

"With everlasting kindness will I have mercy
· · · on thee (Isaiah liv. 8). . . .

"MORE THAN CONQUERORS"

MEDITATIONS
ON THE
EIGHTH CHAPTER OF ROMANS

BY W. H. BENNET



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PREFACE.

THOUGH the eighth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, like the fourteenth of the Gospel by John, is one with which all who love the Word of God are familiar, its brilliant chain of reasoning never fails to draw forth our admiration and heighten our joy.

When its words are intermingled with well-chosen ones from other portions of Scripture, and its blessed truths are confirmed and enforced by expressions that commend themselves to ear and heart—as in this small volume—the spirit is refreshed, praise ascends to God, and the pilgrim path is pursued with quickened step; the Eternal Glory being brought more fully into view.

May this be the experience of each one who reads these pages.

J. L. MACLEAN.

BATH, *May*, 1902.

Who shall separate us from the
love of Christ?

Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution,
or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?

Nay, in all these things we are
MORE THAN CONQUERORS
through Him that loved us.

Romans viii. 35, 37.

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OUR Father, God Omnipotent,
The unsearchable I AM,
We sing to Thee before Thy throne,
For Love is now Thy name.

The holy Spirit teaches us
Above all heav'ns to climb ;
Members of Christ, Thy well-belov'd,
We pass the bounds of time.

Thy saints are Thine inheritance,
And we Thyself possess ;
We join with Christ, our chief in song,
Thy holy name to bless.

At Jesus' bidding heav'n and earth
Shall melt and pass away ;
New heav'ns and earth He shall create
And bring eternal day.

R. C. CHAPMAN.

MEDITATIONS
ON THE
EIGHTH CHAPTER OF ROMANS.

I.

NO CONDEMNATION.

THE eighth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans forms a grand conclusion to the first part of that wonderful epistle, and the word "therefore" must be regarded as connecting it, not so much with the immediately preceding verses as with the whole of what has gone before, and especially with those passages which deal with the great subject of our justification before God. It is not because "with the mind I myself serve the law of God" that I am freed from condemnation, but because Christ "was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification" (ch. iv. 25).

The apostle has clearly proved that Jew and Gentile are alike "under sin," and that

even for those who had been most favoured by having the oracles of God entrusted to them there could be no justification before Him on the ground of law, which could only give "the knowledge of sin," and confirm the sentence of condemnation. He has also set forth God's way of justification for all alike who take their true place as sinners before Him, and shown how, through the great propitiation, He can be "just, and the Justifier of him which believeth in Jesus" (ch. iii. 9-26). He has further declared that as through the disobedience of Adam all who spring from him by natural generation were constituted sinners, so through the obedience of Christ all who are in Him, as the Head of a redeemed people, are constituted righteous (chap. v. 19). In chapter viii. we have the present and eternal results of the grace of God and the mighty work of "His own Son" more fully set forth.

The opening statement is *absolute*. "There is, therefore, now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus."* It is not here

* The latter half of this verse is judged not to belong to the original text of the epistle; it is found in verse 4, where there is no question about it.

a question of our heart condemning us, as in 1 John iii. 21, or of what we still find within ourselves worthy of condemnation, and we must carefully distinguish between our *subjective experience* and what God declares to be our *standing* in Christ, to which our experience should increasingly be conformed.

The one condition of freedom from condemnation is being *in Christ Jesus*. It is this that distinguishes, as by a sharp line of demarcation, those who are "of faith" from all the rest of the world. To belong to the family of the first Adam is to be in the sin and under the condemnation that came by him; to be in Christ is to be like Noah in the ark, safe from judgment and in possession of the righteousness which is by faith. The expression "in Christ Jesus" tells of personal, vital union with Him who has been raised from the dead. Dying for us on the Cross, Christ made an end of our condemnation when He put away our sin, and now, united to Him and partakers of His life, we are as free from condemnation as Christ Himself.

