichment, his organs? Enough to know that he can reproduce his holy life in us so as to make it our very own, free life? Who are we, with all of our consummate ignorance of the nature and workings of spirits, even of our own spirit, to question revealed Christian truth! Faith has reasons of her own, which lie above man's rationalizing.

The flesh is "a strong man," which Christianity does not propose to eradicate in this world. Rather, the Holy Spirit, "a stronger than he," binds him by so counteracting him that he "shall not have dominion"—the strong meets a stronger. This is the principle that enables motors in an airplane, not to suspend, but to counterwork the law of gravitation. The Christian fights the flesh, not in his sole, natural strength, directly, but fits into this Christian way of reckoning himself to be dead to sin, law, flesh, and self so that the Spirit, unimpeded, may produce his ninefold cluster of golden fruit in him.

The author of this sublimely spiritual chapter (Rom. 8) was himself, as all his writings attest, always keenly con-

scious of the presence and activity of a divine energy, wisdom, purity, and efficacy within him far beyond and above his superior native endowments. This is what caught him up out of the futile eddies of unaided self-effort into the mighty stream of God's eternal purpose, dissolved his self-contradictory dualism of Romans 7, prevented his being shattered on law, unified and energized his whole personality, and made him the most vital man in history, save Christ. This is what keyed life up to such peerless heights of power, zest, achievement, and peace. He wrote: "I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I that live, but Christ liveth in me" (Gal. 2:20). Just as all Christians must do, Paul on the adventure of holy faith, proved the pudding by eating it. God grant that we too, as he so frequently and fervently prayed and exhorted that we might do, may imitate his faith and life, as he followed in Christ's steps. "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit, be with you all" (Paul).

### Questions

1. Does Christ rely upon the supplementary, climactic work of the Spirit?
2. What constitutes the Spirit's ministry with respect to Christ during the present dispensation?
3. In studying the mode of the indwelling Spirit's work, what help may be derived from the fact that the Holy Spirit and the Christian's own spirit conjointly cry, "Abba, Father"?
4. Show that the leading of the Spirit did not make a puppet of Paul.
5. What does the statement, "Faith has reasons of her own which reach above human understanding," mean?
6. Upon what principle does the Holy Spirit counterwork (not eradicate) the flesh in Christians? Cite an analogous principle in nature.
7. Is it possible for a Christian now, doing "despite unto the Spirit of grace," vainly to strive and to live on a merely human level, as does the Christian in Romans 7?

## LESSON 23

God the Father imparts his own life to each of his children in a spiritual birth. Then the child has the privilege of growing up in the family of God into a mature son, who, when in sorrow, can always in "The Spirit of adoption" . . . cry, "Abba, Father," as Christ, his Elder Brother, in his deep sorrow, cried, "Abba, Father, all things are possible unto thee; remove this cup from me: howbeit not as I will, but as thou wilt" (Mark 14:36). In this beautiful, natural manner of little children and of Jesus, we should be "Waiting for (the full realization of) our adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body" (v. 23), at his coming.

"And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ, whom God 'appointed heir of all things' " (Heb. 1:2). Do we grasp the truly amazing import of these simple words? Angels are promised no such patrimony. Why are we so little excited about our inheritance? Paul knew the need of praying that Christians "May know the hope of his (God's) calling" (Eph. 1:18).

*God's Over-all Program*

The Maker of man built into both his physical and spiritual constitution the necessity of his dependence upon his Maker. Therefore when Adam revolted against God, the injury to himself and to his progeny was so constitutional, and to God so grievous, that God announced his sublime economy, conceived before the foundation of the world, of his Son's becoming man in order to woo man back to allegiance so that God and man working together might repair the wrongs each had suffered. Accordingly, the eternal Son, as seed of the virgin Mary, became God-man to found and to reign over a mediative redemptive kingdom, within the universal, eternal kingdom of his Father, until the rebellion should be put down. Then Christ, as



triumphant Conqueror, shall deliver up his special kingdom to God, the Father. And "That God may be all in all," Christ, though crowned with the glory he had before the world was, shall be in subjection to God, who shall reign forever over "New heavens and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness." This, I believe, is a spiritual, skeletal outline, historic and prophetic, of the kingdom, or church, of Christ (1 Cor. 15:20-28; Rev. 21:1-8; 2 Peter 3:8-13).

To give up this scriptural blending of God and man is to give up Christianity itself. Christ prayed to God for Christians: "That they may all be one, even as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be in us" (John 17:21). John, who heard this prayer, never forgot it, for his writings are saturated with its doctrine. "And he that keepeth his commandments abideth in him, and he in him. And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he gave us" (1 John 3:24). "Hereby we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit" (1 John 4:13). These Scriptures and many more such as, "For both he that sanctifieth and they that are sanctified are all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren" (Heb. 2:11), chord perfectly with Rom. 8, and with the symbolism of the Lord's supper.

"Speak to him, for he hears, and Spirit with Spirit can meet—

Closer is he than breathing, and nearer than hands and feet."

According to the Bible, the Holy Spirit links Christians to Christ, who is both God and man—man as he was made, and is to be again when fully redeemed. As God, he is "The image of the invisible God," "The effulgence of his glory, and the very image of his substance." Christ said to Philip, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." As man, Christ, during his life on earth as a man, was what

Adam, had he obeyed God, might have been. And since his resurrection even until now, he is what fallen man is yet to be; for at his coming, in the same body that arose from the tomb, that appeared to friends, and that ascended into heaven (Acts 1:11), "We shall be like him" (1 John 3:2). Bodily resurrection, instead of being something exceptional which lifts Christ to a life, inaccessible to others, is to be the common experience of all Christians—"Christ the first-fruits; then they that are Christ's at his coming." This truth is what gives such tremendously vital, personal meaning to the fact of Christ's resurrection.

Life is God's first and last law. Abnormal, penal death, "the wages of sin," marks the entrance and exit of sin. In the first two chapters of the Bible, sinless, therefore deathless, man appears. The last two chapters, "Though a wide compass be fetched," return to the starting place of sinless, therefore deathless, man. The intervening chapters are dedicated to God's spiritual way of winning foolish, sinning, suffering, dying man, "spirit and soul and body," back to life. "Why is it judged incredible with you, if God doth raise the dead?"

### *Suffering and Hoping*

Rom. 8:17-25

The suffering of these verses is not merely the unavoidable kind that sin has brought upon the whole frame of animate and inanimate nature, but also the inevitable kind that being in fellowship with Christ involves—the kind that Paul knew so well by choice. It is especially the non-meritorious suffering that chastens and conditions us to reign with Christ in glory. "If we endure, we shall also reign with him" (2 Tim. 2:12). Unless we are led by the Holy Spirit as was Christ, it is impossible for us to possess his disposition to serve and to suffer; impossible for us to be his brethren and co-heirs, and to be promoted finally to the

glory of perfected sonship. Suffering in general is the penalty of both sin and love. As a mother suffers with her suffering child, so God suffers with his suffering earth; as a shepherd and his lost sheep must meet at one place, so Christ and lost men come together in common suffering. May we with Paul look at present trouble through smoked glass, but at coming glory with unclouded eyes.

This pregnant Scripture declares the all pervading unity of the universe, the interdependence of rational and irrational creation, and Christ's kinship, even unto the dust of his body, with all created earthly things. It represents the whole world as groaning in birth throes, longing and hoping for deliverance from the decay, dissolution, and death that the colossal stupidity of sin has entailed upon it until "The blessed hope and appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ" (Titus 2:12). Without such teaching, we could but helplessly and helplessly stand aghast at the world-old waste and misery; with such teaching, we can patiently wait for the bad dream to end with the coming of the morning.

### Questions

1. How do men enter God's spiritual family, and come to possess life?
2. What does it mean to be heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ?
3. What is the purpose and end of Christ's redemptive kingdom?
4. Can a Christian who does not believe in the blending of God and man in Christianity be a fully instructed and equipped Christian?
5. What does "Life is God's first and last law" mean?
6. What does it mean to look at our troubles through smoked glass, but at our coming glory with unclouded eyes?
7. How does this "Study" apply, "We can patiently wait for the bad dream to be over with the coming of the morning"?

## LESSON 24

Though being joint-heirs with Christ does not exempt us from the present suffering under which "The whole creation groaneth and travaileth together" anymore than Christ was exempted from suffering, the sufferings of time weighed against the glories of eternity are as nothing. Moreover, since the Holy Spirit within us bears witness with our spirit that we are sons and heirs of God, we, already enjoying the firstfruits, hopefully wait for our full inheritance.

It should soften our hearts, enlarge our sympathies, and improve our conduct to recall how close even God's dumb creatures are to his paternal heart. In the beginning animals were not incompatible with sinless human society. God forbade Jews to muzzle the ox that trod out their grain. To hard-hearted Jonah, he gave one reason for not destroying Nineveh the fact that "much cattle" would suffer (Jonah 4:11). Not even one little sparrow "Is forgotten in the sight of God," or "Shall fall on the ground without your Father" (Christ). Does not God expect everything in his Bible to help us to know, love, and trust him? When Christ made common cause with groaning creation, the beasts about his manger-cradle were affected, and since have fared better in Christian than in Christless lands. If a man is a Christian, even his dog finds it out. Any degree of Christ is better for this world than no Christ at all. The by-products of Christianity constitute the blessing of our modern civilization. Alexander Campbell wrote to the effect that those who nibble at Christ become civilized, those who eat lightly of him become moralized, and those who eat fully of him become Christianized.

*"We Know Not . . ."*

"And in like manner (as he bears witness with us and as hope sustains us) the Spirit also helpeth our infirmity: for

we know not how to pray as we ought; but the Spirit himself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered; and he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God."

Who, tenting in a ruined, groaning world that "Lieth in the evil one, the old serpent, who is called the Devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world," can know how to pray as he ought? Infinitely intricate questions and deep, vast, eternal issues, utterly baffling to the best human brains and strategy, are involved in Christian prayer. At the climax of the world-old conflict between God and Satan for world-dominion, it seems that Christ himself felt the clash of alternatives in his praying. Upon the coming of the Greeks just before his cross, he prayed: "Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour. But for this cause came I unto this hour. Father, glorify thy name." A little earlier midst the wailing at the tomb of Lazarus, he groaned, prayed, and wept. It must have been the havoc wrought by Satan among the sons of men from Eden onward that moved him so deeply on this occasion. And in Gethsemane, sore troubled in agony and bloody sweat, he prayed: "Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me." Had there been no momentary reluctance in him, could we but feel that somewhat of real man were lacking? Surely, these sacred incidents in the life of our blessed Lord stir us to our depths, take us into the heart of Christianity, God's kingdom for reducing the rebeldom of earth, and fill us with holy awe, with a profound sense of racial infirmity, and with a spirit of tremulous prayer.

We Christians are so identified with Christ in death and in life (Rom. 6) that God's mind is our mind and his interests are our interests, as "Ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's" (1 Cor. 3:33) puts it. The principle of Christ's in-

carnation is extended to us through the indwelling Holy Spirit, who is thus, so to speak, "found in fashion as a man." He moves within us both to cry "Abba, Father" and to pray "with groanings which cannot be uttered" in such unison with our spirit that we are not conscious of any impulse or impression being independent of our own spirit. This is all according to the will of God, who, searching human hearts and knowing the mind of the Spirit, can interpret the inarticulate divine-human groanings. Cannot a mother project her understanding and feeling into the inarticulate cry of her baby, and know its needs?

These spiritual things make no sense to the natural man, for he "Receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God . . . Things which entered not into the heart of man" (1 Cor. 2). "The wind bloweth (Spirit breatheth) where it will" (John 3:8). Is it necessary for a small child to understand the discussion of its parents it overhears pertaining to its welfare? Does not Rom. 8:26, 27 have God, the Holy Spirit, and human spirits in communion without words? Who is so foolish as to say it cannot be? What may not be the potency of prayers wrought by the Spirit and presented by Christ to God! If we are living the unfulfilled lives of Rom. 7, Rom. 8 tells why. Need it be said again that the word of God is the only seed that produces this unspeakably rich Christian harvest?

*"We Know . . ."*  
(Rom. 8:28-30)

"And we know that to them that love God, all things work together for good, even to them that are called according to his purpose." We do not know how to pray as we ought, but we do know that all things work together for good to lovers of God, because they choose to fall in with his purpose. The word, "purpose," is the key to this great Scriptures. To know that the eternal, unchanging Father "before the foundation of the world" (1 Peter 1:20) conceived

his entire scheme, from beginning to end, for the redemption and glorification of fallen men, by leading them to become "conformed to the image of his Son," is enough for men of faith in God. Gratefully and freely, such men will to accept God's way. This purpose, yet in process of development, so compactly outlined here, is compatible with God's character as revealed in nature and in the Bible. It is inconceivable that he does anything without foresight and his own approval; that he has no law and design concerning that which he in foreknowledge plans is unthinkable. Therefore, foreordination and the remaining items of Paul's outline, all essential parts of God's eternal purpose, follow inevitably and irrevocably. Hence, to question that everything works together for good to Christians is to challenge God's sovereign purpose, word, wisdom, grace and power. Verily, Christianity proposes to manage and to integrate all the circumstances and experiences of our checkered lives for our spiritual good. Do we believe it?

### Questions

1. What does a glance at God's attitude toward his dumb creatures do to you?
2. What proof have we that Christianity has "promise of the life which now is" as well as "of that which is to come"?
3. What effect should the vast issues involved in prayer, which gave Christ cause to weep and groan, have upon the spirit and content of our prayers?
4. In what manner is the principle of Christ's incarnation continued in the Holy Spirit, so that the Spirit, too, is "found in fashion as a man"?
5. Does not Romans 8:26, 27 have God, the Holy Spirit, and the spirits of men in communion without the use of words?
6. To question that all things work together for good to men who choose to give themselves to God's purpose questions what else besides this?
7. Should not a Christian who challenges these "deep things of God" examine himself, whether he is not still too much "the natural man (who) receives not the things of the Spirit of God (1 Cor. 2:14)?"

## LESSON 25

The background of the Spirit's helping "our infirmity" (singular) in prayer is "the whole creation" lying in groaning misery under the long misrule of usurping Satan, whose tyranny and power of death have been broken (Heb. 2:14) so that "the whole realm of nature," in process of being delivered, may lift up its head in hope. About a matter of such huge dimensions, intricate problems, and prodigious issues, we especially need the aid of the Holy Spirit in prayer. In studying this scripture, it helps to keep in mind its context.

It is most difficult for fallen man, to whom God in the beginning gave dominion over all the earth, "And over every living thing that moveth upon the earth," to realize that, since his treachery and rebellion against God caused the miscarriage and distress of the earth, its restoration turns upon his unconditional surrender and penitent return to God. His constitutional "infirmity" is denying his fall, failure, and bankruptcy, proudly to spurn God's proffered help. Nevertheless, not until he comes to see the true state of affairs, I think, can he be convicted of sin in the full Christian sense, or repent in the full gospel sense.

We who are baptized into Christ, thus signifying our identification with him in death, life, mind, vocation, and destiny, surely should be groaning in spirit and praying as Christ, though he had no part whatsoever in causing the sorrows of the earth, groaned in spirit and prayed under the crushing weight of the world's woe at the grave of his friend. Only after we come to this heart-pricked, self-effacing condition can the Spirit of Christ witness with us and pray for us. Unless we have a real sense of our human inability to pray aright about the earth's deep wound; unless, as we raise our heads above the whelming flood of suffering and realize to what depths we were submerged,



we feel a profound gratitude unto God for his deliverance, and, consequently, respond unto him with an unutterable passion of commitment unto him, how can the Holy Spirit in fellowship make "intercession for us with groanings which can not be uttered?"

*God's Unshakable Purpose*  
(Rom. 8:29-39)

As if Paul feared the doctrine of Justification apart from law (Rom. 3:4) might seem too good to be true and enduring, he immediately adds probably his strongest passage of Christian assurance (Rom. 5:1-11), namely, that God's immutable character of pure, free grace and undying love gives the doctrine an unshakable bedrock foundation. The same thing occurs here again. After using Romans 8:1-28 dilating upon the work of the Spirit in, with, and for saints, ending with the astounding statement that all things work together for their good, he spends the rest of the chapter anchoring the doctrine of Sanctification and Glorification to the same unshakable bedrock of God's character and fixed purpose.

His argument is that God's purpose from all eternity past to glorify men who freely choose him in Christ as they once freely rejected him in Adam, is unfolding through the running centuries as he ordained; that no opposition, demonic or/and human, can thwart it; that its success depends upon no contingency; that the purpose has built-in provisions for every need of willing, cooperative men, even their sorrows and disappointments becoming God's appointment for their good; and that the threefold groaning of earth, under God's omniscient, gracious ruling and overruling, is but infallibly working out their final glory. Therefore, Paul, unafraid, looks out through all space and time, and issues his threefold challenge: "Who is against us?" "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?" "Who shall separate us

from the love of God?" It is not a question of human strength, courage, and stability, for all who keep themselves in the love of God (Jude 21) live charmed lives, and are swept on to certain joint-victory with Christ?

This truly eloquent, magnificent passage, quivering with ecstatic feeling and music throughout, ends in grand crescendo: "For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature shall separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Paul hears a harmony in God's purpose as fulfilled in Christ through the Spirit that silences all earth's discords. God's ship may toss in stormy seas, but will not capsize.

*"God Is One Jehovah"* (Deut. 6:4)

In Luke 17, Christ says that, as the world in the days of Noah was too busy and too merry with fleshly things to think about spiritual things, so shall it be again at his coming. This is the setting of his parable (Luke 18:1-8) of the persecuted widow who cried to her judge until she got redress. Christ's application is: "And shall not God avenge his elect, that cry to him day and night? . . . I say unto you, that he will avenge them." This parable teaches that despite outward appearances, the over-all, long-range divine government of the universe justifies patient, hopeful, Christian prayer. If Christians are mentally perplexed about the injustice, cruelty, and wretchedness of the world, they "Ought always to pray, and not to faint," for the almighty, moral-dealing God purposed before he created it to bring it at last to a good end. This world must therefore end right.

Does not the fact that God is one, and that the universe and everything in it, is one orderly, closely knit whole help us to "know that to them that love God all things work together for good?" If the Creator has so ordered his world

that everything favors "them that are called according to his purpose," should we not be grateful? God is the hinge upon which history turns. In his last interview with his brothers, Joseph summed up the tragic story of his life: "Ye meant evil against me; but God meant it for good." He saw at last that the cup of his life, bitterness and all, had been mixed by God's own hand. To make things work together for good is God's predestined purpose and prerogative. But alas and alack! how often do Jacob's false, foolish words to these same men, earlier, "Me ye have bereaved of my children: Joseph is not, and Simeon is not, and ye will take Benjamin away: all these things are against me," befit our poor, unbelieving hearts?

This blessed doctrine is not addressed, brethren, to our reasoning, but to our believing, faculties. On the great venture of faith and hope, may we try it out to find that it works. We must be afflicted and "suffer many things," but in spite of, nay, because of, this, we shall grow in peaceful trust and "mellow fruitfulness" of life. As an eagle in a storm may be lifted on wings, properly atilt, to calm upper air, so we in the storms of life may be lifted on Christian faith, properly atilt, to the serene heights of the eighth chapter of Romans.

### Questions

1. What is the constitutional "infirmity" of Adam's fallen race?
2. On what condition can the Holy Spirit pray for, and with, us with unutterable groanings about the sorrows of earth?
3. What is the granite bedrock upon which Paul anchors the doctrine of the sanctification and final glorification of the saints?
4. Paul, ready for anything, thankful for everything, and afraid of nothing, issues what absolute, threefold challenge to all opposition?
5. Are you of Paul's "persuasion"?
6. Do you react to God's providence as did Jacob, or as did Joseph?
7. What do you, taking Christ's parable about the heartless judge and the suffering widow in its context, make of the parable?

## LESSON 26

Our "Studies in Romans" has covered the first eight chapters of Romans, and concludes the strictly doctrinal part of the book. We have found that there are no good fallen men—"no not so much as one," "for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God"—just as there are no good fallen angels; have found that men are as powerless to change their fleshly nature by their own strivings, as an Ethiopian is to "change his skin, or a leopard his spots;" have found that a man-centered system of religion, based on man's living up to a code of law in his own strength, but reveals the sin in his nature and life, thus increasing his guilt and misery; have found, in short, that sin celebrates its triumph over man when their religion, even though given by God, is a legal covenant.

We have found, furthermore, that to men who see they cannot make themselves good, and are therefore ready to let God make them good in his way, God proposes to give, by means of a spiritual birth, a new, spiritual nature, which will bear fruit after its kind. This requires that men, repenting, admit the justice of their death sentence, gratefully accept Christ's execution in lieu of their own, and eagerly appropriate Christ's risen, glorified life as God's total answer to their total need; requires that they, in the power that God in Christ, through the Spirit, by the Bible supplies, live their Christian life, which is not merely the old, fleshly, Adamic life lived on a higher level, but which is a new order of life altogether, even eternal life, the very life which God himself lives.

According to the outline of Romans proposed in the beginning of our study these eight chapters pertain to "The Philosophy of Christian Birth and Maturity." We are now ready for the second major division of the book namely, "The Philosophy of Christian History" (Rom. 9-11). The

subject of these chapters, as given in the outline, is: "God created Christianity, past, present, and future, according to his will and grace for man's salvation and his own glory."

In the days of Christ, the Jews were subject to Rome, and Palestine was an "occupied" country. But their proud spirit was unbroken, and their fierce patriotism and nationalism burned on. Had not Moses at the birth of their nation said to their fathers: "Thou art a holy people unto Jehovah thy God, and Jehovah hath chosen thee to be a people for his own possession, above all people that are upon the face of the earth" (Deut. 14:2); and "Thine enemies shall submit themselves unto thee; and thou shalt tread upon their high places" (Deut. 33:29)!

Partly, because Christ would not take sides with them against the Romans, the Jews rejected him. When Paul wrote Romans, about 57 A.D., nearly all the estimated more than 15,000,000 Jews scattered over the Roman world still thought Christ was a blasphemous impostor, who richly deserved the doom he suffered. Several years before he wrote Romans, Paul characterized them: "Who both killed the Lord and the prophets, and drove out us, and please not God, and are contrary to all men; forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they may be saved" (1 Thess. 2:15, 16). To Jews, Paul, a Jew himself, who taught that Christ "Abolished in his flesh the enmity (between Jew and Gentile), even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; that he might create in himself of the two one new man, . . . fitly framed together, . . . builded together for a habitation of God in the Spirit" (Eph. 2:15-22), was a contemptuous traitor to all the nationalistic promises, hopes, and struggles of his race. That God was of "stones" raising up children unto Abraham was still, as in the days of John, intolerable heresy to the fiery, bigoted Jews.

The important matter of the relationship of the Jews to Christianity is introduced in Rom. 2, where Paul tells them

that their soulless observance of annulled rites and ceremonies is but sitting by a burnt out crater, only to be dismissed in the first verses of Rom. 3, after slight notice of the involved questions of Jewish advantages and God's moral integrity. Now, in Rom. 9, however, he is ready to face and discuss these questions. This glance at Jewish history, and at the structure of Romans, helps to a better understanding of Paul's method and doctrine in the artistic and skillfully executed ninth chapter.

*Paul's Preliminaries*  
(Rom. 9:1-5)

"I could wish that I myself were anathema from Christ for my brethren's sake, by kinsmen according to the flesh." How is this great human, God-like cry, "White-hot with love and wild with all regret;" this "wish of passion and power in which Paul's heart seems to be pumping blood through his pen" to be taken?

In Paul's preaching, it was always "to the Jew first, and also to the Greek" (Rom. 1:16). In fact, considering that, when Paul early in his ministry pleaded even with God that he be allowed to work among the Jews, he was commanded to "Depart: for I will send thee for hence unto the Gentiles" (Acts 22:17-21); and considering how much unavailing (humanly speaking) trouble he would have escaped had he not later returned to Jerusalem against further advice of prophets, too, (Acts 21), one can but wonder if Paul, as many since have been so influenced, did not allow his "kith and kin" to influence him too much. Be that as it may, if Paul is to have an honest study with the Jews, he must first allay their groundless prejudice against him by convincing them that he loves them and has their best interest at heart. Hence, "His intense love for his brethren constrains him to contemplate *himself* as their victim, if such victim there could be" (Moule). As to whether or not such victim

could be, God's answer to Moses, who proposed that he himself be blotted out of God's book instead of the Jews in the matter of the golden calf, is final. The answer: "Whosoever hath sinned against me, will I blot out of my book" (Ex. 32:33). Such shifting of moral responsibility is repugnant to divine sovereignty and moral dealing. It reverses God's will, robs Christ of a soul, and makes Paul a spiritual suicide. Could Paul really have dreamed of such things? His very words, "I could wish," imply preventing causes.

Paul's naming over nine great divine favors which distinguish the Jews from all other races further attract and conciliate them. They knew that he himself had once been "of the law found blameless," and had led the Jewish opposition to Christianity. After this masterly preparation, Paul is now ready to reconcile, he hopes to ready readers, the equality of Jew and Gentile in Christ to the promise unto Abraham. Are we not ready, in our next "Study," to hear him too?

### Questions

1. What do you learn from Romans 1-8 about human goodness, man's ability to change his sinful nature, and the fruits of a religious, legal covenant?
2. Since the Christian life is not merely the old, fleshly, Adamic nature lived upon a higher level, what is it?
3. Give, according to our skeletal outline of Romans, the general subject of both Romans 1-8 and Romans 9-11.
4. Characterize the Jews of Paul's day, both politically and religiously.
5. Tell what the Jews thought of Paul, and give their reason for so thinking.
6. State two things that Paul did to conciliate the Jews and to get an honest hearing from them.
7. What was the chief difficulty that Paul had to explain to the Jews in order to convert them to Christ?

## LESSON 27

Romans 9 is a grand character piece. Generally speaking, it portrays God as the self-consistent Creator, who, as sole Owner and Manager of his human creature, does his own thinking and planning, makes and executes his own purposes and decisions, and assumes full responsibility for all consequences; it portrays man's proper place to be that of submissive, faithful servant, extremely thankful for the unspeakably great privilege of working under and with such perfect management. Specifically, the chapter shows that the Jews' being excluded from and the Gentiles' being included in the church is neither a breach of God's promise to Abraham, nor a surprise to God, inasmuch as he foretold it in the prophets. The argument, which involves the sovereignty, integrity, and providence of God, goes down to the very roots of all human history, political and religious. In the last of the chapter, the subject, namely, that Jews and Gentiles, alike, are responsible for their respective rejection or acceptance is introduced. This chapter, a masterpiece of art and cardinal truth, requires creaturely and reverent study.

The contention of citizens of the United States today, should they insist that foreigners, as prerequisite to becoming Christians, must become citizens of the United States would be comparable to the arrogant, supernational contention of the Jews in Paul's day. They ignorantly thought that other nations could share in their covenant only by being absorbed into Israel, and thereby exalt and glorify Israel. As Paul's teaching that "There can be neither Jew nor Greek, . . . for ye are all one man in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:28) utterly and forever crushed these carnal hopes, they, with all the well-known strength of nature, tenacity of purpose, and intensity of feeling of the Hebrew race, fiercely opposed him. Paul's statement, written about the time he



wrote Romans, "Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one" (2 Cor. 11:24) is grim evidence of their inveterate, brutal hate and malice for him. Contrast with this his love for them!

### *God's Sovereignty*

The basic mistake of the Jews was their conceit that God was bound beyond recall to give them the blessings of Abraham's covenant, merely because they descended from him. Paul shows this to be a misinterpretation of the covenant: Not "Because they are Abraham's seed are they all children: but, in Isaac shall thy seed be called." This covenant left God free to choose between Isaac and Ishmael as progenitor of the promised "Seed, which is Christ . . . And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, heirs according to the promise" (Gal. 3). Abraham's pedigree had its advantages but it did not make "children" unto Abraham.

Furthermore: "Rebecca also having conceived by one, even by our father Isaac—for the children not yet born, neither having done anything good or bad, 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. Even as it is written Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated." In his own, free, unqualified right, God is here electing the branch of Abraham's offspring in the next generation through which Christ should come. Since Christ could not come through both the sons of either Abraham or Isaac, such temporal election was inevitable. But it has no more to do directly with the eternal election, or non-election, of the souls of men, surely, than does the election that makes one man white and another black; or that makes white men differ basically in bodily, mental, and spiritual qualities. Thus, Paul establishes God's prerogative of choice.

Moreover, in "hating" (merely disregarding) Esau, God

did him no wrong. Honor and favor to Jacob were no dishonor and disfavor to Esau. God finds fault with no man for being what his choice makes him. In his parable of the laborers, Christ has a deep, timeless word: "Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own? or is thine eye evil because I am good?" (Matt. 20:15). The envious, self-willed Jews never questioned God's election when it was for them, against Ishmael and Esau, but stubbornly and defiantly refused it when it went against them. Should not their bondage to tradition, blind prejudice, and glaring inconsistency be a stern warning to religious people of all ages and races?

### *God's Righteousness*

Thus far, Paul has shown it to be a simple, indisputable, historic fact that God in preparing to send his eternal Son into the world as a man, instead of using the method of human descent or merit in selecting his human ancestors, exercised his own sovereign will to call Isaac and Jacob in preference to Ishmael and Esau. Now, he is to go further and show that God by the same principle of divine right acts in things more strictly in the moral realm.

"Is there unrighteousness with God" (9:14)? "God forbid: for then how shall God judge the world" (3:6)? These questions touch moral bottom, absolute. To admit that God does wrong is to obliterate all moral distinctions, and bring in universal moral chaos and night. In the face of this dire extremity, Paul appeals, not to human philosophy, but again to the Bible to establish God's personal righteousness, and to vindicate his ways to man. In a few verses, he digs down to bedrock of all morality. Apart from God's own, inviolable character as unshakable foundation, all strivings after a righteous world come to nought.

"For he (God) saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion." By referring to Exodus, we learn that God

said this to Moses after Moses had read "The book of the covenant" to Israel at the foot of Sinai, and Israel had promised in blood, "All that Jehovah hath spoken will we do and be obedient" (24:7, 8); after they, despite this sacred covenant, had promptly worshipped the Golden Calf, and escaped national destruction at the hand of their outraged God only by the intercession of Moses. As this flagrant breach of the covenant freed God from all covenant obligation, whatever he did for them subsequently must be of pure mercy and compassion. (Ex. 33:19). All this is the premise of Paul's general conclusion: "So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that hath mercy."

It is taught here, only, that by God's mercy, not by human works or merit, do men acquire standing before God. Many other scriptures give the conditions upon which God bestows his mercy. Jews had to fear and love God, and keep his commandments (Deut. 5:10; Psa. 103:13). All know that now God has mercy only on those who come to him through his Son Jesus Christ (2 Cor. 4:1; 1 Pet. 2:10).

### Questions

1. What information pertaining to the nature and character of both God and man does Romans 9 give us?
2. What was the basic mistake of the Jews relative to the Abrahamic covenant?
3. How does Paul establish God's prerogative of choice?
4. Define the ground that the election of God, which Paul is discussing in Romans 9, covers.
5. After proving God's sovereignty of choice, why and how does Paul establish his righteousness and integrity of personal character?
6. By what reasoning does Paul reach his conclusion, "So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that hath mercy"?
7. Apply Christ's "Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own? or is thine eye evil because I am good?" to the matter under consideration in Romans 9.

## LESSON 28

For morally insolvent and ruined men to accept God's mercy at Sinai, or at Calvary, does not exhaust mercy for them, does not repay him, and certainly does not make him their debtor. In profound gratitude for his compassion, they must continue to avail themselves of his unwasting goodness and aid so that they may more and more grow into meek, consecrated, joyous servants, well knowing however that they must ever remain unmeriting, yea, unprofitable, servants.

God's religion to redeem fallen humanity begins, on the human level, with the universal failure and wreck of humanity. Any religion that does not begin here is not from God, and therefore has no power to save men from either past sins or from present and future sinning. Christianity goes to the seat of human malady, and, according to God's infinite love, knowledge, wisdom, grace and power is faultlessly adapted to reconcile estranged men to God, and to woo and to persuade them to take his full, super-human treatment for the cleansing, healing, and making them holy (whole) again. Is not a correct diagnosis necessary for the successful treatment of any disease? What other religion ever produced a Paul?

*The Hardening of Pharaoh*

In Romans 1, it is taught that God progressively gives men up to the hardening effect of sin as they progressively give him up for idolatry, thus punishing sin with more sin. Romans 9:17, "For the Scripture saith unto Pharaoh, for this very purpose did I raise thee up, that I might show in thee my power, and that my name might be published abroad in all the earth," focuses this divine method on Pharaoh, whom God made king of Egypt, sustained under the plagues, and abandoned to the hardening effect of his

persistent, even with ever increasing, light, willing, rebellious sinning against God. God also dealt, centuries later, with the Jewish nation after this fashion: "They have chosen their own ways, and their soul delighteth in their abominations: I will also choose their delusions . . .; because when I called, none did answer" (Isa. 66:3, 4). Nor has he changed his method in our Christian age: "They received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God sendeth them a working of error, that they should believe a lie . . . who . . . had pleasure in unrighteousness" (2 Thess. 2:10-12).

Because God always has just cause and adequate reason for everything he does, he never arbitrarily hardens any man. But by the ordinary, natural workings of his moral law in men who first harden themselves by defying him, he, somewhat as civil law may further harden criminals, further hardens men who have already committed "a sin unto death," for which prayer avails not (1 John 5:16).

Exodus shows that Pharaoh first questioned God's authority, and that his heart was "stubborn;" then, the words, "Pharaoh hardened his heart," are used before it is said that "Jehovah hardened his heart." When such men as Pharaoh, Julius Caesar, Napoleon, et al, harden themselves, he, who "overrules men whom he cannot rule," weaves them, contrary to their purposes and consciousness, into his over-all world government, and makes them, so to speak, passively glorify him. For this reason, God calls Nebuchadnezzar his "servant" (Jer. 25:9), and Cyrus his "shepherd" (Isa. 44:28). From such scriptures as 1 Sam. 4:8, 6:6 (this last verse shows that the Philistines knew that Pharaoh hardened his own heart), and 17:46, we learn that God's name was known in Canaan. And truly his name, where the Bible is known, is "published abroad in all the earth" today. God needed a Pharaoh to demonstrate his own character, and to warn the world of the demoralizing effect of sinning

against light; and he knew where to find him. "The Most High ruleth over the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will" (Dan. 4:32).

Pharaoh is a divinely forged key with which Paul unlocks God's character and the secrets of his government of the world; he is an immortal monument to the power and works of God. History is really made over the heads of human history makers—"the supernatural in the natural." Are not Caiaphas, Judas, and Pilate examples of God's using wicked men, even to give us our Savior? All this, and more, supports Paul's conclusion: "So then he hath mercy on whom he will, and whom he will he hardeneth."

### *Human Accountability*

Paul has just shown that God neither broke his word to Abraham, nor dealt arbitrarily with Pharaoh. This establishes God's prerogative of choice and his personal righteousness. Now he brings up the correlative, inevitable question of man's accountability. "Thou wilt say then to me, why doth he still find fault? For who withstandeth his will?" Paul, the only apostle academically equipped to discuss this highly abstruse, speculative, impracticable subject, absolutely declines all further discussion and uncompromisingly denounces the attitude of the questioner: "Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, why didst thou make me thus?"

Considering what Paul has already said in Romans, I think, he is in effect saying: "Remember, *man*, who you are; you belong to a proscribed race of dead creatures who receive from Adam an infected moral nature that in time (age of accountability) invariably leads to actual, personal sins just as you receive from Adam an infected body that in time invariably leads to death; you are a sinner by both nature and practice, a creature "dead through your

trespasses and sins," with no rights whatsoever before God, and should instead of "talking back" to him, be humbly, gratefully receiving any favor his mercy bestows."

Paul has learned the lesson God in kindness tried to teach the race symbolically by the tree of forbidden knowledge in Eden—the ineffable difference between Creator and creature. The lesson is exceedingly hard for both angels and men to learn. Overvaulting, creatural pride cost the former heavenly and the latter earthly paradise. "Secret (unrevealed) things belong to Jehovah" (Deut. 29:29), and men who aspire to pry into them are drawing too nigh unto the burning bush (Ex. 3:5). Without a metaphysical discussion of the relationship between the divine and the human will, the Bible everywhere takes for granted that men, at least before they harden their hearts, are free to accept or reject God's mercy; and regardless of how they talk, men know they are free to choose. Had theologians never eaten of this forbidden tree, Christendom had been spared a needless, baffling, disastrous controversy.

### Questions

1. Why is it imperatively important for men to know that Christianity begins, on the human level, with a morally bankrupt humanity?
2. Show from the Scriptures that it is the fixed policy of God to allow willful, rebellious men, who are determined to have their own way, to harden under the ordinary working of his righteous government.
3. Did this immutable method of divine dealing apply to Pharaoh?
4. Enlarge upon the statement that Pharaoh is a divinely forged key that unlocks God's personal character, and his principles of governing his world.
5. Explain: "History is really made over the heads of human history makers."
6. Why cannot God ever arbitrarily and indiscriminately deal with men?
7. Comment upon Paul's rebuke of men who try to pry further into God's business than he thinks expedient to reveal.

## LESSON 29

Paul bases the teaching in Romans 9 on these truths: (1) God never acts arbitrarily, (2) God never violates man's will, (3) and what God does is always morally right. He does not feel the need of asking (much less of proving) with Abraham, "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" Moreover, he has nothing but stern denunciation for those who quarrel with these truths. Instead of attempting to answer all questions and solve all problems pertaining to divine government, he unequivocally warns men, that on the human level, these truths must be the stopping place; because men have not the right or the knowledge or the goodness or the power to dig deeper and to judge God.

To make Paul's figure of the potter mean that God makes men either good or bad against their will contradicts all that he, or any other inspired man ever wrote on the subject. The point Paul makes is that, as a potter in sovereign, but not capricious, power over clay selects and molds it into pottery which it is best fitted to make, so the sovereign, merciful God for good reasons of his own, inscrutable perhaps to men, selects and uses men, Abraham and Pharaoh for example, where they are best fitted to serve in his complicated, benevolent, over-all government of the world. His discussion does not delve deeper into the profound problem of temptation, sin, and suffering, which in turn involves the mighty mystery of man himself, since man is the only earthly creature that can sin.

When a man says that, if he does not know God's reasons and understand his ways, he is not responsible, and fatalism follows, Paul brings him up short: "Stop, *man*, Stop! God is *God*! Is it necessary that you know? How dare you, a sinful, condemned creature, so irreverently and presumptuously mistrust your maker, and pry into his secrets?" Paul found great satisfaction and hope, no doubt, in leaving



all the insoluble mysteries (humanly speaking) to him who made and runs the universe—to him who assumes all the responsibility unto all eternity.

### *The Hardening of the Jews*

Inasmuch as God's word and mortal nature require that his wrath be revealed against all unrighteousness, unless Pharaoh be punished, his character will be compromised. And certainly Pharaoh cannot complain, if, while his life is running its inevitable course to destruction, God in long-suffering lets him live on and reign, and uses him as an unconscious instrument to publish his name abroad.

Paul now applies this method of divine government to the Jews, who, as Pharaoh hardened himself, have hardened themselves into "vessels of wrath fitted unto destruction." But immediately he announces the good news that God is delaying their destruction and making "known the riches of his glory upon vessels of mercy, which he afore prepared unto glory, even unto us, whom he called, not from the Jews only, but also from the Gentiles." These "vessels of mercy" are the Christians, for they only have answered God's merciful call to come unto him for pardon and reconciliation. God prepared all this before he created the world.

This is the first time in the chapter Paul has mentioned the Gentiles. At the time however, they composed by far the greater part of the church, and the masses of the Jews were its bitter enemies. He quotes from Hosea to show that God foreknew the Gentiles would become his people; and from Isaiah to show that he also foreknew only a "remnant" of the Jews would be saved. Hence, God is not taken by surprise, for things are developing as he foreknew they would develop.

Had the Jews not been blinded by prejudice and arrogance, this use of their prophets would have convinced them they were separating themselves from the covenant

of the fathers, as Peter told them they were doing (Acts 3), were resisting the Holy Spirit, as Stephen told them they were doing (Acts 7), and were no longer God's people. As Jonah, a bigoted Jew, thought God wronged him when he spared heathen Nineveh, so a nation of bigoted Jews, who have overwhelming evidence denied Jonah, think God wrongs them when he saves heathen Rome. They forget it is always the pure mercy and goodness of God that saves any man—that leaves them a "seed," which saves them from the doom of Sodom and Gomorrah. Penitent, pious, holy men never accuse God, but ever themselves, of wrongdoing.

### *Willing and Running in Vain*

Paul has spent Romans 9 establishing God's sovereign rights and moral integrity. God's selection or rejection, and corresponding use, of individuals and nations are not even to be questioned, but taken on absolute faith and trust.

Now at the end of the chapter, he begins the delicate task of showing the Jews that they are responsible for their exclusion from the Mosaic covenant. In stubborn self-will they yet refuse to see that covenant as a provisional, carnal covenant designed by God to prepare them for his succeeding, spiritual covenant. They are so enamored of the types, stately ritual, and Jewish advantages of Judaism that they think nothing can be better, and obstinately refuse to go on with God in his invincible progress into universal Christianity. With fanatical zeal they cling to the man-centered first covenant in preference to the God-centered second covenant. Since they refuse to make this shift in center, which is the very essence of the distinction of superiority of Christianity over Judaism, what can God do but brush them aside and select others who will trust and cooperate with him? "Wherefore? because they sought it (righteousness) not by faith, but as it were by works. They stumbled

at the stone of stumbling (Christ).” They strangely persist in willing and running in vain, whereas they might, by God’s mercy, will to run successfully on his race track.

As Paul knows only too well how this truth enrages the Jews against him, he, in his burning, Christlike love for them, is tender and soothing. Hoping to prepare them for an honest, healing study of their misdirected zeal, he assures them that the desire of his heart and prayer to God that they may be saved (10:1). As Christ wept over, prayed for, but preached against the Jews, so Paul weeps over, prays for, but preaches against them. He faithfully and firmly tells them that their zeal in seeking spiritual life by means of law-keeping is an ignorant zeal that may be *for* God, but is not *of* God; and that it can do nothing but minister to their fleshly pride. He tells them that Christ is the end of the covenant of law, both temporally and religiously (v. 4), and that only by faith in him can they ever will and run in step with God, and go on with God unto everlasting life.

### Questions

1. Why does Paul take the deepest and most vital things in God’s personal character and his government, ultimately, for granted?
2. Show that the true interpretation of the figure of the potter both leaves men free in the crucial human choice, and preserves God’s integrity.
3. What is Paul’s answer to the shallow fatalist?
4. Show that God used the same principles of government in dealing with the Jews that he used in dealing with Pharaoh.
5. For what specific purpose does Paul use Hosea and Isaiah, respectively, in his portrayal of God’s moral character and government?
6. What shift in center, a shift that is the essence of transition from Judaism (or any other religion) to Christianity, did the Jews refuse to make?
7. Comment upon the blending of faithfulness, tenderness, courage, firmness, and skill in Paul’s reasoning with the recalcitrant Jews.

## LESSON 30

Paul's discussion of divine sovereignty and human accountability in Romans contains no suggestion whatsoever of incompatibility between the doctrines. Neither in Peter's indictment of the Jews on Pentecost, "Him, being delivered up by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye by the hand of lawless men did crucify and slay," which focuses the two truths more sharply than Paul's discussion does, is there so much as a hint of discord between the doctrines.

All questions that may arise from the fact that God's foreknowing and predestining Christ's death did not affect responsibility and accountability of the men who crucified him are "foolish and ignorant questionings," which Paul told Timothy and Titus to shun and refuse. If Peter and Paul even thought of this matter at all, they stayed not to meddle with it, but leaving it to God whose business it was and who alone was competent to deal with it, they hastened on, humbled and sobered by the dread truths involved, as faithful stewards in tremendous earnestness with their own commissioned business of preaching the universal gospel of reconciliation, hoping to humble the perishing rebels of earth into surrender and repentance to the merciful, sovereign Maker and Owner.