To be condemned is an awful thing! It

is solemn enough in a human court, but how much more solemn in the heavenly court of the righteous Judge of all. Yet every one *not* "in Christ" is "condemned already"; he is like a criminal under sentence, and only waiting for that sentence to be executed. Such was our condition by nature. What a change to pass from this state into that of being freed from condemnation! Do we dwell upon this as we should? If, by the teaching of the Spirit of God, our mouths have been "stopped," and we have owned ourselves "guilty before God" (ch. iii. 19), and God has in grace opened these lips that our mouths may show forth His praise (Psalm li. 15), should we not so dwell upon this marvellous work of His grace that our "new song" may constantly become deeper and richer?

In verse 2 we are told how these blessings which are bestowed through the death and resurrection of Christ become the possessed portion of each individual believer, and the apostle sets us an example of personal application by speaking in the first person, "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus freed me from the law of sin and death."

The "law of sin" is that terrible power that is in us all by nature, and "the wages of sin is death," therefore it may well be called "the law of sin and death." Opposed to this is "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus," that new life which is imparted to us in regeneration by the Spirit of God. As God's great sentence of *justification* in His heavenly courts frees us from the *condemnation* of sin, so this mighty operation of the Spirit of God, which is an evidence of our being in Christ and absolved from condemnation, frees us from the *dominion* of sin. Only once before in this epistle has the work of the Spirit in the believer been mentioned—as shedding abroad God's love in the heart; but in chapter viii., where His gracious ministry is a special theme, He is revealed as the One who first communicates life "in Christ Jesus," and then takes up His abode in believers as members of Christ. It is not on the ground of deliverance that we are justified, but justification leads to deliverance, and the deliverance is really as complete as the justification, though it may not yet be so to our experience.

But the basis of all—whether the justification or the deliverance—is the sacrificial work of Christ, “For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh” (verse 3). The law was indeed strong to discover sin and condemn it, but it could not lead either to justification or deliverance; it was weak *through the medium of the flesh*, having nothing to act upon but what was already “under sin,” and therefore under condemnation. But what was impossible to the *law* God accomplished in *grace* by sending *His own Son*. It was GOD’S *own* purpose of love, carried out by *His own SON*, and as no creature could ever have devised such a work, so, even when the purpose was formed, no creature could have carried it out. Can we be too often reminded of the true glory of Him who was thus sent by God? He *was* the SON before He was *sent*. Before any creature existed the SON was with the FATHER in an unspeakable fellowship, shared by the Holy Spirit, and when, in lowliness, He stood among men

He could say, "I am *from Him*, and He *sent Me*." God sending *His own Son* tells both of the greatness of the Father's love and the greatness of the work that had to be performed. Apart from God Himself there was no hope. Therefore the SON was sent—not, indeed, in the external glory of Godhead, but "in the likeness of sinful flesh"; not in *the likeness of flesh*, for He truly "became flesh," but in the *likeness* only of *sinful flesh*, for He "knew no sin."

The words "for sin" (verse 3) are often used in the Septuagint (over fifty times in Leviticus) for the *sin offering*, and it is clear that they here point to the sacrifice of Christ by which God "condemned sin in the flesh." He condemned sin—*root* as well as *branch*—in Him, laying it to His account, that sin might not condemn us. He inflicted on it unsparing judgment that it should no longer have any claim on or dominion over those who are Christ's.

The object of all this is "that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit" (verse 4). "The righteous

requirement of the law" is, in the first place, the death of Him who has broken it. This has been fulfilled in our case by the death of Him who perfectly kept the law, and then, as our *Surety*, died under its curse. Thus it is magnified and made honourable, and all its demands are fully satisfied. But in another sense the requirement of God's law is fulfilled in the believer who, though he could not present a faultless obedience that would find acceptance if he were "under law," yet has, as the fruit of regeneration, a delight in God's law, as that which he desires in his very heart to fulfil, and power to exercise that love which is its fulfilment.

II.

FLESH AND SPIRIT.

THE standing description of those who are freed from the law of sin and death by the law of the Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus, and in whom the righteous requirement of God's law is fulfilled, is that they "*walk not after the flesh, but after the*

Spirit” (Rom. viii. 4). The word “walk” is common in Scripture to denote the bent of one’s life, and it may well remind us that none of us is stationary ; we are all moving on to one of two goals. A man’s feelings, desires, and actions are the outcome of what he *is*, “for they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh, and they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit” (verse 5). The “flesh” here denotes that principle of moral evil which rules in the heart of fallen man, and is only overcome in those who are born of the Spirit, and led by Him. Thus the whole world is divided into two classes—those who being still in their natural state “are after the flesh,” and under the controlling influence of the flesh, and those who being born of God “are after the Spirit,” and are ruled and guided by the Spirit who dwells in them.