*Two Kinds of Righteousness*

How is it that such perverted, depraved Gentiles as those described in Romans 1 "attain to righteousness," while Jews, who zealously, laboriously, and sincerely observe religious rites, elaborate rituals, and burdensome traditions, fail to attain it? The Gentiles, who had no self-righteousness to hinder them, freely and gladly entered in through the "door of faith" (Acts 13:48; 14:27) into Christ, thrown wide open to them by God's mercy, as their only hope. Thus

they obtained the righteousness, which is the free and gracious gift of God to believers. The reason Israel failed to arrive at this faith-righteousness was that they were seeking a law-righteousness of their own "by works of law"—counterfeit righteousness camouflaged as the righteousness from God. Paul gives them full credit for their zeal, but tells them it is "not according to knowledge," and that it is no ground for salvation. This is the key to the whole chapter, the purpose of which is to show the Jews why they are set aside. Paul's own life is the best commentary on the appalling truth that sincere, zealous men may be lost.

Paul in relating his religious experience contrasts these two kinds of righteousness: "Not having a righteousness of mine own, even that which is of the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, even the righteousness which is from God by faith" (Phil. 3:9). These two kinds of righteousness cannot coexist, because one must be dead to the former in order to be alive to the latter: "For I . . . died unto the law that I might live unto God" (Gal. 2:19); "For if there had been a law given which could make alive, verily, righteousness would have been of the law" (Gal. 3:21). Law cannot give pardon and life and hope and love and security. Since Pentecost, Jews must be as completely done with Mosaic law, both as a means of obtaining life and as a rule for living life, as if it had never been given; or as dead to it as are Gentiles, who have never been under it.

Israel is a tragic example of religious men of legal mind clinging, blindly and doggedly, to traditions and symbols instead of growing into the truth and the life symbolized by and embodied in the types and emblems. Nothing more surely than the leaven of legalism paralyzes the finer instincts and most godlike facilities of the soul. Jesus warned his disciples against it (Luke 12:1). Remember, it was Jewish legalists who forced the Pagan Romans con-

trary to their feelings and will to crucify Jesus. Had Jesus but said, "Woe unto you Romans," instead of: "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites," what a difference it would have made. Remember, Paul, probably in mental gifts and nobility of soul the greatest of all Jews, was first "A Pharisee . . . as touching the law, found blameless." But he was withal, because of his inhuman, bloody persecution of holy, helpless saints, the chief of sinners. But this was the best the principle of legality could do for him! Need Christians today be told that they may eat the Lord's Supper, and in every way live respectable, nominal Christian lives in this cold, formal, traditional, legalistic, partisan, loveless, flesh-centered, spirit-killing manner?

*"All Things Are Now Ready" (Christ)*

In Rom. 10:5-21, Paul, continuing his contrast of law-righteousness and faith-righteousness, shows that the free and universal nature of Christianity is set forth plainly in the Old Testament. "For Moses writeth that the man that doeth the righetousness which is of the law shall live thereby. But the righteousness which is by faith saith thus, Say not in thy heart, who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down;) or, who shall descend into the abyss? (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead). But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word we preach."

First, Paul here makes a free quotation from Moses (Lev. 18:5) to the effect that the life of men living under law depends on their perfect obedience of law. Second, he incorporates, with Christian meaning, the strong, lively words of Moses with reference to the law (Deut. 30:11-14) into his exposition of Christianity. What could so well show his skill and power in reasoning with Jews as this personifying the gospel and having it say what Moses said of the law? His purpose is to convince Jews that Christianity is a ful-

fillment of Moses, and that following Moses through will make Christians of them; that instead of doing meritorious deeds they have only to believe in the divinely wrought, past Incarnation and Resurrection of Jesus, the benefits of which are as free as the air they breathe, and to realize that with respect to righteousness, the gospel says, not "do," but "done." He is begging them to lay their "deadly doing down," to empty their hands that they may grasp what only empty hands may grasp, and to see that they cannot drag themselves up the lofty peak of righteousness by natural human strength.

Finally, Paul quotes Isaiah and Joel to show that the gospel is, not only free, but also universal—"Whosoever shall call . . ." Then, he quotes Isaiah and David to show that this free, universal gospel has had divine universal proclamation. Thus, Paul vindicates his mission to the Gentiles, the very thing that the Jews say makes him their enemy. Last of all, he has Moses and Isaiah testifying that the acceptance of the Gentiles was made known from of old.

### Questions

1. Why do Paul, Peter, and all other Biblical writers ignore the incompatibility that men may find between God's sovereignty and man's accountability?
2. Differentiate between "a righteousness . . . which is of the law" and "the righteousness which is from God by faith."
3. Why did Gentiles find faith-righteousness, while the Jews found it not?
4. Account for the fact that Paul before he accepted Christ was, "as touching the righteousness which is in the law, found blameless," and yet he was chief of sinners.
5. Why should Paul's point that, if they would but follow Moses through, they would become Christians, have appealed to Jews especially?
6. Explain the statement that with respect to justification, the gospel says, not "do," but "done."
7. How does Paul vindicate his apostleship to the Gentiles, which is the main offense the Jews have against him?

## LESSON 31

“The Spirit of truth,” through Paul, weaves into Romans 9-11 about thirty quotations from the Old Testament. Some of these, such as Paul’s applying to the gospel, with fuller, deeper, more spiritual meaning, language that Moses applied to the law, are free, allusive quotations. This manner of quoting throws light upon the Christian use of the Old Testament, and upon the unity, and consistency of the Bible as a whole. This may be called interpreting the Old Testament in the spirit of the New. Such use of the language of others is a common practice of both inspired and uninspired men. For instance, to how many things besides marriage has Christ’s saying about marriage, “What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder,” been applied?

A living, increasing, unifying purpose runs through the Bible—“The word of God is living and active,” and “shall not pass away.” With the fuller, final revelation of the New Testament on such subjects as God’s kingdom, Christ’s nature and character, the ministry of the Holy Spirit, God’s care for his children, the resurrection, immortality, and eternal life, Job, Psalms, Isaiah, and indeed all the books of the Old Testament mean more to us than they could possibly mean to their first readers. Certainly, God’s personal character, his government, and his word since Revelation was written are changeless, but when a Christian’s knowledge of God and the Bible becomes changeless, his life is impoverished. The reading of Christians may be so fragmentary, disjointed, and textual that they cannot grow in knowledge as they should. The failure to include in their methods of studying the Bible this general, synthetic method accounts for much of their partial, superficial understanding of God’s invincible, overall, eternal purpose.

“With the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and



with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." Belief of the heart guards against hypocrisy, and confession with the mouth against cowardice. How simple, easy to come by, and efficient Christianity really is. Every seeking sinner finds a seeking Savior coming to meet him; no advantage of fleshly privilege is needed to reach spiritual blessing in Christ; Christians ascend the heights because Christ descended into the depths. Free and Universal! Ask and have—what more could one wish? If the Jews were destined by God to eternal damnation, how much short of blasphemy is the language of Isaiah and Paul, "All day long I (God) spread out my hands (beseeching them to be reconciled unto him) unto a disobedient and gainsaying people?" One wonders whether God's long-continued patience and goodness to "vessels fitted unto destruction," or the Jews' long-continued hardness, wilful ignorance, and complaining, stubborn, rebellious spirit is the greater wonder.

*Rejection of Israel Not Total*  
(Rom. 11:1-10)

As God's forbearance with Pharaoh was finally exhausted, so his longsuffering with the Jews was first running out when Romans was written. About thirteen years later (A. D. 70) God used Rome to destroy Israel in what has been called the most complete military execution of any nation in history.

Although this impending doom, and subsequent eternal woe, as well it may, grieves Paul, himself an Israelite, beyond words and tears, he is not hopeless as Elijah was when he faithlessly wailed that he, the only faithful man left alive, was being persecuted unto death. Paul knows that as there were seven thousand who did not bow the knee to Baal in Elijah's day, "Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant (including himself) according to

the election of grace." Thus, Paul finds comfort and hope in the fact that God is not compelled to cast off all "His people which he foreknew" in a special way.

"But if it is by grace, it is no more of works; otherwise grace is no more grace." Paul nowhere states more incisively and categorically than in this verse the utter incompatibility of grace and works. He knows by both subjective and objective experience the seductive, powerful, and tenacious nature of the faith in human sufficiency and merit. Such faith energized him when he persecuted the church, and it later energized the Jews when they persecuted him as a Christian. Even many Jews who came into the church, not really converted from flesh to spirit, and consequently having little conception of the newness, liberty, and largeness of Christianity, were his aggressive enemies. This crafty, Judaic party in the church (Gal. 2:3-5), by destroying its freedom and universality, perverted and shriveled it (Gal. 1:7) into another Jewish sect. Paul's knowing how very hard it is for men to believe that works and grace are mutually contradictory and destructive must account for his often repeated, emphatic teaching on the subject in so many of his letters. Anyway, he teaches that men who trust grace are the elect, and that men who trust their own works are the non-elect—that any election must be an "election of grace;" teaches that men are free and may will to have God's grace to work Christian works in and through them (Eph. 2:4-10).

This section closes with more quotations from Isaiah and David re-emphasizing the fact that the Jews so hardened themselves against God that God had to harden them, even unto allowing their religion to become a burden and a curse to them. Truly, a most solemn warning to all worshippers of all races!

*Rejection of Israel Not Final*  
(Rom. 11:11-32)

The first five verses of this section prepare for the rest of the passage. "I say then, did they stumble that they might fall (beyond recovery)? God forbid: but by their fall (a second Greek word for "fall," meaning "falling aside") salvation is come unto the Gentiles, to provoke them to jealousy . . . For if the casting away of them is the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be but life from the dead?"

Paul here declares that the rejection of Christ by the Jews was the occasion of the reception of Christ by the Gentiles—that Jewish unbelief was Gentile opportunity. He rejoices that his success among the Gentiles reacts favorably upon some of his beloved kinsmen after the flesh, and moves them to become Christians. But Paul, being too familiar with the whole fabric of traditional Hebrew culture with its entrenched, obstinate bigotry to be blindly optimistic, speaks of this saving only "some of them." His two rhetorical questions emphasize the idea that, if Israel's falling aside works such benefits, Israel's restoration should mean a mighty spiritual revival.

**Questions**

1. What does interpreting the Old Testament in the spirit of the New mean?
2. Give the meaning of, "studying the Bible in a general, synthetic way," and tell some of the advantages of so studying it.
3. How does belief in the heart guard against hypocrisy and confession with the mouth against cowardice?
4. Why did not Paul become despondent over the condition of Israel, as Elijah centuries before had done?
5. Put into words of your own the meaning of Paul's, "But if it is by grace, it is no more of works; otherwise grace is no more grace."
6. Why must any election that God ever makes be of grace?
7. Does Paul teach in Romans 11 that Jewish unbelief was Gentile opportunity?

## LESSON 32

Romans 9-11 has been called the noblest theological argument ever written. The ninth chapter portrays God as the absolutely independent Ruler of mankind, exercising his sovereign right to use, or set aside, individuals and nations according to their fitness to serve his ends and further his program. God, and only God, is *God*. Men must know they are creatures, and act as creatures.

The tenth chapter shows that God never abuses his prerogatives, but that he always makes legitimate use of his almighty power and limitless resources; that instead of his dealings with his subjects being arbitrary and corrupt, as the dealings of men lifted up in power almost invariably are, all his decisions and works rest on a foundation of justice, righteousness and loving kindness.

The eleventh chapter witnesses to the utility of the judgments, measures, and methods God uses in presiding over the progress of the Abrahamic covenant. It reveals his consummate administrative wisdom and skill in adapting means to ends, in balancing one thing against another, and in turning loss into gain, as he irresistibly advances according to schedule in fulfilling his promise to Abraham, "In thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed." Under his infinitely wise, able, and good management, everything is grist to his mill.

*The Abrahamic Covenant As An Olive Tree*

The promise of a Savior is co-eval with human sin. This promise makes known that the Savior was to be a human being—the Seed of the woman (Gen. 3:15). After many centuries, God chose "Abram the Hebrew" (Gen. 14:13) to be the father of "a great nation" which would produce this Seed of the woman, without a human father. Hence, the Savior was to be not only a man, but a man of the Hebrew

race. This divine choice constituted Abraham a man set apart and made holy for this special purpose. "Hebrews," "Israelites," and "Jews" are three scriptural names for Abraham's descendants, or branches. Paul's statement, "If the root is holy, so also are the branches" means, I think, that Abraham as the "root" and his posterity as the "branches" are the holy, dedicated race for God's bringing Christ into the world. "Salvation is from the Jews" (Christ—John 4:22).

God added his limited provisional Mosaic covenant of law to his earlier universal, permanent Abrahamic covenant of grace, not however to annul the older covenant, but to let men learn by experience that, inasmuch as they could never earn justification by perfect obedience of law, they must accept it as a free gift of God's grace. When this temporary, parenthetical covenant of law had served its purpose as a tutor to bring men to Christ, as their only hope of justification, "God took it out of the way, nailing it to the cross" (Gal. 3:15-19; Col. 2:14). But since the Jews refused to give up their national covenant, and hardened themselves and rebelled against God, as Pharaoh did, they forced God to set them aside, and go with his fulfilling the Abrahamic covenant without them.

This is the gospel Peter preached on Pentecost so effectively that he persuaded a remnant of about 3,000 Jews of the "crooked generation" that crucified Jesus to go on with God in order to escape being left behind. In his next sermon, Peter, after telling the Jews that Moses and all the prophets from Samuel onward had foretold the Christianity he was preaching, continued: "Ye are the sons of the prophets, and of the covenant God made with your fathers, saying unto Abraham, in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed" (Acts 3:35). As a result of this sermon, the Christian remnant that elected to remain in the

Abrahamic covenant of grace increased to "about five thousand."

To Gentile Christians Paul writes: "But if some of the branches were broken off, and thou, being a wild olive, wast grafted in among them, and didst become partaker with them of the root of the fatness of the olive tree; glory not over the branches: but if thou gloriest, it is not thou that bearest the root, but the root thee." As Peter was the chosen apostle to persuade Jews not to fall out of God's advancing program, he was likewise the chosen man to make the first graft (Cornelius—Acts 10) from the Gentile wild olive into the Abrahamic stock, so that all men might be "Abraham's seed, heirs according to promise" (Gal. 3:29).

### *Gentile Pride*

Paul to Gentiles again: "Thou wilt say then, branches were broken off, that I might be grafted in. Well; by their unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by thy faith. Be not high-minded, but fear: for if God spared not the natural branches, neither will he spare thee. Behold then the goodness and severity of God: toward them that fell, severity; but toward thee God's goodness, if thou continue in his goodness; otherwise thou also shalt be cut off." Note that Paul makes human cooperation absolutely indispensable—God's goodness unmixed with man's faith and obedience simply will not work in religion (Heb. 4:2). As unbelief was the cause of Jewish branches being broken off, so must unbelief cause Gentile branches also to be broken off. Furthermore, since Gentiles have much more faith-creating evidence than ancient Jews had, their unbelief is much more blameable. Human reason, pride, and prejudice must bow before faith.

The Holy Spirit knowing the deceitfulness and corruption of the human heart, warns Gentile Christians lest they re-

peat the fatal pride and presumption of the broken-off Jewish branches. Does not remembering that this warning was sent directly to Rome, the very city in which Gentile pride and presumption as they grew into the powerful, arrogant hierarchy of Roman Catholicism was to reign over Christendom many centuries (and the end is not yet) emphasizes its divine foresight and providence, and put Gentile Christians on their guard against an insidious, perpetual, deadly peril until their fulness be come in?

Why should Gentile Christians be high-minded and glory over Jewish Christians? Paul reminds them to be a graft is nothing of which to be proud. Since the whole church springs from a Jewish root, Jewish and Gentile Christians, sharing Christ's eternal life in common, are organically one. Christ "Abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commands contained in ordinances; that he might create in himself of the two one new man, so making peace; and might reconcile them both in one body unto God through the cross . . . and preached peace to you (Gentiles) that were far off, and peace to them (Jews) that were nigh: for through him we both have our access in one Spirit unto the Father" (Eph. 2:15-18).

### Questions

1. State the gist of each chapter in Romans 9-11.
2. On what basis did God select and dedicate a family for Christ's human ancestry?
3. How is it that the Mosaic covenant is a parenthesis?
4. What was Peter's understanding of the relationship between the Abrahamic covenant and the Mosaic covenant?
5. Show that Paul under the figure of an olive tree corroborates Peter's view.
6. Against what egregious mistake of the Jews did Paul warn the Gentiles?
7. How does this prophetic warning confirm the inspiration of the Scriptures?

## LESSON 33

Over against the warning to Gentiles, "Be not high-minded, but fear" lest you fall also, Paul sets the hope of Jewish restoration—fear for Gentiles and hope for Jews. Having already shown that the recovery of Israel is desirable (12-15) and scriptural (16), he now shows that it harmonizes with nature: "And they also, if they continue not in unbelief, shall be grafted in: for God is able to graft them in again . . . into their own olive tree" (23, 24).

In this Scripture, Paul, illustrating by a general use of the principle of grafting, teaches that, since the immutable covenant was made primarily with Israel, it is more natural and reasonable that Israel be restored to it than that pagan Gentiles be brought into it. He is asking why, inasmuch as Gentiles from Cornelius onward have "contrary to nature" been grafted into the Jewish olive tree, should grafting Jews back into it be thought unnatural and improbable.

*Paul As Prophet*

After arguing that the restoration of Israel is desirable, scriptural, and natural, Paul is ready to prophesy that God's keeping his promise to Abraham involves as a coming event the recovery of Israel: "For I would not, brethren, have you ignorant of this mystery, lest ye be wise in your own conceits, that a hardening in part hath befallen Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in; and so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Zion a Deliverer . . . and this is my covenant unto them . . . for the gifts and the calling of God are not repented of" (25-29). Surely, this prophecy means that now, while Israel is broken off, God's field of operation is in particular with Gentiles until his work among them is done; at which time the generation of Jews then living will be ready to choose the Christ, whom their ancestors crucified, as their Lord and



God (cp. Luke 21:24). The adverb "so" compactly condenses the quotation as the manner of Israel's restoration. "O foolish men, and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken" (Christ).

That the history of Christendom since Paul's prophecy was made vindicates him as a true prophet of God should lead us to expect the fulfillment of the rest of his prophecy. Time works no change in God. But has Paul's warning that Gentiles be not conceited and high-minded, but fear, been heeded? How much truer to God in Christ have they been than Jews were true to God in Moses? Do not many think that the present Christian age can never be superseded by a maturer age, much as the Jews refused, despite the utmost efforts of Christ and Paul to convince them of their deadly error, to go on with God into Christianity, because they blindly thought the Mosaic age was God's best and final economy? As Jews were anciently and still are in their new Palestinian state, may not Gentiles now be "Found even to be fighting against God?" Is not the present Gentile age, as the Jewish age before it ended, to end in partial failure (Luke 17:22-27), but not until Israel is ready by choice to come back into God's program of mercy?

The Holy Spirit gives in Romans but a very general outline of God's manner of working out the Abrahamic covenant. Details found elsewhere in the Bible, of course when we understand them, fit perfectly into this basic outline. In our study of this complicated subject further than an exposition of Romans requires, we must remember that, while God never works above or beyond Christ, he may work in and through Christ now and "in the ages to come" (Eph. 2:7) very much that far transcends our present knowledge and even "All that we ask or think."

Differing views about the future which do not directly effect primary, essential things, such as Christ's lordship

and the worship and work of the church, may not involve matters irreconcilable to Christian doctrine, and hence need not disrupt Christian fellowship. Of course, to mark and turn away from any one who teaches anything "contrary to the doctrine" (Rom. 16:17), is a plain duty. But to mismanage differences about secondary, non-essential things in such a loveless, un-Christian manner as to disrupt fellowship is very definitely contrary to the whole doctrine and spirit of Christianity. Let us, brethren, in brotherly kindness, love, unbiased study of God's work, and friendly exchange of ideas, re-examine our differences about things that are not of vital importance to the life and work of the church. We, then, "Speaking truth in love may grow up in all things into him, who is the head, even Christ" (Eph. 4:15).

*Paul's Worshipful Doxology (11:33-36)*

From the summit of the lofty range of divine revelation to which he has been climbing in Romans, Paul writes: "For God hath shut up all unto disobedience that he might show mercy unto all" (11:32). This verse is the conclusion to both Paul's exposition of the philosophy of Christianity (1-11) and to his setting forth Israel's place in human history (9-11). This historic division of Romans begins with Paul's profound sorrow over Israel's temporarily losing her place in God's perpetually unfolding plan for the ages and ends with his sublime panegyric upon God who makes possible the hope of her restoration. It seems that men who feel deepest also think highest.

This doxology is both retrospective and prospective. When Paul views the past, he sees Jews and Gentiles alike condemned; when he turns to the future, he sees God's mercy poured out on both alike. God's mercy given gratis to men who have no merit in the grand climax of Romans. Upon contemplating God's unified policy, which admits no piece-

work, of making the wrath of both Jew and Gentile praise him by having them alternatively aid each other until they come to see that they have only common interests and become one in Christ; at last Jews, with zeal according to knowledge, and Gentiles knit together, by faith, forever in the Abrhamic covenant that all the earth may be blessed, Paul's joy knows no bounds, and this ecstatic laudation of God, whose character is the basis of all profound reverence and devout worship, praising his sole proprietorship, inscrutable wisdom, invisible might and infinite goodness, leaps from his pen.

Can the heart of any man who considers God's strategy of letting the black plague of sin work its horrors until mankind in desperation comes to him for cure, fail to beat in sympathy with this beatific vision? Surely, Christian men who love both God and men can, with Paul, wonder, worship, work, and wait for God to finish his glorious work of redemption. May I pray you, my dear brethren, to study Romans reverently, take it at face value, and grant others the same Christian freedom.

### Questions

1. What is Paul's fear for the Gentiles, and his hope for the Jews?
2. Does Paul think that the restoration of the Jews to the Abrahamic covenant is desirable, possible, and scriptural?
3. What is the logical import of the adverb "so" in his argument?
4. What similiarity exists between the end of the antediluvian age and the coming end of the present Christian dispensation?
5. Does Paul think it is contrary to, or a fulfillment of, God's revealed will to believe that a great many of a generation of Jews will yet "be grafted into their own olive tree"?
6. What is the scriptural procedure for brethren in Christ who differ about secondary things, that are not plainly contrary to Christian doctrine?
7. Discuss the prime cause, the comprehensiveness of the subject matter, and the energizing hope of the Doxology with which Paul closes Romans 1-11.

## LESSON 34

The conclusion to the doctrine of Romans 1-5, namely that condemned humanity—all men patients in one hospital stricken with the same deadly malady—may be justified, is found in 5:1: “Being therefore justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” The conclusion to the doctrine of Romans 6-8, namely, that justified reconciled men are enabled to be holy, saintly men, “conformed to the image” of God’s Son, is found in Romans 8:1: “There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus.”

Another “therefore,” summing up the doctrinal part (1-11) and introducing the hortatory part (12-16) of Romans, is found in 12:1: “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living sacrifice . . . to God.” Romans crystallizes into these great logical “therefores”—the “therefore” of *Justification* and of *Sanctification* and of *Consecration*.

## Romans 12:1, 2

That the hortatory part of Romans, pertaining to the various relationships of Christians to church, state, and society in general, is linked to the doctrinal part by “therefore” proves that practical religion depends upon doctrinal religion—doctrine is the oil in the lamp, exhortation is lighting the wick, and the Christian character is the burning lamp. Doctrine is related to practice, to use another figure, as root to fruit. To think that doctrine within itself is sufficient is as an orchardist who cares for only the roots of his trees. On the other hand to think that the Christian life is possible without Christian doctrine is as foolish as to expect grapes without the vine. God does not ask men to climb the lofty peaks of love and self-renunciation found in Romans 12 and in the Sermon on the Mount until they

know the doctrine of his mercies toward them in their desperate need; he knows such living is impossible to fallen men, unaided. Verily, it takes the coalescing of doctrine and practice to make Christianity, which rests solidly upon the goodness of God.

These verses also make it plain that the way Christian doctrine grows into Christian behavior is by making the mind Christian: "And be not fashioned after this world; but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind." This begins not by putting a new coat on the old man, but by making a new man, renewed down to the very roots of his nature. Even the necessary old activities he brings over into his new life are new in motive and purpose. A Christian's being regenerated in mind within makes it, since the body is the agent of the mind, reasonable and spiritual for him, as a flower grows from within to without, to present his body without to God. Because the true test of whether we actually give ourselves to God when we think we do is the use we make of our bodies, Paul beseeches us to present our bodies to God, not our souls. The body is the ultimate in sacrifice. Christ used his body as his bridge across to men, and he uses our bodies now as his bridge across to men.

Man is a being consisting of three essential parts, "spirit and soul and body" (1 Thess. 5:23), which, but for sin, would never have been separated. When his redemption from the ruin of sin is complete at his resurrection, he will again be a triune being. The body is so dear to God that he permits the devil to have the body of Moses (Jude 9), or of any other servant of his, only temporarily. The gospel is good news for the body as well as for the soul and spirit, both before and after death. Christianity is the only religion that gives the body its proper dignity and honor. "Know ye not that your bodies are members

of Christ? . . . Or know ye not that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit which is in you, which we have from God? and ye are not your own; for ye were bought with a price: glorify God therefore in your body" (1 Cor. 6:15-20).

The man who takes up Paul's challenge to be moved "by the mercies of God, to present" his body, through the means of his regenerated mind, as a living sacrifice to God finds that the plan does what it proposes to do. As he might find, not by human philosophy and logic, but by sowing an unfamiliar seed, that it produces a choice, new flower, so he finds that God's will to save him by grace through faith, inasmuch as he progressively becomes wiser, better, and happier, with sins of mind and bad habits of body conquered, is not only a "good and acceptable and perfect" way, but that it gets better and more satisfying all the time.

Moreover, a Christian is rewarded by being so transformed in nature that he is able to discern God's plan for his life. As he obeys and prays for guidance, he will in the perplexities of life be guided by means of his regenerated mind around pitfalls into good things. Let him in good faith accept Christ's invitation, "Come unto me . . . and ye shall find rest," and he will find that in the measure he trusts Christ, he believes God is directing his way through life. Every earnest man owes it to himself to put Christianity to the proof of life that he may find out for himself it is not merely a doctrine to discuss, but a reality to be known only by personal experience. "Prove me . . . saith Jehovah . . . if I will not open you the windows of heaven" (Mal. 3:10).

A final thought on these two verses: after naming "the mercies of God" as the mighty driveshaft upon which Christianity depends for its operating power, they on the human level, give the fundamental principles of Christian consecration. The remainder of Romans is but their prolonged echo.

## Romans 12:3-8

“For I say through the grace that was given me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but so to think as to think soberly.” This warning has reference especially to the miraculous gifts of the day, but it is not limited to them. That Christians should soberly estimate their ability and not attempt things beyond their capacity is still as true as it ever was. In miraculous gifts, I think, God supplemented the gifts he had already given by natural means. He is too wise an economist to discard natural gifts, for they blend with supernatural gifts. Would not God in giving miraculous wisdom select as recipient a man of naturally clear thought? Or in giving supernatural hortatory power a man of naturally warm, fervid feelings? Would he to get a better exhorter in song select a man without ear and voice for music? After men could use the complete Bible, probably miraculous gifts would not improve their teaching, exhorting, and singing.

## Questions

1. Comment upon the logical and doctrinal import of the three “therefores” into which Romans crystallizes.
2. What relationship exists between God’s mercies and Christian living?
3. What relationship exists between doctrine, exhortation, and practice?
4. Why does Paul beseech Christians to give, rather than their spirits, their bodies to God?
5. How may Christians learn that God’s will for them is “good and acceptable and perfect”?
6. How may Christians be assured that amid the problems and perplexities of life God is leading and keeping them?
7. Comment upon the blending of miraculous with natural gifts.

## LESSON 35

“As we have many members in one body, and all the members have not the same office: so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and several members one of another” (12:4, 5). The Holy Spirit, because we are all branches of one Vine, Christ, who shares his life with us, thus constituting Christian unity, in these verses stresses our mutual interrelationship and interdependence. To make these spiritual relationships more realistic and practical, Paul repeatedly uses the analogy of the human body (1 Cor. 12; Eph. 4; Col. 1) with all of its amazing perfection, without deficiency or redundancy, of unity in the midst of diversity.

As in the body there are no giftless, useless members, and as each member has its own particular gift, so is Christ; as in the functioning of the body as a unit each member does its own work, and supplements all other members, so is the church. Thus Christians are, so to speak, organs of one another. For example, if I cannot lead singing in the assembly, my brother who can is my organ of song, whom I must love and help, not envy and disparage. I have grace, faith, and gift to fill only my own office, and can never work in the measure of another's faith, gift, and aptitude—each key fits its own lock. Paul teaches in the context of, “But now are there many members, but one body” (1 Cor. 12:20), that unity in diversity is equally essential in the body and in the church—both are so constituted. Herein lies the possibility of mutual edification, as in music, “Distinct melodies breathed by different voices constitute full harmony.” But nothing can be more deadly to divine Christian unity than the substitute, synthetic, uniformity, built upon human authority, written or oral, and social bias and pressure.

Not until we think “soberly” of our talents—neither flaunt



nor bury them—and possess the cardinal Christian virtue, humility, can our self-sufficient, egotism (“mistaken non-entity”) and envy break down and make possible the presenting of our bodies to God. Only when we do this, however, the ambitions and lusts of the flesh may be superseded by ninefold fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22, 23).

### Romans 12:9-21

As a spontaneous sketch of the fairest graces of personal behavior toward others, growing out of the master principles of Christian love, this Scripture is unrivaled. It comprises a cluster of some two dozen specific exhortations, running counter to the instincts of human nature, to act in nobly unselfish love “Toward all men, especially toward them that are of the household of the faith.” The Greeks wrote of wisdom, courage, temperance, and justice, but of nothing similar to the Christian traits of lowliness, tenderness, sympathy, kindness, forgiveness, peaceableness, and general largeness of soul that pervade these verses.

Our difficulty lies not in understanding, but in obeying, the requirements of this passage. A basic mistake, I think, is we expect the flesh by the process of education to evolve into Christianity, whereas Paul says, “They that are of Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh” (Gal. 5:24). In writing this compendium of Christian virtues, Paul assumes that his readers “have no confidence in the flesh” (Phil. 3:3), for he has already taught them: “In my flesh dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me, but to do that which is good is not . . . The mind of the flesh is enmity against God . . . they that are in the flesh cannot please God” (7, 8). “Fleshly Christian” is a contradiction of terms. The unwillingness of the flesh to die has ever been the tragedy of the church.

Digging down to the deepest roots of Christianity on the human side, Christ gave Nicodemus to understand that his

flesh was so polluted that it would have to be discarded, and a new start, involving such a radical change in him that he called it being "born anew" (John 3), must be made. Paul says the man who has been so born is "a new creature" (2 Cor. 5:17), and that his former life is "but refuse" (Phil. 3:8). If Nicodemus ever was born again, he became one of the "babes in Christ" and possessed for the first time spiritual life which is imparted by God in this spiritual birth. Only then, could he judge the values of life as God judges them, and live a spiritual life. Could he have attained this new order of life by developing his flesh, "Then Christ died for nought" (Gal. 2:21).

### *Love in Action*

The world is built upon a cross. "The love at the heart of the universe is a stern, splendid thing, deep and tragic." Without stern aspects nothing nobler than facile good nature and unrighteous indifference to sin is possible. In both God and man, love embodies wrath—the two constituting holiness. Love may have to be "grievous" in order to yield "peaceable fruit" afterward. Only the love that is strong enough to abhor evil can cleave to the good. Honest love hates the evil even in friends, and loves the good even in enemies—"rejoiceth with the truth." When both truth and peace cannot be kept, let peace go.

Only lowly Christian love is capable of honoring others before self. In times of suffering and trouble, patience with her "perfect work," hope that "putteth not to shame," and love that "never faileth" unite to compound the best soul tonic. "Little minds are too much hurt by little things." An unknown brother's trouble is a letter of introduction to his brethren. Prayer is such a simple thing that a child can pray, and yet it involves such profundity and mystery that maturest saints thank God for the privilege and boon of prayer without understanding philosophy of prayer. Love

enters into the joys and sorrows of others. It is easy to weep with the weeping, but it takes a heavenly spirit and a large, rich nature to rejoice with those in success and happiness. What is more moving than the tears of a strong man? "A good man weeps easily, the better, the easier." One who is not very kind is not very spiritual.

Christians having equal minds toward all, keeping in harmony with one another, affecting not high things but living in sympathy with the lowly (many early Christians were slaves), and practicing scrupulous honesty are the best examples of the fine art of living together, and prove that of all institutions on earth "The church is the noblest school of courtesy." Only the church knows the full meaning of love, fraternity, equality, freedom, and peace. Were Christians only Christian, unloving, over-bearing self-confidence and self-assertion, the thing against which this chapter forewarns, could never be among brethren.

### Questions

1. Describe Christian interrelationship and interdependence, tell what gives them existence and strength, and by what analogy Paul illustrates them.
2. As applied to Christians at worship or work what does "Every key fits only its own lock" mean?
3. Explain what "unity in the midst of diversity" means in the church, and tell its advantages.
4. What is the difference in source between pagan and Christian virtues?
5. What is the basic cause of discord and division among brethren?
6. What does "The church is the noblest school of courtesy" mean?
7. Why is the phrase, "fleshly Christian," a contradiction of terms?

## LESSON 36

Romans 12 closes with exhortations concerning the treatment of enemies. When Christians live their religion, neither enmity among themselves nor peace with the world is possible, for "All that would live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" (2 Tim. 3:12). The world demands conformity: it punishes those who fall below and persecutes those who rise above its standards. The only way for Christians to avoid the enmity of the world, that crucified their Lord and have never repented of the crime, is to become worldly themselves. "If the world hate you, ye know it hated me before it hated you . . . I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you" (John 15:18, 19). The world hated Christ because his word and life condemned its evil works (John 3:19-21), and the word and life of his disciples likewise arouse the hatred of the world, for they also must condemn its humanism, sensuality, pride, greed, envy, and lust for power.

"Avenge not yourselves, beloved, but give place unto the wrath of God: for it is written, Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense saith the Lord." Peter says that Christ's own life is an example of this way of living: "Christ suffered also for you, leaving you an example, that ye should follow his steps . . . who, when he was reviled, revileth not again . . . but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously" (1 Pet. 2:21-23). Peter and Paul exhort us to follow Christ, who always obeyed God and left his enemies, absolutely, for God to recompense. That evil-doers be recompensed is morally right and necessary, but God does not permit Christians to usurp his prerogative of administering vengeance.

If we try to mete punishment to our enemies, by reason of our sin-warped, passion beclouded thinking, partial knowledge, and incapacity to know hearts, we are unable

to do it aright. Probably another reason we are not to avenge ourselves is that the very effort would further demoralize and harden us. On the human level, evil is not the answer to evil; rather, evil breeds evil. We should be happy to leave it to him who can judge "righteously" for all concerned. The only way to be rid of enemies is to melt their hostility with kindness. The logic of kindness is stronger than the logic of argument, or of force—men cannot be coerced into love. When I retaliate and become the enemy of my enemy, God's wrath rests upon us both. Instead of being overcome by evil, we must be conquerors, overcoming evil with good—this is Christian vengeance and victory.

### *God's Two Governments*

In Romans 12, Paul exhorts Christians in God's spiritual kingdom, the church, to overcome evil with good, to do all they do in love, and to let God avenge their wrongs. Continuing the subject of vengeance in Romans 13, he reveals that God ordains civil government, the state, "As an avenger for wrath to him that doeth evil." The church and the state are both, therefore, divine institutions, but God uses them in different ways for different ends. The church evangelizes and in grace pardons; the state arrests and in justice punishes. In the church, Christians are active leaders; in the state, Christians are but passive subjects.

A thumbing through the Bible shows why these two governments are needed. God originally governed man through immediate, personal, spiritual communion with him. This perfect government soon began to work imperfectly, however, because man's sin separated him from God. This form of government, nevertheless, continued until God's holiness could no longer endure man's unholiness, and he destroyed all men except Noah and his family.

God would not permit men to avenge Abel's murder (Gen. 4:15), and he used no human agency in the Noachian flood.

One change God made in the government of the new world after the Flood was to give men the authority to execute murderers: "Whosoever sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed" (Gen. 9:6). God was not abdicating to let men take over government, but merely letting them, as his representatives, exercise some authority which heretofore he had kept to himself personally. But Nimrod, the beginning of whose kingdom was Babel (Gen. 10:10), and many others broke away from God and established their own kingdoms. The first centralization of power, consolidation of humanity in rebellion to God, and dream of godless world empire was the Tower of Babel (Gen. 11). As the race was again descending into the depravity that culminated in the Flood, God "Scattered them abroad from thence (Babel) upon the face of the earth," according to his first plan for men (Gen. 1:28-31).

### *Origin of Civil Government*

God called Abraham out of this godless confusion and made him head of a nation in which to establish his government, and to set forth the relationship between the divine element and the human element in government. When he settled this nation in Canaan as his peculiar people, he gave it a government without the civil organization of other nations. The authority he delegated to it, including the death penalty, was vested in religious elders and judges.

But the nation rebelled against God's simple, spiritual sufficient way and said to Samuel, the judge whom God had given them: "Make us a king to judge us like other nations" (1 Sam. 8). When Samuel sought counsel of God, God answered: "Hearken unto . . . the people . . . for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected me that I should not be king over them." Consequently, against

his primary will, but with his permissive, secondary will, as he suffered divorce among the Jews because of the hardness of their heart though from the beginning it had not been so (Matt. 19:8), God modified his government, and made Saul the first king of Israel. Is it not clear that the root of civil government springs out of the soil of disobedience and rebellion to God?

After a checkered history under many kings, mostly defeat and disaster, as the nation staggered into final Assyrian captivity, God chided: "Where now is thy king? . . . I have given you a king in my anger and have taken him away in my wrath" (Hos. 13:10, 11). Thus, the Jews by rejecting God's first-choice government brought utter ruin upon themselves. Does not their history exemplify the Scripture, "He gave them their request, but sent leanness into their soul" (Psa. 106:15)? When will men learn that God's primary spiritual government meets all human needs, and that they do not need a secondary political government?

### Questions

1. Is it true that, when Christians live their religion, neither discord among themselves, nor peace with the world, is possible?
2. Suggest some reasons why God does not permit his people to administer righteous vengeance upon their enemies.
3. Is the statement true that the logic of kindness is stronger than the logic of argument and force?
4. What change did God make, after the Flood, in his original government for mankind?
5. Out of what worldly ambition did the Tower of Babel grow? What was God's reaction to this first consolidation of humanity against him—this first vain dream of a Godless world empire?
6. What was the history and the end of the first Hebrew government with a human king that God, after faithfully warning the Jews of its many exactions, finally suffered the rebel Jews to establish?
7. Why does God need both the church and the state? Contrast the two with respect to their purposes and methods of operating.

## LESSON 37

The preceding "Study" held that the state is an expedient, ordained by God for those who are not in his church. As a student in the Nashville Bible School, I heard David Lipscomb teach this, and in mutual brotherly kindness debated the matter with G. G. Taylor of Louisville, Kentucky. I have since read adverse reviews of Brother Lipscomb's book on the subject, but my conviction that his position with respect to the origin of civil government is scriptural has never been shaken. Alexander Campbell wrote to the effect that the best government on earth, be it "English or American" said he, had within it the seeds of its own destruction, for it acknowledged not that God had set Christ upon his throne.

*The Twofold Function of the State*

Neither the kinds of government, such as monarchy and republic, nor the moral character of individual governments and officers is discussed in Romans 13, but the source and function of the state itself as an institution. While it is true that God ordains civil government as an avenger for wrath to evil doers and true that, should all men become Christians, it would automatically cease to be, it is also true that the state "Is a minister of God to thee (a Christian) for good." Or as Peter puts it, "For praise to them that do well." Why should not rulers feel kindly toward Christians? They are submissive, law-abiding, loyal citizens in everything Caesar has a right to expect (Matt. 22:21), for in God's over-all government of his universe two sources of ultimate authority with clashing laws is impossible. Do not church and state bear much the same relationship to each other in time that heaven and hell bear to each other in eternity? "God is one" (Deut. 6:4; Gal. 3:20), and has built into his creation the constitutional prin-



ciple that physical and spiritual forces are so geared together for his long-range purpose that the universe is one orderly, logical, closely related, moral whole, with all things in both nature and religion working together for good to those who love him—both nature and religion are kind to obedient men, but harsh to others. Does not all this bear eloquent witness to “The riches of his grace,” and unto “The praise of his glory,” wisdom, foresight, power, and goodness?

The Scripture, “Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee (God): the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain” (Psa. 76:10), throws clear, strong light upon the workings of God’s government of the world. Though the inhuman monster and matricide, Nero, was emperor of Rome when Peter and Paul wrote, they feared no evil, for they knew the watchful eye and the almighty, overruling arm of God would not suffer the “wrath” of Nero to go far enough really to hurt them and the church. Even in the event of their martyrdom, they would depart and be with Christ which was very far better (Phil. 1:23). No matter what happened, Nero would be “A minister of God . . . for good” to them. “I take pleasure in weaknesses, in injuries, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ’s sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong” (Paul). “Who is he that will harm you, if ye be zealous of that which is good” (Peter? “When a man’s ways please Jehovah, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him” (Solomon).

### *The Relationship of Christians to the State*

As I understand Christianity, the three rhyming words, “obey,” “pay,” and “pray” comprehend a Christian’s duties to his state. Romans 13 shows that he must obey all laws and pay all taxes. Prayer is treated in 1 Tim. 2:1-4: “I exhort . . . prayers . . . be made for all men; for kings and

all that are in high place; that we may live a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and gravity . . ." This passage considers the whole church as a "holy . . . royal priesthood" praying for the world of lost men (none of whom can pray adequately for themselves), particularly for kings and other rulers, that they may "come to a knowledge of the truth" in Christ. And just as Aaronic priests received a portion of the offerings of men whom they represented before God, so praying Christians are to be blessed with considerate rulers, under whom they may live in peace, as their portion. Such seems to be the import of this great Scripture, which thus furnishes another example of God's orderly, integrated, supreme rule over the whole earth.

In his monumental history of the Roman Empire, Gibbon, admitting his perplexity as to why Rome persecuted Christians, writes: "Christians yielded the most passive obedience to the laws, though they declined the active cares of war and government. They were a singular people who held an inoffensive mode of faith and worship." This, an unbelieving historian testifies concerning Christianity before it became so worldly and perverted that the nominally Christian emperor, Constantine, who delayed his baptism until on his deathbed in 337 A.D., made political use of it in 325 A.D. to strengthen the Roman Empire. In this manner, the gospel lost its superhuman sanctifying power, and the Medieval Dark Ages came on apace.

Early Christians who "declined the active cares of war and government" were simply following, as Peter exhorted them to do, in the steps of their Master, "Who when he was reviled, reviled not again." Surely, Christ said and did enough in the few hours between his arrest and death to cause their declining active participation in duties of state. When he said to Peter, "Put up the sword into the sheath: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword," did he not "unbelt," as Tertullian says, every sol-

dier who would his disciple be? "What can war but endless war still breed?" (Milton). "A man in armor is his armor's slave" (Browning). And did not Christ forever repudiate force as an agency to establish or propagate his kingdom when he added: "Or thinkest thou (Peter) that I cannot beseech my Father, and he shall even now send me more than twelve legions of angels?" See the deep, impassable gulf he put between his kingdom and the kingdoms of the world when he said to Pilate: "My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is not my kingdom from hence."

As Father Abraham "became a sojourner" in Canaan, so Christians, whose "citizenship is in heaven," become "Strangers and pilgrims on the earth . . . for they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly." Let poor men, who have no "Spiritual blessings in the heavenly places in Christ," attend to the state. For them, does God ordain it, as the best he can do for *them*. But for Christians, he ordains a better way in which to honor him and to help a rebel world.

### Questions

1. What precise point pertaining to the state is Paul discussing in Romans 13?
2. State clearly the twofold function of the state.
3. What bearing does the fact that two sources of ultimate authority for governing the world are impossible have on the truth that nothing can harm Christians?
4. What three words exhaust the duties of Christians to the state?
5. What information does Gibbon give about the relations of the early Christians to the state?
6. How should Milton's question, "What can war but endless war still breed?" impress the statesmen of the world today?
7. What do Christ's sayings to Peter and to Pilate teach concerning Christians taking up arms?

## LESSON 38

The very fact that Christians must be subject to the government under which they live precludes their inaugurating and operating it. Are they not avenging themselves, something God forbids their doing, when they help start or run the state, which God ordained as his "Avenger of wrath"? Furthermore, since "The Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will, and setteth up over it the basest of men" (Dan. 4:17), when his over-all government of the earth calls for a Pharaoh, Nero, or Hitler, if Christians try to prevent or overthrow the rule of such men, they fight against God. In the light of these truths how can Christians do otherwise than as Christ and his disciples did?—just ignore civil government, for the most part at least, as a necessary expedient to punish evil-doers, primarily, but useless as a direct agency for spiritual work.

Christians who think they can raise the standard of public morals and civic righteousness, and meet human need generally, by active participation in affairs of state, should remember that the New Testament never even intimates that such effort will succeed. It is not a question of the attitude of Christians toward human need, and good works for its alleviation, but of the means for doing such work. Christ created his church "For good works . . . that we should walk in them" (Eph. 2:10); Christians must be "zealous of good works" (Titus 2:14). He said that his disciples were "The salt of the earth" and "The light of the world." By their unceasing Christian teaching and living, Christians pour a living, purifying stream into the putrid life of the world, similar to the power of gravitation in the physical world, which is something that all the non-Christian institutions on earth for the betterment of mankind combined cannot do. Would it not have been presump-

tion had the Jews thought marching around Jericho at God's command was inadequate, and supplemented the marching with battering-rams? Would God have been obeyed and honored? Would the walls have fallen? Surely, God's spiritual government is adequate for all earthly human need.

When Christians do not live separated, pilgrim lives, however, but compromise and become worldly, they lose their savor, hide their light, and have no salutary power. They need to remember Lot as well as to "Remember Lot's wife." When Lot, with nothing in him deep and high enough to trust God, went to make his home in Sodom, he not only lost power to help Sodom, but also barely escaped its destruction himself. We never read, "By faith Lot dwelt in Sodom." But we do read of Abraham's trusting God to fulfill, in his own time and way, his promise to give him Canaan, firmly refusing all compromising connections with the king of Sodom, even declining the gift of so much as a shoelace (Gen. 14), lest it appear that he, doubting God, took substitute gifts from men. How jealous Abraham was of God's honor and name! And do not forget that it was Abraham, who lived a sojourner a century in tents, not Lot, who sought convenience in Sodom, that had power with God in prayer on behalf of Sodom in her day of distress (Gen. 18). How much the church of God loses at any time, because Christians give more of themselves to the state than God's threefold requirement of obedience, payment of taxes, and prayer for rulers, only God can know. A church may be strong either spiritually or politically, but not strong both spiritually and politically at the same time.

### *The Fulfillment of Law (8-10)*

By connecting these three verses with Paul's long discussion of law in Romans and Galatians, the relationship be-

tween the law, which was given through Moses and grace, which came through Jesus Christ (John 1:17), becomes plain.

Briefly to summarize: Paul teaches that God embodied his eternal moral law in the special code of Ten Commandments, which he wrote on tables of stone and gave to the Jews to convince them (and through them all other men) that, inasmuch as no man can obey God's law perfectly, he must look elsewhere for his justification—that is, that legal salvation is impossible. Once convinced of this, earnest men in self-despair are ready to look to Another for salvation. In other words, law was given that grace might be sought; then, grace came that law might be fulfilled. When Christ came therefore, the Mosaic code having done its particular work, was, as a system of religion, abolished.

It is at this level that Romans 13:8-10 fits into Christianity. A Christian is a man who has acknowledged the justice of his being sentenced to death as a law-breaker, and has accepted Christ's gracious death in lieu of his own death so truly that he dies to self in order to become Christ's grateful, eager slave, not only to love Christ himself, but also to love everybody and everything that Christ loves, for the same reason and in the same way that Christ loves them. This is the love that faileth not. Such total commitment to Christ is the difference between Saul the Pharisee and Paul the chosen apostle and pattern saint.

Caesar can make good laws, but he cannot gender the love in his subjects to heed them—hence the sword. Law, even God's law, can but give directives to show what should be done, demand of loveless men the impossible conduct of love, and punish disobedience. Law has no help for the victim of lawlessness; it discovers wounds for which it has no healing. Men cannot climb up to heaven on a ladder of law. The fulfillment of law, which law itself vainly seeks, is found in love, which, as when a tender mother

cares for her sick child, turns "hard duty into holy delight." Only when love is absent, is a consciousness of law and duty necessary. A heathen who has never heard of the law of Moses, upon becoming a Christian, should soon have the commandments of Moses written on his heart—an inner decalogue, so to speak—and through love, without a sense of law, be lawful in his human dealings. "He that loveth his neighbor hath fulfilled the law."

Christians do not need to be under law in order to be lawful. In truth, they can never fulfill law until they are delivered by the power of God from the realm of law and of flesh, and put into the realm of grace and of Spirit. "Sin shall not have dominion over you; for ye are not under law, but under grace" (Rom. 6:14). "If ye are led by the Spirit, ye are not under law" (Gal. 5:18). "They that are in the flesh cannot please god" (Rom. 8:8). Christ does not abrogate law. Love does not disregard it, but, on her magical feet, she outruns law, on her leaden feet, and does the good deed before the law arrives.

### Questions

1. Can Christians to whom God says "Avenge not yourselves" help create and operate the state that God ordains as his "avenger for wrath"?
  2. When conditions are such that God wants such men as Pharaoh (Rom. 9:17); Nebuchadnezzar (Dan. 4:17), Nero and Hitler to rule states, can Christians be active participants in their Christless brutalities?
  3. Do you agree with the statement that the church may be strong either spiritually or politically, but not in both ways at the same time?
  4. Can a church convert the world, when it is a part of the world?
  5. Interpret the sentence that law was given that grace might be sought; then, grace came that law might be fulfilled.
  6. Put into your own words the description of Christians that this "Study" contains.
- ∴ What is the scriptural and efficient way for Christians to do "good works"?

## LESSON 39

Romans 13, "The Christian Citizen's Chapter," teaches three practical lessons, namely: Christians must be loyal to their government (1-7), just in their dealings with men (8-10), and clean in their personal lives (11-14).

Christianity should appeal to men because of its simplicity and certainty. It is built upon the same natural, simple, yet profound, principle that moves a child to love its mother. "God is love . . . We love, because he first loved us." Christianity therefore, distills into reciprocative love between God and man. And unless it can fortify man against doubt, dread, and death, it is not adapted to his deepest needs. Sinning, suffering, dying men, the sons of dead fathers, can but wonder whether life means anything or leads anywhere. Their "Reach exceeds their grasp." They feel that they were made for eternity and long for satisfying fulfillment of their nature. Christ's, "In this world ye have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world" (John 16:33), gives certainty and finality. Verily, Christ is the invincible "Cheer-leader" of his people.

Love not only fulfills and takes the place of the countless laws and rules for human behavior, but it also goes on into something codified law does not attempt to do, the vast, living world of courtesy and good manners. With law obeyed, the debt of duty is paid in full; but love is an eternal debt, forever being paid, but never liquidated. "Owe no man anything, save to love one another." Christianity requires neither economic, academic, and character entrance tests, nor asks its adherents to define love and to explain the philosophy of its subtle workings. It is enough if they feel and exhibit the power and goodness of love.

Yes, Christianity, like all great things, is sublime in its divine simplicity and certainty. And its first human requirement is that the natural man become as simple and



honest as a child, acknowledge his complete religious ruin, and be willing to follow God in Christ through the Spirit to the end. Not until he does this can he know the Christian love that, without sense of law, fulfills law plus.

### *Christ's Return to Earth*

“Already it is time for you to awake out of sleep: for now is salvation nearer to us than when we first believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light. Let us walk becomingly, as in the day.” As at the beginning of the hortatory section of Romans Paul exhorted Christians not to be conformed to the world by urging them to remember the mercies of God (12:1, 2), so here he continues to exhort them to be unworldly by urging them to be looking always for coming salvation. Thus, he appeals to their memory and to their hope (push and pull), both unsurpassed motives to persuade them to live clean lives.

Christians in Paul's day were such earnest, honest believers in Christ's coming back to earth that he knew, when he wrote this, his readers, without his expressly saying he did, would understand that he did have this doctrine in mind. Hence, the “salvation” of the text is the salvation, including the resurrection of the bodies of saints, that Christ is to bring with him when he comes (1 Thes. 4:16). As Christ had exhorted that, inasmuch as no one knew the time of his return, all should, lest they be found unready, live in wakeful expectancy of his coming, so is Paul here using the imminency of Christ's coming back as a motive for clean living. “Everyone that hath this hope set on him (Christ) purifieth himself, even he (Christ) is pure” (1 Jon 3:3). Even with this hope, there was much impurity in the church during the life of Paul and John. But who can say that, without it, conditions would not

have been worse? Does not God in wisdom and kindness leave the date of Christ's coming unrevealed in order to give every generation of Christians in their grim struggle between flesh and Spirit the advantage of this potent help? Does not our generation need it?

Paul did not know when Christ would come to dispel the long night of sin, which began when Adam turned his back on God and walked away into the darkness of his own shadow mortally wounded, and to usher in the immeasurably longer day of his presence, but he did believe that he would come before another 4,000 years rolled by; furthermore, he knew he might come any hour. And we know that "salvation" is now 1,900 years nearer than when Paul wrote. If any difference therefore, the certainty of the event, linked with the uncertain time element, should be better cause for spiritual living now than it was in the days of Paul and Christ. In our teaching and exhorting, why do we use it so little?

His second coming should be given its scriptural place in Christ's history. Other cardinal doctrines in his life, such as his pre-existence, incarnation, death, resurrection, and indwelling life through the Spirit, without his climactic return, are but an unfinished story. The New Testament gives much attention to "Looking for the blessed hope and appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ" (Titus 2:13), the impending act in the ever unfolding drama of redemption, as the means, par excellence, of keeping the church, which is espoused "as a pure virgin to Christ" (2 Cor. 11:2), ready to meet her Bridegroom when he comes.

The loss, practically, of this hope, which came all too soon, may be called "The light that failed in the church." How the loss works is seen vividly in the servant of the parable, who, saying, "My lord tarrieth," began "to eat and drink with the drunken" and "to beat his fellow-serv-

ants." Our Lord knew that his people's ceasing to look for him would result in their sinfully indulging their bodily appetites and mistreating their brethren. The Bible closes with Christ's promise, "Behold, I come quickly," and John's echo, "Amen: come, Lord Jesus."

### *Putting on Christ*

In Galatians, Paul says that those who had been "Baptized into Christ did put on Christ." That is, having put on Christ's righteousness in baptism, they were properly dressed to appear before God. Here, "Putting on Christ" has another meaning. Christians live Christ over again by letting him dwell in them and express himself through their personalities. "It is no longer I that live, but Christ liveth in me" (Paul). Both of the meanings may be illustrated by children in play who, after putting on the garments of adults, impersonate them. Romans 13:11-14 tells Christians why and when to arise, how to dress, and how to walk and live. What a contrast between Christians who make "No provision . . . to fulfill the lusts" of the flesh and worldlings whose every thought centers on ways to multiply and prolong gratification of the flesh!

### **Questions**

1. State three practical lessons which are found in Romans 13.
2. With what meaning does Paul use the word "salvation" in Romans 13?
3. Show that Christianity meets man's deepest needs.
4. What is the first requirement that Christianity makes of men?
5. Show that Paul appeals to both the memory and the hope of Christians in exhorting them to be unworldly.
6. Show that Christ, Paul and John all use the imminency of Christ's second coming as an inducement for Christian living.
7. In what two senses does Paul use the phrase, "Putting on Christ"?

## LESSON 40

The hortatory section of Romans (12-16) deals with various human relationships. Chapter 12 pertains to love among Christians, and to love as manifested by them toward non-Christians. Chapter 13 teaches that the citizenship of Christians is in heaven, whence they expect Christ to come and complete their deliverance "Out of this present evil world" (Gal. 1-4), in which they are but passive, submissive "sojourners and pilgrims." And now chapter 14 shows that the relationship among Christians who differ in spiritual knowledge, maturity, and insight is mutual love and toleration. These chapters require the church to be in submission to the state without, and to exercise reciprocal sympathetic understanding with respect to its differences within. Elemental Christian truth separates the church from the world, and elemental Christian love unites the church.

*"Strong" and "Weak" Christians* (Read 1 Cor. 8-10)

Because of disparity in natural capacity, age, mental development, social and religious background, and other constitutional and circumstantial inequalities, differences in any congregation of Christians are inevitable. It is not only impossible to have a congregation without these differences, but it is also undesirable, for therein, "Through that which every joint supplieth," lies the opportunity for mutual edification, and for "Building up of itself in love." The home and the local church taken together constitute God's training school to educate his children in interrelated forbearance, patience and unselfish love (take and give)—all requisite qualities for entrance into the eternal "Sabbath rest for the people of God." Christians who do not grow in grace and knowledge under the chastening, tempering, mellowing discipline of these two divine institutions

miss much that purifies, sweetens, and sublimates life for time and eternity.

Paul devotes chapter 14 and part of 15 to the relationship between "strong" and "weak" brethren, and, if we get his timeless lesson, we must needs know the sense in which he uses these terms. "But him that is weak in faith receive ye, yet not for decision of scruples." This "faith" cannot be the absolute justifying faith in Christ as Savior, for that faith can never be weak. Some Christians in Paul's day, though accepting Christ as the only Savior, had religious regard for the sabbath, circumcision, and other Mosaic legalism and ritualism. "Some, being used until now to the idol," were morbidly fearful of honoring an idol by unwittingly eating meat that had been sacrificed to it. Yet a graver weakness, indeed the critical weakness involved in the matter, some lacked moral courage and integrity to be true to their conscientious "scruples"—a weakness in obedience to known duty. These weaknesses were not necessarily exclusive of each other.

"We that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves . . . For Christ also pleased not himself" (15:1-3). Paul's "strong" man knows the difference between primary and secondary things—that is, between things eternal, essential, and inflexible about which God speaks precisely and finally, and things that according to their very nature are flexible and adaptable (like our backbones for instance), and imply human study, experience, and change. He knows that "No idol is anything," that the character of meat is not changed by being offered to an idol, that Christ makes all meats clean, and that Christians dedicate all their days to God. And his knowing that men may differ from him without being inferior to him helps him to be fair and honest with them, and to see things in perspective and in relative importance.

This "strong" man sees that the differences between him and his "weak" brother do not involve the everlastingly fixed, primary things of Christianity, but that, because they are neither right nor wrong within themselves, they lie in the realm of religiously indifferent things, about which brethren may, if they differ aright, safely and profitably differ. He is not "strong" because he has a "superior mind," but because he has the mind of Christ.

### *Presumptuous Meddling*

Such diversity in the church at Rome, Corinth, or elsewhere, any time, however, may be fertile soil for friction, tension, mutual incrimination, and bitter feelings. The "strong" man may scornfully consider his "weak" brother an ignorant, narrow-minded man who needs a guardian. The "weak" man on the other hand may captiously consider his "strong" brother a self-indulgent man, no better than a worldling. Fertile soil indeed for "earthly, sensual, devilish" pride, prejudice, and envy! "Where jealousy and faction are, there is confusion and every vile deed." Christians, mistaking fleshly feelings and interests for spiritual loyalty to truth and principle ("conscience bribed by inclination"), are easily drawn into mere quibbling. Only at the foot of the cross can such matters be settled.

Romans 14 calls Christians of all time from vain wanderings in the fringes of Christianity to its center by simply reminding them that "The kingdom of God is not eating and drinking," that, since "God hath received" them all, despite their diversities, into his own family, they are all sons of God; by simply reminding them that Christ died and arose to demonstrate the truth that he is their sole Owner and Judge, as well after, as before, they die. Does not this throw light upon the meaning of mysterious death and the intriguing intermediate state? In effect he asks: "Do you not see that your judging other Christians is but

idle, presumptuous meddling, for to their own Master, only, they stand or fall? How dare you! Who do you think you are anyway?" He concludes his earnest, solemn plea: "So then each one shall give account of himself to God." And what is more arresting, sobering, and better cooling for the hot tempers of overwrought men than the realization of their accountability to God for every feeling, word, and deed! Is it amiss to remember that Moses provided no offering for presumptuous sinning?

Possibly Paul gets his cue for this divine counsel to Christians from the unforgettable, post-resurrection manifestation of Christ at Tiberias, in which he "manifested himself" as Lord of the life and the death of his servants (John 21). As Peter on that occasion, after receiving the sketch of his own life-work and death, asked Christ about John only to be admonished, "If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to you? follow thou me," so Peter here makes following Jesus in supreme loyalty and extreme devotion the fixed pivot round which the life and death of all Christians revolve. No matter what "devices" Satan employs, he must gain no advantage over them at this vital center (2 Cor. 2:11).

### Questions

1. With what matter does Romans 14 deal?
2. What is the difference between primary and secondary things in the church?
3. Why do Christians inevitably and desirably differ about secondary things?
4. What does it mean for a man to bribe his conscience by his inclination?
5. Describe Paul's "weak" and his "strong" man.
6. Why do differences about secondary things often cause trouble and division in a congregation?
7. What is Paul's chief point against brethren judging each other concerning secondary, or discretionary, matters?

## LESSON 41

Romans 14 falls into two main parts. The first part, consisting of twelve verses, urges that it will help Christians to be mutually sympathetic and tolerant in their unavoidable inequalities and differences concerning things about which more than one good way of procedure is possible to remember that every one of them renders a strict, individual account to Christ, his real Master in life and in death, before whose judgment he stands or falls.

The rest of the chapter is an especially effective presentation of the place and power of reciprocal sympathy in Christian edification and fruitfulness. Who does not desire and need an understanding friend to whom he feels free to go, day or night, with assurance of sympathetic hearing, comfort, and help? In a world full of "the invisibly wounded," no one is so strong that he does not have weak hours when he needs, and no one is so weak that he cannot be sometimes, such a friend. What an opportunity—"A door opened, which no man can shut!"

*The Sovereignty of Conscience*

In studying Romans 2, we found that conscience, as is memory, imagination, or reasoning, is a distinct, innate human faculty; that its office is, not to ascertain the truthfulness of things, but to see that its owner is true to himself and follows his convictions; that in violating his conscience, a man so destroys his moral integrity as to make moral, spiritual living impossible; and therefore that the most deadly thing any man can do is to trifle with his conscience, for in so doing he is tampering with the compass of his soul.

Paul has been called the apostle of grace and of faith, and he may with equal propriety be called the apostle of conscience. This is not to intimate that he is a spiritual



dictator, who cracks a whip over the conscience of others, but that, in a spirit he caught no doubt from his Lord, he believes magnificently in the unfettered conscience of all believers in Christ. He believes that within the large, flexible domain of discretionary matters, but only in this domain of course, a Christian is a law unto himself, and should be left to his own sense of right and expediency, for his conscience is king. Although Paul so respects and reveres conscience, he knows quite well that when Christ speaks explicitly, a Christian conscience trusts and obeys implicitly regardless of all cost.

For championing this pre-eminently Christian doctrine of the dignity, honor, sanctity, and freedom of a living soul to learn and to grow, both Christ and Paul lost their lives at the hands of bigoted, dead slaves of tradition and prejudice, who had developed a fatal blind spot in their spiritual vision. Christianity is the only religion that produces true, noble individualism and independent personality, which progressively grows stronger for all, both strong and weak. This growth in character, contrary to man's thought and expectation comes, not by way of self-assertion and crushing human authority and power, but by way of going outside of self for communion with Christ through the indwelling "Power of the Holy Spirit." No individual is merged with another and lost, but all individuals are cultivated and ripened unto harvest. "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments."

Paul exhorts the "strong" to receive the "weak" cordially, without prying into his attitude towards discretionary things, trusting the Lord to make him stand and grow, according to his new, spiritual birth and nature. This protects the "weak," who is afflicted with a conscience that does not prevent his doing, under pressure, what he thinks to be wrong, by pleading with the "strong," with

whom Paul obviously is in sympathy, not to take advantage of a brother who is suffering from a "weak" conscience, somewhat as an angry man might be shamed out of striking a cripple. On the other hand, of course, the "weak" must be willing to learn and grow. In this manner, would Paul correct the defect of love in the one and the defect of knowledge and conscience in the other.

When a man is converted to Christ and ready to be baptized into him, Christ, because he actually loves him, is ready without arbitrarily deciding his conscientious "scruples" for him to receive him into his church, and give him an honest chance to learn, grow, and reverently work out his own convictions. In the light of this, who has the right to ask him, without the risk of becoming a sectarian, more than concerning his faith in Christ, the one foundation of the one church? But every man who is not crucified to the flesh has within him a potential pope and Pharisee who demands that every other man pronounce "Shibboleth" as he pronounces it (Judges 12:6). The flesh which does not, and cannot, please God (Rom. 8:8), is similar to Procrustes, the mythical giant of ancient Attica, who after seizing and tying hapless travelers through his petty state to an iron bed, either stretched them or cut off their feet until they fit the bed.

### *Paul and Peter (Gal. 2:11-21)*

Momentous matters and perplexing situations may arise in connection with things which within themselves are religiously indifferent. Even Peter became Paul's "weak" man and precipitated a crisis in the church when he "fearing them that were of the circumcision," ceased to eat with Gentile Christians. It was his Christian liberty to eat or not, as it was Paul's to circumcise or not, according to which choice would be in the interest of Christianity. When he chose not to eat in circumstances that introduced

the caste system into the church, thus destroying its universality, Paul had to resist him openly.

This occurrence in Antioch throws light on the difficult problem involved in Romans 14. The apostles did not differ in primary doctrines; Peter only *acted* as if they did. His cowardly conduct, which belied his doctrine, constituted his "dissimulation," or hypocrisy. Had Peter been a proud, headstrong, self-seeking man, the consequences would have been deadly. But his being honestly converted to Christ, "Crucified . . . unto the world" (Gal. 6:14), and Christian to the core, made it possible to show him the appalling results of his mistake. Who, knowing Peter, can doubt his eager readiness to heal the fresh wound he had ignorantly inflicted upon the body of his Lord? We know he took his correction meekly and continued to honor and love Paul (2 Peter 3:16, 17). Surely, God's purpose in recording this episode was that his church might have an example for all time of how differences over things that are within themselves neither right nor wrong ("Neither, if we eat not, are we the worse; nor, if we eat, are we the better" (1 Cor. 8:8), should be handled.

### Questions

1. To what is "A door opened, which no man can shut," applied in this "Study"?
2. What is conscience designed to do, and what is it designed not to do?
3. Why is trifling with his conscience so hazardous for a man?
4. How does Paul correct the deficiency of love in the "strong" and the deficiency of knowledge in the "weak"?
5. How admirably is Christianity adapted to develop ever-maturing nobility of personality in every Christian?
6. What does "Every man who is not dead to the flesh has within him a potential Pope and Pharisee," mean?
7. What may be learned about handling such differences as these in Romans 14 from the disagreement between Paul and Peter?

## LESSON 42

We can never know the full practical workings nor climb up to the highest fruit of Christianity until we distinguish between its inflexible doctrines and its flexible practices. The error that Paul fought so uncompromisingly in Galatians is primary error, for it robs Christianity of its super-human power to deliver men from sin and from sinning. Concerning this fundamental perversion, he could not have written either, "Let each man be fully assured in his own mind," or, "I know, and am persuaded in the Lord Jesus, that nothing is unclean of itself; save to him that accounteth anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean," as he writes in Rom. 14 concerning less vital, secondary errors.

*Heavenly Wisdom*

The arena wherein practical choices between primary and secondary things are to be made should be entered with "fear and trembling." The woeful mismanagement of things in this realm, which has plagued the church from of old, is still with us. Had matters, such as separating into classes for study, unfulfilled prophecy, and co-operation of congregations that, though they do not necessarily involve doctrines and practices contrary to the doctrine we have learned (are there not Christians on both sides?), disturb the church, had been dealt with in the Christian way, how different things would now be! Wise handling of puzzling situations which often arise in connection with such matters is the severest test of the acumen, wisdom, honesty, love, and all round, spiritual maturity of elders. Compared to the relatively simple duty of condemning moral breaches, prudent management of such complexities, demanding keen discernment, delicate balance, and righteous compromise, needs must be difficult. In this field, even Peter, lacking Paul's sincerity and spiritual insight, made his tragic mistake.

Nothing but pious study, earnest prayer, straight thinking, deep feeling, patient conference, and above all, brotherly love, will meet the requirements of Rom. 14. Neither snubby tolerance nor ruthless intolerance of a "weak" brother's honest "scruples," but sympathetic tolerance, born of love, that gives him, with the help of his brethren, time to outgrow his deficiencies will do. Tolerance neither leaves a brother alone in his false convictions nor takes them away from him by force. Capacity for this work must be included in the "wisdom," beyond human wisdom, which James says may be had through undoubting prayer. Can a Christian "Overthrow . . . the work of God," "Sin against Christ," and offend "The brother for whom Christ died"? Since Christ was so deadly earnest, must a Christian not be earnest? In this realm, Christians may get their best experiential discipline, ripest, sweetest "fruit of the Spirit," and greatest enrichment of personality and life.

Your conscience is the unchanging innate consciousness that you ought to do what you think is right and refrain from doing what you think is wrong. Both its constraining and restraining powers are great; it is the most searching test of conduct. When a conscientious man's convictions are wrong, his mind, not his conscience, needs changing. Paul's becoming a Christian changed his conscience no more than it hanged his memory. Every man must reverently obey his conscience; in violating it, he defiles his most holy place, and commits himself to the vicious principle of self-will and lawlessness—becomes, so to speak, a willing sinner. Neither the "weak" nor the "strong," even for the sake of peace, may force the conscience of the other. Before either can contend that discretionary matters involve his conscience at all, he must make the common error of mistaking his opinion, prejudice, pride, and stubbornness for his conscience.

Rom. 14 and 1 Cor. 8-10 supplemented by, "A factious man after the first and second admonition refuse; knowing that such a one is perverted, and sinneth, being self-condemned (condemned by his own conduct, not self-confessed)" (Titus 3:10, 11), give God's infinitely wise way of keeping his church free from proud, self-seeking, incorrigible men, who must rule or rain. God lets it be known, in this firm and final manner, that he does not intend to give contentious partisans the right to become petty, vexatious, destructive tyrants in his church.

Though we may not know all the reasons why Paul saw into the heart of truth better than Peter did, we do know that men are expected to interpret moral things, and judge their relative values. Said Christ to the Jews: "Ye, hypocrites, ye know how to interpret the face of the earth and the heaven; but how is it that ye know not how to interpret this time? And why even of yourselves judge ye not what is right" (Luke 12:56, 57)? Had the Jews been as much interested in God's way as they pretended to be, they would not have been so blind about Christ's identity.

Even so Christians are now expected to discern the difference between primary and secondary things, and to understand their relative importance. Christ still wants "Fullgrown men, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern good and evil" (Heb. 5:14)—men who can of themselves judge what is right. As parents rejoice to see their children, no longer needing directions about every detail, become able to reach sound moral judgments for themselves, so God rejoices to see his children grow in powers of spiritual interpretation and application of the principles of Christianity to actual life.

*Paul Himself Lived Rom. 14*

Paul, who at supreme cost heroically stood unflinchingly for all primary gospel truth, but, who in secondary things

became all things to all men that he might by all means save some (1 Cor. 9:22), is the best example of the Christian discrimination between essential truth and discretionary conduct. He gnawed on no bare bones, that he might give himself wholly to big, worthwhile things, including correction of the "weak" who were wrecking the church. He stressed no incidentals, and majored in no minors. And what truer measure of a man than the size of the thing he deems worthy of his best, lifelong endeavor and devotion?

Unbounded zeal in essential things, brotherly liberty in discretionary things, and tender toleration for the "weak" characterized Paul. He was very superior in mind, conscience, and energy, yet withal as sensitive in feeling as a gentle woman. His Christian blend of remarkable inflexibility in things divinely fixed, and his no less remarkable flexibility in secondary things accounts for his enduring, peerless power and influence in the church. Next to Christ himself, Paul is the best example of the strength, tenderness, adaptability, sanity and balanced wholeness of Christianity. "Brethren, be ye imitators together of me" (Paul).

### Questions

1. How important is it to differentiate between the primary error Paul combats in Galatians and the secondary errors he combats in Romans 14?
2. Why are problems involving secondary matters so hard to solve?
3. Why are the constraining and the restraining power of conscience such searching tests of conduct?
4. What grave mistake must a man make before he can think that discretionary matters involve his conscience at all?
5. Show by the Scriptures that God does not give a contentious man the right to be a vexatious, destructive tyrant in his church.
6. Does Christ's question, "And why even of yourselves judge ye not what is right?" apply to the realm that Romans 14 covers?
7. Show that Paul himself was a superlative example of the gospel he preaches in Romans 14.

## LESSON 43

Romans 14 ends with a plea for sincerity, consistency, and moral integrity. "Happy is he that judgeth not himself in that which he approveth. But he that doubteth is condemned if he eat, because he eateth not of faith; and whatsoever is not of faith is sin." This verse, in its setting, means that a man whose conscience prevents his doing what he thinks is wrong is a true, blessed man; but that a man whose conscience allows him to do what he thinks is wrong wrongs himself, for this violation of his conscience insulates the one point at the center of his moral being with which God can make spiritual contact.

Who can read this chapter without realizing that Christian doctrines are of unequal value, and that big and little things should never exchange places? Men must not make things which God does not make conditions of salvation tests of Christian fellowship, because in so doing they reject those whom God receives, and make divisions in the church over trifles. To separate believers from unbelievers is right, but to separate believers from other believers is wrong. Blessed is the Christian who keeps Christian things in Christian proportion.

Possibly, Paul's purpose in writing Romans 14 was to correct an acute condition in Rome, caused by the contention of the "weak" that only their view of eating idolatrous meat could be right, and that therefore the whole church must adopt it. In the very nature of things, men whose meekness does not equal their "weakness" are more likely, than are the "strong," to push their opinions and prejudices to the extremity of overriding the conscience of others, and to form parties in the church. In fact, proud, "weak" brethren may be so unconscious of their "weakness" that when they are told of it, instead of being grieved as Peter was when Paul rebuked him, they are



insulted. Romans 14 and 1 John 3:11, 12, "This is the message which we heard from the beginning, that we should love one another not as Cain was of the evil one, and slew his brother," make it impossible for any Christian to deny, as Cain did, that he is his "brother's keeper" (Gen. 4:9).

### *Twofold Truth and Unity*

Christian unity is so closely connected with the subject matter of Romans 14 that understanding it will help to understand and apply the teaching of this chapter. The church is an organism consisting of a solid core of fundamental, common truth surrounded by a wealth of variety and diversity in its members. All Christians must be irrevocably committed to this core of primary truth, but concerning the surrounding secondary truth, they must be adaptable.

The unity therefore of the church does not require the sameness of an ant hill, or the confinement of a prison cell. Differences in ability, personality, and maturity among the members of a congregation should be welcomed as a priceless asset, for they contribute to fulfillment of its worship and work. The existence and fruitfulness of any organism depend upon all its various parts doing their particular work—"Each for all and all for each." "If they (the members of a human body) were all one member, where was the body" (1 Cor. 12:19)? As God, in making a tree, gave it central unity and the necessary diversity of root, trunk, limb, and leaf, just so in building his church, he gave it central unity and the necessary diversity of its members, who must not be forced into a straight jacket of conventional conformity. Concerning secondary things, externally enforced uniformity breeds stagnation and decay; too much freedom (license) breeds disorder and anarchy. Yes, there is a liberty that destroys unity, and

there is a unity that destroys liberty. But "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty" (2 Cor. 3:17) and unity. And unity and liberty as they are interrelated in God's church (or tree) are cohesive and creative. "The Rock (God), his work is perfect" (Deut. 32:4). One of the most bitter, stubborn, and strategic fights of Paul's life was with the Jews for Christian freedom, spontaneity, and fulness against legal bondage, dead customs, and empty formalities of religion.

Ephesians 4:1-16 sets forth twofold Christian unity. It deals first with the constitutional, absolute "Unity of the Spirit," which comprises seven basic, unifying *facts*. This unity is the gracious, free gift of God through Christ in the Spirit, which must be kept "in the bond of peace." Then follows the relative, increasing unity of fellowship, which is progressively acquired through growth and experience. The former is the fruit of God's personal work, and is obtained from him. It is man's responsibility, through the "obedience of faith," to work out the latter "Till we all attain (*attained*, not *obtained*) unto the unity of the faith . . . unto him, who is the head, even Christ." In the realm of relative unity, no man can contend that "conscientious scruples and loyalty to principle" give him the freedom to destroy the freedom that is in Christ Jesus. Christ's free-men must be above contentions about secondary things. Knowing that Christian unity is organic unity in diversity, they examine their differences in love, with a sense of only partial knowledge, and learn in such matters to disagree without being disagreeable.

### Romans 15:1-13

In these verses, Paul gives deep, comprehensive emphasis to the mutual tolerance and tenderness that brethren of unequal spiritual knowledge and understanding should always manifest toward each other. In order to assure a

goodly yield of this choice, Christian fruit, he plows up the rich subsoil of the authority, antiquity, and utility of the Jewish Scriptures, and of God's personal character and methods, as he endlessly works to guide Jews and Gentiles unitedly to glorify him.

To serve as both model and motive for Christians, Paul weaves into this great passage part of Psalm 69:9, which states that Christ pleased not himself, but suffered reproaches, means for God, that the will of his Father might be done. It is instructive to note that John 2:17 uses the rest of this verse, "Zeal for thy house shall eat me up," to explain Christ's challenging Jewish hate by cleansing the temple. This bit of Scripture gives Paul, who, as all holy men are, is ever eager to magnify the sacred writings and their author, the occasion to write: "For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that through patience and through comfort of the Scriptures we might have hope. Now the God of patience and of comfort grant you to be of the same mind one with another according to Christ Jesus: that with one accord ye may with one mouth glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ."

### Questions

1. Explain Romans 14:23 in its context.
2. Enlarge upon, "Blessed is the Christian who keeps Christian things in Christian proportion."
3. Why are "weak" men more likely to be domineering than "strong" men are?
4. Why should any congregation of Christians welcome both constitutional and circumstantial diversity among its members?
5. Study the meaning of, "There is a liberty that destroys unity, and there is a unity that destroys liberty."
6. Explain the difference between absolute and relative unity (Eph. 4). Does understanding this difference support the teaching of Romans 14?
7. How does Paul in Romans 15:1-3 close his long, earnest plea for Christian unity in the midst of diversity?

## LESSON 44

The old, inbred, mutual intolerance of Jew and Gentile made their becoming "One new man" in Christ, "so making peace," difficult. Jews had been rocking in the cradle of law so long that they could scarcely learn to walk in grace. The Jew-Gentile question, a burning issue that threatened the very life of the early church from Cornelius onward, found a prominent place in the inspired writings of the time. Because the question involved the perpetual, elemental warfare between the flesh and the spirit, divine wisdom preserved these writings for us.

The way Paul brings this question into Romans again is evidence that it had a part in causing the unbrotherly behavior among brethren of different background and spiritual discernment. "For I say that Christ has been made a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, and that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy" (15:8, 9). This means Christ, not only fulfilled the promises God made the Jewish fathers, but also, though no promise was made Gentiles, God had them in mind from the beginning, and purposed out of pure, uncovenanted mercy, in due time, to graft them into the covenantal olive tree, that they too might have hope in Christ. To use another figure, God always intended Gentiles should draw from his public well of salvation, without having to get license from the Jews. Therefore, it being God's will that both be saved, Jews, praising God especially for his fidelity and Gentiles especially for his mercy, should be knit together in brotherly love, for no matter what they ate, or what days they kept, without "The Spirit of Christ" they were "none of his" (Romans 8:9).

A statement of this conclusion for Jews, particularly, who were the chief offenders in the feud (1 Thess. 2:14-16), might run: "Since God included the Gentiles in his

original plan, and since Christ now receives them, you should receive them too, without arrogant condescension." As final proof, Paul uses four Jewish Scriptures—the Law, the Psalms, and the Prophets all represented, as Christ himself used all three in his post-resurrection instruction (Luke 24:44)—to show that Christ was intended from of old for Gentiles as well as for Jews.

The Holy Spirit, knowing how selfish and loveless brethren would always be with one another about discretionary things, gave through Paul the timeless admonition: "Now we that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves . . . For Christ also pleased not himself." As a big brother in a family feels responsible for his little brother, so a Christian favored in brain, education, and personality should feel toward his brethren who are less favored in these particulars. Rather than flaunting his advantages, let him have them to himself "before God" (14:22); let him, remembering he is his "brother's keeper," use his ability and lawful liberty as trusts from God, in the "meekness and gentleness of Christ," to build up the whole church in love. If Christ bore all the wickedness his worst enemies could inflict, surely his disciples can forbear the weaknesses of their friends! If eating flesh caused his "brother to stumble," Paul would "Eat no flesh for evermore" (1 Cor. 8:13).

It is amazing how this simple, spiritual, sufficient divine way oils the machinery of church life, both corporately and individually. Without it, many tangled problems, including those that often arise concerning borderline vocations, entertainment, and amusements, are not soluble. I have read of a big dog, that ordinarily swam the swift river which ran through his master's estate, going far out of his way to a bridge, when a little dog was to cross with him!

*God and His Word*

The fact that Paul characterized God as "The God of patience . . . of comfort . . . of hope . . . of peace" (all in Romans 15) points up how fundamental to true religion God's character is. Inasmuch as worship fashions the character of worshippers after the character of the god they worship, Christians who worship God in spirit and truth will grow in patience, comfort, hope, and peace. Their worship at church, at home, and in secret must be designed and conducted in such a manner as to increase in them the sense of God's personal presence, reality, and character—upon this depend the depth and genuineness of their religion.

How can Christians afford to forsake their "own assembling together," when Christ, giving them the unspeakably blessed privilege of meeting and getting better acquainted with him, meets with them (Matt. 18:20)? Is not the abstruse spiritual meeting and communion with Christ, and the eating of him in order to live (John 6:57) the real purpose of their assembling? The less the inner, spiritual life and understanding worshippers have, the more importance they attach to outer, fleshly things, such as meats, days, forms, and ceremonies. Note that Paul's characterization of God with its bearing on worshippers supports his plea for the unity and peace of the church pertaining to things of no intrinsic moral value, for it is difficult to live in peace with impatient, peevish, hopeless, fussy people.

Paul finally takes leave of the subject, over which he has lingered from the beginning of chapter 14, with the great benedictory prayer: "Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, in the power of the Holy Spirit" (15:13). Behold, the largeness and fulness of this short prayer! Does

it not put to shame our poor, little praying? God is the God of eternal hope, which his worshippers drink in from him. Joy is energetic, peace is restful, and hope is an unfailing tonic for drooping spirits on dark days. But all depends on "believing," the deep, solid granite ledge upon which the human side of Christianity rests. "All things are possible to him that believeth," but not a single thing of endurance is possible until he believes.

The God of patience and of hope! What, if God should become impatient and lose hope! Has he not always had ample cause (has he any less cause now?) to grow weary of mankind? "It is of Jehovah's loving kindnesses that we are not consumed" (Lam. 3:22). God is patient, restful, and hopeful because he is eternal. "Through the ages one increasing purpose runs"—"One far-off divine event to which the whole creation moves." God is infallibly working out his glorious destiny for his universe (Col. 1:18-20). God's world must at last be right (Luke 18:7, 8). Give him time! "Blessed are all they that wait for him" (Isa. 30:18).

What of God's word? It is God's means, says Christ in John 6:44, 55, of drawing men, who hear and learn, to himself. Every line in the Bible from Genesis through Revelation was "written for our learning." But, no matter what other riches we may gather from its sacred pages, we have not "learned" until we come intelligently to God, worship him in spirit and in truth, and become "A habitation of God in the Spirit" through Christ (Eph. 2:13-22).

### Questions

1. Why was the Jew-Gentile question so prominent in the early church?
2. Why should Christian Jews praise God especially for his fidelity, and Christian Gentiles especially for his mercy?
3. Why does Paul use the Law, the Psalms, and the Prophets in Romans 15:9-12?

4. Why is the knowledge of God's character so necessary to his people?
5. Explain how the Lord's Supper helps Christians to understand and appropriate John 6:50-58.
6. What do you get from Romans 15:13 about the cooperation of God and man in prayer? about the benefits Christians derive by means of prayer?
7. Though preachers have preached, and men have heard the word of God, have men "learned" and come to Christ (John 6:45) unless God's very life is imparted to them by means of a spiritual birth?



## LESSON 45

“Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning,” and they are “profitable . . . that the man of God may be complete, furnished completely unto every good work.” The fact that these scriptures refer to the Old Testament welds the entire Bible into a perfect compend of God’s complete will for all mankind. Paul’s reminding Timothy that from a babe he had known the Jewish writings which were able to make him “wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ” clinches this invaluable truth. Only two of the many ways these writings make us wise unto salvation can now be considered .

First—The most difficult, yet absolutely necessary, thing for men of Adam’s fallen, broken race to learn is that they are so woefully wrecked and shattered that only the God who made them has the wisdom and power to repair, and make them whole again—that only the creator can re-create. Now, God’s history of humanity in the Old Testament is such that readers who are not convinced of the universal corruption and depravity of man’s heart, and of their own imperative, personal need of wisdom and strength beyond their own, are blind. To deepen this conviction if possible, however, many divine estimates of man, such as, “And Jehovah saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually” (Gen. 6:5), and “The heart is deceitful above all things, and is exceeding corrupt: who can know it?” (Jer. 17:9), are added to the history. In Romans 3, Paul quotes several passages from the Old Testament to prove that “There is none righteous, no, not one . . . for all have sinned.” In this manner does God lock every, individual man fast in the death house of sin, to which Christ is the only key.

All secular history, including the state of the world today, and conscience echo the truth that something catastrophic has befallen man. Only the fall of man can account for the moral contradiction within him, as described in Romans 7. Why should Christians be so slow to believe this cardinal Biblical doctrine?

Second—Painting a vivid picture of God as a real, living, active person (The truth at the heart of Christianity) is another way the Old Testament makes us wise unto salvation. For example, the doctrine of prevailing prayer comes more thrillingly alive when we see God, as in the case of King Hezekiah, in his workshop so to speak, actually answering prayer (2 Kings 20:1-11). In this bit of inspired history, after he had, through Isaiah, told the king, who “was sick unto death” that he would die, God, because the king “wept sore” and prayed to live, answered: “I have heard thy prayer, I have seen thy tears: behold, I will heal thee . . . And I will add unto thy days fifteen years.” And do we not still need to know that God punishes men “That say in their heart, Jehovah will not do good, neither will he do evil” (Zeph. 1:12) “These things happened unto them by way of example: and they were written for our admonition” (1 Cor. 10:11). As “God is one,” even so is his Bible also one.

We must never forget that the Bible as a whole furnishes, in principle, the way “completely unto every good work.” The time, money, energy, and influence that Christians spend futilely trying to “save” the world by doing things in ways that God never asked them to use is something to think on. Good things, to be sure—things inevitably by-products of Christianity, would Christians but seek in faith first God’s kingdom and his righteousness, according to the word and example of Christ and of Paul. To discover by experience that our small buckets grow in receiving capacity, and that our short ropes lengthen pro-

gressively, as we perpetually draw from the deep, living wells of infinite knowledge and wisdom in the Bible should ever lead us up to its author "beyond the sacred page."

### *Paul's Province*

(Rom. 15:22-28; 2 Cor. 10:13-18)

From 15:14 to its close, Romans is largely personal—Paul and his friends. This does not mean, however, that the ending of the book is weak, or that it does not invite and reward serious study. This record of the fruits of the gospel in the life of Paul (and in the lives of scores of his friends) gives point to his frequent exhortations that Christians imitate him, and also makes an appropriate, practical, powerful close for the mighty doctrinal Treatise.

Apart from what is found in the book of Romans, little can be known about the founding and early history of the church in Rome. Possibly, some "sojourners from Rome" (Acts 2:10) became Christians at Pentecost, and upon returning home, of course took the church with them. In any event, by the time Romans was written some 25 years after Pentecost, a good, strong church, which Paul had in vain longed to visit for many years, existed there. Among the 24 men and women, whom Paul salutes by name in Romans 16 as dear friends known elsewhere, are some of his "kinsmen . . . who are of note among the apostles." Others are saluted as tireless, proficient Christian workers, whom we know from other Scriptures to be just such Christians. We are not surprised, therefore, at Paul's writing: "And I myself also am persuaded, my brethren, that ye yourselves are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, and able to admonish one another."

Since such commendation might seem to make his writing Rome at all, needless and presumptuous, Paul explains that God chose him as "A minister of Christ Jesus unto the Gentiles" at large, and that he feels obligated to stir

up their sincere minds by putting them in remembrance as long as he lives. The Corinthian Letters make it plain that Paul's envious, malicious foes in Corinth, thinking to get rid of him, tauntingly said that he had no right to be in Corinth at all—that his wide evangelistic travels were too ambitious for a man of his caliber. Seemingly the slander was known at Rome also. Second Corinthians 10:13-18 and Romans 15:22-28, in which he boldly asserts that the world is his "province," and that he does not "stretch . . . overmuch" his commission and right in the broadest reaches of his labors and successes, is his nobly Christian answer.

"Oh how the angels would rejoice if 10,000 men who preach for established and settled churches would gather up their belongings and go to some place where the gospel is unknown!" (Reuel Lemmons in the *Firm Foundation*, July 3, 1956).

### Questions

1. Prove by the Scriptures that the Bible as a unit is a perfect compend of God's complete will for men, and that it was written for our learning.
2. Show that the writings of the Old Testament help prepare men, by teaching them their desperate need of Christ, to accept him as their Savior.
3. What evidence outside the Bible itself supports the cardinal Biblical doctrine that man without divine intervention is hopelessly lost?
4. How does the story of Hezekiah prove a truth that lies at the root of Christianity, namely, that God is a real, living, acting Person?
5. How is it to be accounted for that, though Christians are completely equipped in the church to do every good work, they sometimes do their good works in ways not furnished in the church?
6. What are the nature and value of Romans from 15:14 to its close?
7. Why does Paul feel the need to justify his world-wide gospel labors, and his visit to the strong, capable church in Rome?

## LESSON 46

In his introduction to Romans (1:8-15), Paul told the church that he had longed, prayed "unceasingly," and "oftentimes purposed" to visit them that he might have some fruit in them "also, as in the rest of the Gentiles," but that he had been "hindered hitherto." Now, in his program as outlined here in chapter 15, he, keenly conscious that by divine appointment the whole Gentile world is his "province," says that, since his work in East Europe is done, he is ready for a tour of West Europe, which affords an occasion for both the long-anticipated visit and their having fellowship with him when he goes on into Spain.

In his language, "That I should be a minister of Christ unto the Gentiles, ministering the gospel of God, that the offering up of the Gentiles might be made acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy Spirit," Paul paints a faithful, beautiful picture not only of the nature of the Christian ministry in general, but also of the deeply religious nature of his apostleship to the Gentiles in particular. He sees himself as an officiating priest, who by preaching the gospel to the Gentiles leads them to offer themselves up as sacrifices to God, the Holy Spirit being the sanctifying Person. In other words, at his preaching and their believing, the Holy Spirit descends upon them to enable them to become living sacrifices to be consumed for God's glory upon the altar of love and service.

Inasmuch as Paul's lifetime work among the Gentiles is at last opening up in the West, why does he take a long, perilous journey to the East? Why does he collect money from Gentile churches for poor saints in Jerusalem? There existed in the church a party of Jewish zealots that was destroying the unity and universality of the church. Hence, "That the truth of the gospel might continue" (Gal. 2:5), Paul hopes by a brotherly exchange of "spiritual"

and "carnal" things between Jewish and Gentile Christians to guide them both into realizing that Christ created "In himself of the two one new man, so making peace; and might reconcile them both in one body unto God through the cross" (Eph. 2:15, 16).

### *The Power and Mystery of Prayer*

From Paul's writings and the book of Acts, we know that the Jews (even many Christians) were so suspicious of him that he was forced, repeatedly, to defend his apostolic authority. Nothing but utter devotion to Christ and passionate love for his kinsmen after the flesh could have induced him to visit Jerusalem again. That he went "bound in the spirit" with grim forebodings of what might befall him there is revealed in the address to the Ephesian elders (Acts 20), which he made on his way to Jerusalem soon after Romans was written. This is the background of his earnest plea: "Now I beseech you, brethren, by the Lord Jesus Christ, and by the Spirit, that ye strive together with me in your prayers to God for me; that I may be delivered from them that are disobedient in Judea, and that my ministration which I have for Jerusalem may be acceptable to the saints" (15:30, 31). What could better portray the Jewish bitterness against Paul, and the crucial discord in the church than the fact that Jewish Christians, though in distress, might refuse relief which he brought from Gentile Christians?

Note the earnestness of this prayer. "Strive" implies agonizing wrestling with a strong, determined foe. Just so, prayer to God is prayer against Satan, "the strong man" who must be bound (Christ)—must be strangled, else he "sure will strangle thee." The world is currently concerned about the importance of Air Power in warfare. One may be uncertain about this question, but Paul has no doubt, in the war of the church with "the prince of the

powers of the air" (Eph. 2:2)—"powers" composed of "spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places" and "world-rulers of this darkness"—with his "tares" and "wiles," that the "Air Force" of "All prayer and supplication," since it gives effectiveness to the whole Christian armor, is the decisive power in the war. (See Eph. 6:10-18.)

Prayer, a great, blessed mystery and fact, taps the power of almighty God. There is nothing in radio and television that approaches its space-bridging wonder and usefulness. The wonder and power of prayer, however, in making wishes come true has nothing in common with Aladdin rubbing his magic lamp and ring as in oriental fable, or with overweening occidental Science. Rather, God's integrating and humanly inscrutable economy of prayer, unspeakably, blesses Christians by having them contribute to the answering of their own prayers, which makes them fellow-workers with God in the destiny of both themselves and of the world.

### *The Indispensability of Prayer*

Some say that the two things for which Paul in such deep-toned earnestness and sincerity asks the co-prayers of the church in Rome are not fit subjects for prayer—that such mundane things lie wholly within the realm of human responsibility and activity. But to Paul, what concerns the church concerns Christ, because they are one, even as a man's head and body are one. He makes no nice distinctions between "sacred" and "secular" things for Christians, but *believing* and "continuing steadfastly in prayer," he practices as he preaches, "Let your requests be made known to God," as naturally and confidently as a child in need goes to its mother. As Christ, who said, "This kind can come out by nothing, save by prayer" (Mark 9:29), and as the earlier apostles, who named prayer be-

tore preaching (Acts 6:4), made prayer indispensable, so does Paul make prayer indispensable.

Probably, Paul could pray a prayer that Fenelon, a French churchman, wrote about 250 years ago better than its author could, or than we can. The prayer reads: "O Father, give to thy child that which he knows not how to ask. I dare not ask either for crosses or for consolations. Behold, my need which I know not myself. See and do according to thy tender mercies. Smite or heal; depress me or raise me up. I adore thy purposes without knowing them. I am silent; I yield myself to thee; I would have no other desire than to accomplish thy will. Teach me to pray. Pray thyself in me. (See 2 Cor. 12:7-10.)

How real, near, and dear God, Christ, and Spirit, whom Paul links together in this prayer, all are to Paul and his brethren! How good and usable to hear him extol the God of "Patience . . . Comfort . . . Hope . . . Peace" as he does in this chapter, which is so full of the frowning situation that confronts him, and of the huge burden that weights him down. Is not he pattern saint as well as chosen apostle?

### Questions

1. Explain Paul's figure of his being a priest, offering up the Gentiles as a sacrifice to God.
2. What psychology was involved in moving Paul, when his heart was set on the West, to spend so much time, labor, and travel on Jerusalem in the East?
3. What is the background of the agony of earnestness in prayer which Paul begs his brethren in Rome to share with him?
4. How is it that prayer to God is prayer against Satan?
5. Is there any analogy between prayer and radio, television, and the Air Power in carnal warfare?
6. Cite a case of Christ's making prayer indispensable, and a case of his making it the alternative of fainting.
7. What do you think of Fenelon's prayer?



## LESSON 47

In Romans 15, Paul states his lifetime purpose as follows: "Making it my aim so to preach the gospel, not where Christ was already named, that I might not build on another man's foundation." His journey to Jerusalem, as we have seen, was tributary to this purpose. Christ's words to Ananias, "He is a chosen vessel to me, to bear my name before the Gentiles and kings," kept him loyally waging a broad, uncomprising war against the usurping "God of this world . . . Satan, the deceiver of the whole world," Christ's inveterate enemy.

Alongside this great, Godlike purpose, Paul, knowing the inadequacy of human power for this superhuman task, names the divine power that came to strengthen him: "Christ wrought through me . . . for the obedience of the Gentiles, by word and deed, in the power of signs and wonders, in the power of the Holy Spirit." This verse with its context ascribes the miracles that attended and confirmed Christianity in its beginning to the power of the "Holy Trinity." All that God and Christ had previously contributed to the making of Christianity united in the Spirit on Pentecost with a burst of power, so that, since then, "The power of the Holy Spirit" is the power of Father, Son, and Spirit. Instead of coming in place of God and Christ, the Spirit brings them to men. This accords with Christ's instructions to his apostles: "When he, the Spirit of truth, is come . . . he shall glorify me . . . All things whatsoever the Father hath are mine: therefore said I, he taketh of mine, and shall declare it unto you" (John 16:13-15). In the divine economy, both in nature (Gen. 1:1-3) and in religion, the power of the Godhead comes to a perfected focus in the Holy Spirit.

Inasmuch as Paul has already prayed (v. 13) that "The God of hope" might fill the Christians in Rome with "All

joy and peace . . . (and) hope, in the power of the Holy Spirit," the power that sustains, as well as the power that makes, Christians is "The power of the Holy Spirit." The one God, who gives men justification through His Son, dwells in justified men through his re-creating, sanctifying Spirit (v. 16). "For through him (Christ) we both (Jew and Gentile) have our access in one Spirit unto the Father . . . builded together for a habitation of God in the Spirit" (Eph. 2:18-22). There is but one line of approach for men to God, always through Christ, the Spirit, and the word—the word for instruction, Christ for justification, and the Spirit for sanctifying power. The Holy Spirit did not exhaust himself in his incidental, inaugural miracles, for he is eternal, unwasting God, Christ, and Spirit integrated, and at work saving the lost, through the instrumentality of the word. God is no more limited to miracles in religion than he is in nature.

### *The Spirit and the Church*

Christ told his disciples that God would "give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him" (Luke 11:13). He also taught: "If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, from within him shall flow rivers of living water" (John 7:37, 38). When John wrote his book many years later, he explains: "This spake he of the Spirit, which they that believeth on him were to receive: for the Spirit was not yet given; because Christ was not glorified." Christ promised the Spirit to every believer.

After his resurrection, a few days before his ascension and glorification, Christ in preparation for the fulfillment of this promise, charged his apostles not to leave Jerusalem until God's promise, through him that they should be "baptized in the Holy Spirit not many days hence," thus becoming "clothed with power from on high" (Luke 24:49), was fulfilled. He concluded the charge: "Ye shall receive

power, when the Holy Spirit is come upon you" (Acts 1:4-8).

How "the eternal Spirit," "the Holy Spirit of promise," was "poured forth" by the glorified Christ, and how the apostles "were all filled with the Holy Spirit" and "clothed with power from on high," is recorded in Acts 2. The common idea that the resurrection of Christ supplied the new power found in the apostles and the church after Pentecost does not satisfy readers of the inspired records. Weeks after his resurrection, but days before his glorification, Christ told his waiting, expectant apostles that they could receive the prerequisite, promised power when the Spirit came. It is scriptural to associate enabling power with the Spirit, prevenient grace with God, and vicarious suffering with Christ.

That the church of God and of Christ began as a church with the coming of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost is no more certain than that, when the church began, the Holy Spirit took up his residence in it, as "the house of God." The two supreme gifts, *age-lasting gifts*, to the church were forgiveness of sins and the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38). Peter is soon speaking of "The Holy Spirit, whom God hath given to them that obey him" (Acts 5:32), as his permanent co-witness.

Since only men "full of the Holy Spirit" could "serve tables," Stephen, "A man full of faith and the Holy Spirit" was chosen for this work (Acts 6:2-5). Barnabas, "A good man, and full of the Holy Spirit and of faith" (Acts 11:24), was soon prominent in the church. Later, Gentile Christians in distant Pisidia were "filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit" (Acts 13:52). Faith, joy, and the Holy Spirit dwelt together in these early Christians. As men believed and obeyed the gospel, joy and the Spirit entered into them, as inevitable workings of the gospel; the gospel was made to work this way. Consequently, to be filled

with the Spirit and to go on their "way rejoicing" were the normal experiences of all Christians. In view of this fact, and the additional fact that Christ promised the Spirit to *every believer*, why are many Christians today joyless and doubtful of the Holy Spirit's indwelling presence? Really, do you know why?

### *Paul Lived in the Power of the Spirit*

Romans 15 is full of the Holy Spirit. Twice, the expression, "In the power of the Holy Spirit," occurs; once, the Spirit is named as the Sanctifier of converts, and once, as the Inspirer of love among brethren (v. 30). Paul teaches in this chapter that his rich, dynamic life was lived in the power of the Holy Spirit; that the Spirit permeated and energized him, "spirit and soul and body," for God's work.

### Questions

1. Explain how it is that instead of coming in place of God and Christ, the Holy Spirit brings both God and Christ to men.
2. Study: The one God who gives men justification through his Son, dwells in justified men through his recreating, sanctifying Spirit.
3. Cite a Scripture in which Christ promised the Spirit to every believer, and another in which he told the apostles they would receive power when the Holy Spirit came. When and how were these promises fulfilled?
4. Verify: It is scriptural to associate prevenient grace with God, vicarious suffering with Christ, and enabling power with the Holy Spirit.
5. Consider: There is but one line of approach for men to God, always through Christ, the Spirit, and the word—the word for instruction, Christ for justification, and the Spirit for sanctification.
6. Name two age-lasting gifts which were given to the church on Pentecost.
7. Does Paul teach in Romans 15 that the Holy Spirit is the power that both makes and sustains Christians, and that his own rich, dynamic life was lived "in the power of the Holy Spirit"?

## LESSON 48

Christ told Paul at his conversion that he would be "Filled with the Holy Spirit" (Acts 9:17). After a sketchy record of the first years of Paul's Christian life, a much fuller record begins when the Holy Spirit starts him on his particular mission to the Gentiles (Acts 13:2). As he began this world-wide work, Paul, "filled with the Holy Spirit," draws, with military brevity and finality, the indelible line of battle between Christ and the usurping Devil for the possession of the world, a line across which no fraternizing of the contending armies can be, in his forthright assault upon Elymas the sorcerer: "O full of all guile and all villainy, thou son of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord" (Acts 13:8-12).

Need readers of Paul be reminded that he himself repeatedly affirms that he lived, labored, suffered, rejoiced, and faced death "In the power of the Holy Spirit?" or that he repeatedly admonishes his converts: "Be filled with the Spirit," "Quench not the Spirit," "Grieve not the Holy Spirit . . . which dwelleth in us," and reject not God, who giveth the Holy Spirit to us" (1 Thes. 4:8). This earnest admonishing shows that Christians have a responsibility in the matter.

*Paul's Repentance*

To compare the powerful, hopeful Paul of Romans 15 with the powerless, hopeless Paul, who cried in helpless despair, "Wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me out of the body of this death" in chapter 7, before he experienced the power of "God in the Spirit" as set forth in chapter 8, throws light on the nature of repentance. The earlier heroic, but overpowered Paul is the natural man at his best before he gets power beyond his own to strengthen him in the fierce, unequal duel with "the flesh." Does not

this Paul suggest a great electric locomotive, ready to go, except the power to make it go. No more is power the crux in machinery than is power the crux in Christian men.

Men who have not learned that Adam's despoiled race has lost both the power to do right and the power to refrain from doing wrong, as Paul learned it, have made poor use of Biblical and secular history, and of their personal experience. Furthermore, men who knew that they have lost this power must also know that it cannot be recovered by human power—that it is "Not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God" (John 1:13).

The central, living power that makes Christianity go is God Himself, who meets the universal, imperative human need of power "With power through his spirit in the inward man" (Eph. 3:16). Apart from God in Christ, no Justification; apart from God in the Spirit, no "Sanctification, without which no man shall see the Lord." It takes Christianity in totality to re-create fallen man with his disorganized, fatally twisted personality. The finishing touch of the awful picture that Paul paints of the church in the "grievous times" of the last days is: "Holding a form of godliness, but having denied the power thereof" (2 Tim. 3:1-5). This Scripture is the faithful portrayal of the church, dead because it holds Christian forms, empty of the indwelling power of "God in the Spirit."

Paul's writings show his profound insight into the spiritual meaning of the Old Testament, which is full of man's inability to live when he is out of gear with God. Probably he poured over the book of Job with its supreme doctrine that the Creator accepts only men who know their creatural limitation and failure. Job was the best man on earth (1:8), but he was proud of his goodness, and ready in touchy pride, even unto the disparagement of God, to defend his good name before men—in short, he was man-centered, and claimed human merit. "He was righteous in

his own eyes . . . and justified himself rather than God" (32:1-3). He had to learn that he was but a creature—even a fallen creature. After God asked him some eighty questions, none of which he could answer, or was expected to answer, though he had been contending "That he would maintain the right of a man with God" (16:21), he contritely confessed: "I have uttered that which I understood not . . . wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes" (42:6-9).

The Old Testament is brimming with essential religious truth. In the book of Job, a man by faith climbs up to God through inexplicable suffering. In Ecclesiastes, a man by sight tumbles down into unrelieved gloom and emptiness. Neither the best man nor the wisest of men can direct his steps. Job's sin was spiritual pride and self-righteousness; Solomon's sin was fleshly pride and self-indulgence. Pride! the ruin of angels and men! The drama of Job, perhaps God's first written message to man, certainly should help Paul and all other men to know their eternal condemnation in Adam, if left to themselves (Rom. 5:12-21).

When Job repented, he cried: "I abhor myself." At last, realizing man's intellectual ignorance and moral corruption before God, Job lost his confidence in man, as man. After his trust in human wisdom and righteousness was punctured, "Jehovah blessed the latter end of Job more than the beginning," and restored his possessions twofold. Men's giving God His rightful place conditions them to receive His "latter-end" blessings. Repentance requires fallen, rejected men to turn, not only from their personal sins, but also from what they are by birth. "That which is born of flesh is flesh . . . Ye must be born anew" (Christ). "Repentance unto salvation" plows much deeper than mere surface reformation.

Paul, repenting as Job repented, abhorred himself. Declaring that he had "no confidence in the flesh," he repudi-

ated all fleshly values, counting them but "refuse" that he "might gain Christ" (Phil 3:2-11). Inasmuch as no man can serve two masters, Paul had to die unto self before he could "live unto God." He puts it: "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I that live, but Christ liveth in me" (Gal. 2:19, 20). This means that Paul had to put his fleshly self out to make room for Christ to come in, take over, and express Himself through Paul's regenerated personality. Paul learned the secret of *how* to ask God for the Holy Spirit, whom Christ says God gives to them that ask Him. (Luke 11:13). As water flows naturally and freely into irrigable gardens, so the Holy Spirit flows religiously and freely into penitent, congenial human spirits.

Paul preached "Both to Jews and Gentiles repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ" (Acts 20:21). Until men cease refusing God His prerogatives and repent toward Him, they cannot believe in His Christ. And they cannot repent toward God until they, with Job and Paul, abhor themselves, and "repent in dust and ashes."

#### Questions

1. By what power did Paul in Acts 13:8-12 draw the indelible line of battle between God and Satan for the dominion of the world?
2. Does not Paul's exhorting Christians to "be filled with the Spirit" and to "grieve not the Holy Spirit" that dwelt in them show that a Christian is to blame if he "hath not the Spirit"?
3. Is not the lack of "power through his (God's) Spirit in the inward man" the fatal deficiency of the baffled Christian in Romans 7?
4. Is not man as a child of Adam alive to sin and dead to righteousness? What evidence apart from the Bible supports this thesis?
5. Name the living, central Power that makes and keeps Christians.
6. Should not the books of Job and Ecclesiastes have helped Paul to see that gospel repentance requires fallen, reprobate men to turn away from not only their personal sins, but also from what they are by birth?
7. Where is the Scripture that portrays the church, dead because it clings to dead, Christian forms and customs, empty of the indwelling Power of "God in the Spirit"?



## LESSON 49

Throughout the Bible, "God is one." This eternal Oneness of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Spirit was taught by Christ so plainly and earnestly that the Jews said he blasphemed. God, Christ, and the Spirit interweave their redemptive workings over the centuries until they culminate and focus "In the power of the Holy Spirit" on Pentecost into a working unit—the church.

Workings of the "Trinity" in justifying, sanctifying, and glorifying men are as inseparable as are the working of light, heat, and energy of the sun in making grass. To use a simpler comparison, as the power of steering wheel, transmission gears, and wheels are integrated to run cars, so the power of Father, Son and Spirit is integrated to save sinners. The constituent parts in such cases, not named, are implied. For example, to make Paul's "Christ in you, the hope of glory," read, "God, Christ, and the Spirit in you, the hope of glory," is but to state Paul's gospel more fully, not to alter it. "Christ in you" is therefore, also "The Spirit in you." To remember that the expressions, "The Spirit," "The Spirit of God," and "The Spirit of Christ" are all three used in one verse (Rom. 8:9) to designate the Holy Spirit is helpful in studying the question of the Spirit.

*"The Mysteries of the Kingdom" (Christ)*

With Paul's prayer for the Ephesians, "Unto the Father . . . that ye may be strengthened with power through his Spirit in the inward man; that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith," with his reminder to the Corinthians, "Know ye not that ye are a temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you," and with many more Scriptures to the same effect, all Christians surely believe, in some sense at least, that the Holy Spirit dwells in them.

A common reaction to this truth however, is doubt that

the Holy Spirit himself actually dwells in us, because we do not see *how* he can do so. Are not we who "Walk by faith, not by sight" inconsistent in demanding to understand God's mode of working? In nature, we make no such demand. Does not this reaction take the matter out of the realm of faith? Christianity begins with "Great is the mystery of godliness" and continues with Christians "Holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience" (1 Tim. 3:9-16). Christians believe that "God is a Spirit," and that, as he says, "Not by might . . . but by my Spirit" (Zech. 4:6) his works are performed. They refuse to regard what they do not understand as ultimately inexplicable. They cannot believe that God, were he unable to dwell in them without violating their basic moral nature, would mock them by telling them that he can do so. All this is but simple elementary Christian faith.

All attempts to explain such mysteries as how God's foreknowledge leaves man free to choose, or as how spirits can mix and commune with each other without losing their individuality, are inadequate, for none of them probe to the kernel of the matter. Moreover, since the benefits of God in religion depend no more on man's understanding the process involved than they do in nature, such vain attempts are quite uncalled for. But worse, do they not signify a mistrustful heart? If such mysteries, uninvited and unwelcome, intrude and disturb us, to remember that God reminded Job, by a long list of questions that he could not answer, of his creatural limitations and pride in order to set him in his place, repenting, should bring us to our knees, repenting and seeking more faith.

Should not baffling animal instinct, astounding workings of our minds, including their complex reflex and deep subconscious activities, and the insoluble mystery of the origin and growth of our own spirits so frangibly dwelling in us to be dismissed at last by grisly death against our struggling

wills—should not these mysteries, and many, very many, more (the speaking of Balaam's ass and Saul's interview with Samuel, brought up from "the gulph of death," to name two) condition us to accept by faith that on Pentecost Christ "poured forth" his Spirit, and has continued to infuse his Spirit into the spirits of his own ever since? Does not the spiritual likeness and affinity between God and man, made in God's image, make this, at least, not impossible and incredible? Christ's prayer for Christians, "That they all may be one; even as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they may also be in us . . . I in them, and thou in me, that they may all be perfected into one" (John 17), is not to be explained, thank God, just simply believed and used.

Did not Adam's companionship with God in Eden, similarly to the instinct of animals possibly, keep him from all sin and error? Is not Christianity God's way to break man's rebel spirit and bring him back to the original life-preserving fellowship with himself, again guided and guarded by his wisdom and power? Is an unfinished, pre-Pentecostal Christianity before the Spirit was given equal to the super-human task of re-creating a dead humanity? Would God plan and work from all eternity past to give his Spirit to Christians who would not need him?

The Holy Spirit himself pleads with Christians not to resist, grieve, and do despite unto him. Did not Paul's honest response to these pleadings, and his unreserved surrender to Christ account for his, "I can do all things in him that strengtheneth me," and for his superlatively powerful life? Who knows to what depths the Spirit by his writings and prayers in unutterable groanings for us may not yet permeate, impregnate, and vitalize our spirits, if we but present them, all stops open, for his harmonizing, enabling deep workings, "according to the power that worketh in us?" How much of our Laodicean lukewarmness is due

to our failure to let God use the power he has provided for our strengthening?

*“Through Faith”*

In his prayer that the Ephesians might be strengthened through the power of the Spirit in the inward man, and that Christ might dwell in their hearts through faith, Paul reveals the practical “how” of God’s indwelling Christians. It is through and according to their faith. By his question, “Receiveth ye the Spirit by the works of law, or by the hearing of faith,” he reminds the Galatians that they got the Spirit by believing the gospel, just as they got the remission of their sins—no miracle, no magic, no burglarizing invasion of their personality. God’s workings are so perfected that his supernatural unites with his natural without a discernible joint. Everything God does for Christians must ever be in conjunction and agreement with his word—never contrary.

**Questions**

1. Does to make Paul’s “Christ in you, the hope of glory,” read, “God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit in you, the hope of glory,” alter Christian doctrine?
2. Do men need to understand the mode of God’s workings in religion, any more than they do in nature, to receive his benefits?
3. Is it true that Christians refuse to regard what they do not understand as being basically inexplicable?
4. May not the mystery of animal instinct, and many more mysteries, throw suggestive, analogous light upon the mystery of God’s Spirit permeating and strengthening man’s spirit?
5. Is Christ’s prayer that Christians may all be one, having him in them as God is in him and he in God, to be intellectually understood?
6. Is it reasonable to think that God would plan and work from all eternity past to give his Spirit to Christians who would not need such Power?
7. Think on: No restraint, except what the lack of faith imposes, is to be put upon the word and promise of God through Christ in the Spirit.

## LESSON 50

While it is not essential to the working of the "One God and Father of all, who is over all, and through all, and in all" that men know *how* he performs his work, it is essential, if they are to reap the fruits of his religious workings, that they know how to cooperate with him, and that they chose to do so. This basic knowledge, which God is kind enough to vouchsafe in his Word, is that, from start to finish, men must humbly trust, wholly obey, and actually depend upon him for wisdom and power—belief, obedience, and dependence are the key words. Only the triune God dwelling in men can heal their inherently dislocated, depraved nature. What relief, gratitude, and hope that fumbling, ineffectual man may resign to him who is willing and able all responsibility for both means and results!

A sufficient answer to unbelievers who say that this robs Christians of incentive, ambition and energy, and makes life colorless and unchallenging—in a word, depersonalizes them—is Paul himself. Within three days at Damascus, Paul passed through a form of death and resurrection which so identified him with Christ that Christ lived in him and express himself through him, thus supplementing Paul's natural powers. Instead of his natural powers being suppressed, they were, with Paul's eager cooperation of course, geared into divine power, and strengthened, heightened, and made effective so that Paul was no longer unable to do what he willed and struggled desperately to do (Rom. 7:19).

Though Paul did not understand all about how God worked in him, he knew that God did, and left the making of his life in God's hands. Paul, having "no confidence in the flesh" (Phil. 3:3), relinquished the antichristian, fleshly struggle after sanctification, as he had relinquished such struggling after justification. This alert passivity

toward God filled him with both "all the fulness of God." as he prayed the Ephesians might be, and with all activity toward men.

Paul's own, oft-repeated explanation of his deep, constitutional change was that Christ "In the power of the Holy Spirit" lived in him, and gave him strength beyond his own, according to his need. The Spirit never did anything for, in, or through Paul, however, against his will and effort. We need not fear that God will make us more fruitful socially, or better personally—less worldly, more liberal givers, or more devout worshippers—than we both will and work to be. As electricity flows through a wire into things not insulated, so the Holy Spirit flows through faith into spiritual men, for they are not insulated by the flesh.

This involves the New birth "of water and the Spirit," which Christ in an interview with Nicodemus makes an indispensable condition of entrance into the kingdom of God. Christ explained to Nicodemus, who was puzzled about "how" he could be born again, that, since the "how" of the birth was as independent of direct human power and control as was the "how" of the wind, he must leave it to God (John 3:3-12). The creation of the "new man" (Eph. 2:15), as was the creation of Adam, is the work of God. Nicodemus' part was as simple and down to earth, however, as was setting a sail to use the mysterious wind to run his boat.

At the set time for establishing the kingdom, the glorified Christ sent the Spirit to preside over its inauguration. When believers on that occasion (Pentecost) asked for directions, the Spirit replied: "Repent ye, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins; and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38). Beginning then, to all who are "born of water and the Spirit" into his family (kingdom or church), because this is the way to ask him for the

Holy Spirit (Luke 11:13), God gives, as a birthright, the indwelling, family Spirit, "Crying, Abba, Father" (Gal. 4:6).

Men who received the word of the Spirit on Pentecost were "Born of water and the Spirit." If Nicodemus was among them, he had consented to let God do a work in him (Phil. 2:13), which he could neither do for himself nor understand (not expected to do so) after God did it. Should this unconditional surrender to God seem difficult to men otherwise irrevocably lost? Have men today who have not obeyed the Pentecostal word of the Spirit been born into the kingdom?

### *Eternal Life*

Did not Adam's creation in God's likeness include, so long as he was loyal to God, eternal life? In his fall away from God, he lost eternal life, but not eternal existence. Christ said to the Jews: "Work not for the bread that perisheth, but for the bread which abideth unto eternal life, which the Son of man shall give unto you: for him the Father, even God, hath sealed." Again, "He that believeth hath eternal life" (John 6:27-47). 1 John 5:11, 12 adds: "The witness is this that God hath given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son, hath the life: he that hath not the Son, hath not the life." Mankind is thus divided into two mutually exclusive classes: men with eternal life, and men with merely eternal existence—spiritual men and fleshly men.

In his talk with Nicodemus, Christ recognizes these two classes of men, and calls the process which restores eternal life to eternally existing men of Adam's fallen posterity, that they may come into the kingdom of God and again possess real life—"The life which is life indeed" (1 Tim. 6:19)—a New Birth. He tells Nicodemus that instead of man's merely making the application of a moral lesson

which he has learned, in this birth God imparts his own, eternal, personal life to men who are dead through trespasses and sins, without God and hope in the world (Eph. 2:1-12), as in fleshly birth a father imparts his fleshly life. Clearly, each of these births, as does the wind, requires superhuman, "heavenly things."

Eternal, spiritual life for men, both before and after death, is life lived in relation to eternal, spiritual realities, as fleshly life is life in relation to temporal, fleshly shadows. Unregenerated men live dominated by the flesh. When they are regenerated, they begin again to live eternal lives dominated by the Spirit, such as Adam lived before he fell. Eternal life is to be thought of rather as life above death, hence untouched by death, than as life after death. If Adam lost original eternal life through sin, restored eternal life may be lost again through sin.

Our present Christian life is the life of God himself restored to us in Christ. Of course it survives death. In speaking of his own probable death, Paul says that it would be "gain" to him, for, after death, he would enjoy fuller fellowship with Christ than was possible on earth (Phil. 1:21-23). This view of human life as one eternal piece, which the incident of death does not disrupt, gives Christianity an unspeakable worth, power, and appeal above all other religions to a dead, hopeless world. Even the body is discarded but temporarily, for, when the Lord comes, it shall be raised from the tomb a spiritual body.

### Questions

1. Though men need not know how God works in them, what knowledge do they need? What are, on a human level, the three key words of Christianity?
2. Does not Paul's own life refute the slander that Christianity cheapens life, even unto depersonalizing Christians?
3. Consider: As electricity flows through a wire into things not insulated, so the Holy Spirit flows through faith into spiritual men because they are not insulated by the flesh.



4. Why was the bewilderment of Nicodemus about the New Birth idle and wholly unnecessary?
5. Study: To all who are "born of water and the Spirit" into his family, God gives, because this is the divinely appointed way to ask for the Holy Spirit (Luke 11:13), the indwelling, abiding family Spirit, "crying, Abba, Father."
6. Differentiate between eternal life and eternal existence. When and how did the race of men lose eternal life? When and how was it restored?
7. What is the unique Christian view of human life—all one eternal piece which death does not disrupt—capable of doing for a dead world?

## LESSON 51

“Paul purposed in the spirit, when he had passed through Macedonia and Achaia to go to Jerusalem, saying, after I have been there, I must also see Rome” (Acts 19:21). Here is a glimpse of the lure distant places held for Paul about the time he wrote Romans, some three years before he went to Rome as a prisoner. Though often seemingly dead, yet three living years packed full of unpredictable pivotal, dramatic adventure, “Passing strange . . . by flood and field.”

*Were Paul's Prayers Answered?*

Paul besought his brethren in Rome to pray with him for two things: that the Jewish saints might accept the Gentile offering, and that he might be delivered from disobedient men in Judea (Rom. 15:31). His visit to Rome is so linked with these petitions that it is virtually a third petition. Were these petitions granted? The narrative in Acts 21-23 implies that the gift was accepted, and tells the story of Paul's deliverance from disobedient men and voyage to Rome. Note that the prayer does not contemplate Christian's exercising their independent wills to shape the future and to direct their own lives, but that all things are referred to the overruling, sovereign “will of God” (Jas. 4:13-15).

After the Jews with murderous intent dragged Paul out of the Temple, the Romans rescued and held him prisoner in Palestine two years. After this delay, Paul despairing of trial there appealed to Caesar, and was taken as a prisoner in chains to Rome, where his imprisonment continued another two years. In his writing during this latter period, Paul interprets these seemingly barren years as follows: “These things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the progress of the gospel; so that my bonds became manifest in Christ throughout the whole

Praetorian guard, and to all the rest; and that most of the brethren in the Lord, being confident through my bonds, are more abundantly bold to speak the word of God without fear" (Phil. 1:12-14). If God's intervention, though delaying, probably cancelling, his long-cherished plan of evangelizing the West, and though subjecting him to extreme shame and failure, but increase the harvest of souls, Paul, no matter what happens to him personally, is grateful and cooperative. Would not any other reaction mean that he repudiated the fundamental doctrine of God's infallible providence, and raise the searching question of the reality of his conversion, loyalty and devotion to God at all?

According to the book of Acts, many things occurred during Paul's imprisonment in Palestine and voyage to Rome that seemed to blast all hope of his prayers ever being answered, or of his ever seeing Rome. But the disobedient, stubborn Jews have been thwarted, and he is in Rome! As he views it all with Christian insight and hindsight, he sees divine purpose and overruling providence threaded through his many perils, sad delays, bitter disappointments, and crushed hopes. The removal of a single woof would spoil the whole tapestry. In his own perfect, inscrutable way, God has answered his prayers, and given him Caesar's large bodyguard (some 10,000 men) and household, and "all the rest" as an undreamed of, ideal radiating center from which to sound out the gospel to the whole Roman world—the very method of spreading Christianity which he has preferred and used for many years. Foresight? Though his future is very uncertain, Paul feels no foreboding anxiety. If his long-delayed trial results in his death, he will go to be with Christ which is indeed "very far better" (Phil. 1:23).

In this manner, he interprets the, humanly speaking, whole tragic story, and, as Joseph said to his brothers, he says to all apparent opposition, "You meant evil against

me; but God meant it for good." Men of God learn to see that the free, eternal, personal God is the prime Cause, central Pivot, and final Arbiter of all history; hence second causes do not upset them. They do not fluctuate with the ups and downs of personal or racial life. Paul never writes about doing the best he can "under the circumstances," for he is always on top of circumstances.

Most probably Paul's long incarceration ended in his acquittal, and a few more years of freedom. Did he go to Spain? We can never know, at least in this world, but, to his everlasting praise, he started. "Low aim, not failure, is crime." Lack of spiritual vision and Christian purpose in us must grieve God and Christ and the Spirit most deeply. A second arrest and trial ended in Paul's execution. During an interval between two stages of this trial, apparently, he wrote his "Swan Song:" "I am already being offered, and the time of my departure is come . . . At my first defense, no man took my part, but all forsook me . . . But the Lord stood by me and strengthened me; that through me the message might be fully proclaimed, and that all the Gentiles might hear: and I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion. The Lord will deliver me from every evil work, and will save me unto his heavenly kingdom: to whom be the glory for ever and ever" (2 Tim. 4). With this, compare what Martin Luther wrote shortly before his death: "Aged, wornout, weary, spiritless, and now almost blind in one eye, I long for a little rest and quietness. I am weary of the world and the world is weary of me."

Of all men, surely, Paul best answers Christ's prayer that his disciples be neither overcome by the world nor taken out of it until their work is done (John 17:15). In Paul, more than in others, do the reality and nearness of the gracious Father, the greatness of life, and the meaning

of death stand demonstrated. Who ever got so much out of Christ as did Paul? He took no "trek into the shadows." We can but bless God for moving him to write his Christian autobiography that we and our children may learn to imitate him as he imitated Christ. Christ does not get old and weak, and Christians who live upon him, as they profess to do in the Lord's Supper, need not. As on each successive floor when one ascends to the top of some lofty building the horizon is wider, the sunlight brighter, and distant objects clearer and nearer, life should be to Christians. To them, life is not a landlocked lake enclosed by a shore line of a few years.

Paul's prayers were more than answered, because he simply and honestly made his requests to God and left Him really free to make changes which would better enable him to answer according to his own infinite wisdom, power, and goodness. He actually prayed in the name of Christ, for he had no desires and made no prayers that Christ could not countersign. Is it not astounding to see Christians and their families living lives that involve "All that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the vainglory of life," even as worldlings do, yet saying that they are following God because they have "prayed" for guidance? What does this lack of taking the name of God in vain, and of being blasphemous?

### Questions

1. State the two petitions of Paul's prayer, and observe that Paul leaves the disposition of all things to the sovereign will and providence of God.
2. Relate the facts of Paul's life as a Roman prisoner, and give his own interpretation of these puzzling years.
3. Had Paul been unhappy about the wreck of his cherished plans, what would it have revealed about his faith in God, and how would it have affected his work to convert others to a Christ who brought to him no peace and happiness?

4. Why do not Christians fluctuate with the ups and downs of life and get upset by second causes, even as the rest of men do, but remain hopeful and serene?
5. Apply the saying, "Low aim, not failure, is crime," to Paul, and tell how he compares with other men to whom the saying is applied.
6. In the light of Paul's life comment upon a Christian's insight, hindsight, and foresight. Did Paul think that his prayers were answered?
7. What did Paul himself have to do with God's being able to more than answer his prayers?

## LESSON 52

In the last chapter of Romans, Paul heartily commends Phoebe, a sister who is going to Rome probably taking this Epistle, and, associating with him eight brethren, sends warm greetings to four groups of saints and twenty-six individuals, whom he has known elsewhere—eighteen men and eight women. He calls the names of thirty-two people, and characterizes many of them by particularizing, incisive phrases, fragrant with memories of closest associations. Should one wonder how Paul with so many heavy responsibilities, labors, and sorrows of his own can see, remember, and graciously wish to tell so many details, the answer is that Christ creates in Christians an unselfish interest in others.

These lively, interesting men and women constitute a cross section of the early church over the sprawling Roman Empire. Here is a little world of faith, love, work, suffering, and endurance, significantly coming at the close of the Book as a sample of the harvest from the seed sown in the Epistle. These really converted Christians believe all the doctrine of Romans, commit it to life, and move, both physically and spiritually, over a wide field. Albeit they pass before us in such rapid file, they are a living monument of the abiding truth that the oneness, and consequent lovely, satisfying interrelationships of Christians spring from their common relationship to Christ, who shares his life with them all, and expresses himself through their surrendered personalities.

It should be a source of comfort and strength to some sisters to note that the several whom Paul commends for "much labor" and Phoebe, "A helper of many," are all, except Priscilla whose husband is named with her, women unassociated with men. Possibly by taking advantage of the circumstances that they are denied homes of their own,

These good women make their espousal to Christ purer and more fruitful (1 Cor. 7:32-34). If this is the case, do they not far more than compensate for their loss? Under no circumstances can Christians lose. It should be helpful to some Christian women of every generation to think on these women, and the evangelist Philip's "Four virgin daughters, who prophesied" (Acts 21:9)

### *The Church and Satan*

In this chapter, Paul uses the word "church" for the first time in Romans. The very fact that Paul, who is a master of order and government, finds no need for the word in his exhaustive treatment of all fundamental doctrines of Christianity, such as universal human condemnation, Christian justification, sanctification, and glorification, should help us to understand what the church is, and to see that all ecclesiastical hierarchy and institutionalism are contrary to its essential nature. Inasmuch as giving the church of Christ a mechanical, legalized title contradicts both the letter and the spirit of Christianity, when Paul finally gets around to the term "Church of Christ," instead of intending to give the church a stereotyped name, he must be thinking of Christ's right, based upon its nature and stupendous cost to him, to own and use the church.

God imparts his own eternal life by means of spiritual birth to all who heed his call to repudiate and come out of the condemned world—man's choice and God's act. Men, thus rescued from eternal death and made partakers of the divine nature, compose Christ's "Church which is his body . . . the bride, the wife of the Lamb." The church is therefore a divine creation, which shares the life of God, which Christ identified with himself as his body and bride, and which the Holy Spirit makes his residence—a profoundly spiritual relation of men with God, through Christ, in the Spirit, by the instrumentality of the word.



The church is the company of men and women whom God adds together (Acts 2:47, margin), as they are justified by being buried with Christ in baptism, wherein they are also raised with him through faith in the working within them of the same mighty power of God that raised Christ from the dead (Col. 2:12); adds them together for creative, sanctifying, maturing worship and work. Any other religious company added together by outer, human federation and organization into conformity and union is but Satan's cheap counterfeit (one of his tares) of the church with its inner, divine, organic unity and uniformity. Because of its divine nature the church is deeply and richly human. As Christ's physical body while he lived in it was his instrument of contact and service, so his spiritual body in which he now lives is his instrument for bodying himself forth to the world.

By craftily beguiling and corrupting the church (2 Cor. 11:3), Satan weakens the sole adversary of his unholy ambition for world-dominion. Were the church destroyed, he would be supreme "Prince of this world." Man cannot foresee the end of the cosmic struggle (Col. 1:20) between God and Satan, who possesses superhuman knowledge, power, skill, and hate—"The deep things of Satan" (Rev. 2:24). But Paul's, "The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet," looking backward to God's promise in Eden to bruise the Serpents' head (Gen. 3:15) and forward to its perfect fulfillment in the Serpent's being "Cast into the lake of fire and brimstone . . . for ever" (Rev. 20:10), drives out all doubt about the final outcome and brings in "The peace of God, which passeth all understanding."

### *Peace and Doxology*

The manner in which Paul brings the bruising of Satan into this final admonition for the unity and peace of the church shows, I think, that he is clinching his teaching

of the two preceding chapters, namely, that men in the church who cause trouble over secondary things—things about which Christians are as free to react one way as another, about which they must not contend for their own terms of peace—are tools of Satan, acting contrary to Christian doctrine, and are unworthy of fellowship. A church which is too small to allow freedom of conscience and wholesome co-existence of inevitable differences about such things is too small for “A habitation of God in the Spirit.” In this connection, Paul teaches, as a precaution against the wiles of Satan, that there is a wisdom which keeps one ignorant of evil; that, on the principle that cleanliness best understands filth, one need not know sin by experience to be wise about it.

The Book of Romans appropriately closes with a classic doxology: “Unto him that is able . . . the only wise God” (wisdom to contrive and power to effect the whole of Christianity) Paul ascribes glory forever. What is “The mystery which hath been kept in silence through times eternal,” but is now made known in Paul’s gospel? It is, that apart from the flesh-centered, carnal principle of law, apart from all fleshly distinctions and human merit, God in pure grace freely gives eternal life to all humanity on the principle of the “Obedience of faith.”

“The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.”

### Questions

1. How do you account for the fact that Paul, active missionary, close student, and great author, had time and disposition for many most intimate friends?
2. What may we learn about the source of the many lovely inter-relations of Christians from this roll of Paul and his friends?
3. Should the fact that Paul does not use the word “church” in Romans until he gets to the salutations help us to understand the nature of the church?
4. Does the statement that the church is a profoundly spiritual relation of men with God, through Christ, in the Spirit, by the in-

strumentality of the word help us to see what the church really is?

5. Why has Satan from the beginning desperately fought (and continues to fight) the church of Christ?
6. Do you think that Romans 16:17 emphasizes the doctrine of Romans 14, namely, that the church of God must be big enough to enfold brethren who differ about discretionary things?
7. God has ability and wisdom, according to the Doxology, to accomplish what end? What is the ancient, long-veiled mystery that Paul, especially, has at long last unveiled?