To “*mind*” signifies to be engrossed or taken up with something as the object of desire or pursuit. “The things of the flesh” are not limited to what is gross and debasing. Human philosophy and the highest intellectual attainments may be congenial pursuits of

a mind that knows no subjection to God. Man may soar into the heavens, or search the depths of earth, and yet never think of honouring or even acknowledging Him who created both. The apostle Paul, when taught of God, reckoned all his attainments in religion even, as "things of the flesh," which hindered his knowledge of Christ (Phil. iii. 4-7). So in the present day it is possible to practice any form of religion, from the highest ceremonial downward, yea, even to profess to own no Name but that of Christ, and yet only to *be* and to *walk* "after the flesh."

"The things of the Spirit" are those things of the Father and the Son which the Spirit delights to unfold" (John xvi. 14, 15), "those things which are above," the heavenly ministry of our Lord, and the things He has in store for His own, as well as the grace, lowliness, and obedience of His life on earth in which we are called to follow Him. These are the things on which those who are after the Spirit set their mind or affection, as exhorted in Colossians iii. 2.

If the dividing line is thus clear and de-

finite, the result also is equally marked, "for (to have) the mind of the flesh is *death*; but (to have) the mind of the Spirit is *life and peace*" (ver. 6). "The mind of the flesh is *death*" — a present condition of spiritual death, unholiness, and alienation from God, leading to death eternal—because it is "enmity against God," the Giver of life; it "is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." It is a simple impossibility for an unregenerate person to be subject to God, for the mind is in a state of actual hostility to Him; "so then they that are in the flesh cannot please God." They are "children of disobedience," and the principle of obedience being absent, there is neither desire nor ability to please Him.

"But the mind of the Spirit"—the state of mind produced by the Spirit—"is *life and peace*." The Spirit by revealing Christ to the soul imparts life, and by still unfolding Him, gives us to know that life in increasing fulness (John x. 10), till we prove its power in resurrection glory. And with *life* comes *peace*—"peace with God" as the fruit of justification, and an ever-growing peace

as we learn in fuller measure to trust in God, and have our minds stayed upon Him (Isa. xxvi. 3), while we press onward to the undisturbed and everlasting peace in His presence above.

The solemnity of these truths is perhaps little felt. Men think that training and education are improving human nature; but the question is, Do they lead to *pleasing God*? We are slow to learn that nothing can enable anyone to do this but the impartation of a new life, with its holy desires and aspirations. It is by diligent meditation on such words as these that we may more perfectly learn what *we were*, and what is the true state of all who are not "in Christ Jesus;" and surely if these truths are thus brought before us as children of God it is that we may be led to a deeper sense of the *grace* that has made us what *we are*, and may also have the heart of compassion towards those who know not the "life and peace" which the Gospel brings.

The question may be asked, Is man responsible for that which is beyond his power? Hence it is well to remember that

our inability to please God is entirely owing to our utterly sinful nature, the owning of which is the first step towards deliverance. But this is just what we are not ready to own. We may at times think of the future and the unseen, and how we may escape the consequences of the wrong things we do ; but, instead of turning to God, we shape our efforts according to our own thoughts, which are quite contrary to His. If, however, we accept God's testimony as to our *condition*, and believe that we are so sinful and helpless that we "cannot please God," we shall not rest till we find deliverance. Though Satan, working through the flesh, may exercise great power over those who are within the sphere of his dominion, he cannot keep anyone from Christ who is determined to seek Him, and the feeblest acknowledgment of sinfulness before God, if only it be true, is a turning into the pathway of "life and peace," for it brings the mighty and willing Saviour to the rescue.

Between such an act on the part of the sinner and the gracious operation of the Spirit of God we cannot distinguish, for they

go together, and the Spirit who shows the sinner his need glorifies Christ by revealing Him as the Saviour of the lost. To all who, however feebly, know Him thus, it can be said, "But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be the Spirit of God dwell in you" (ver. 9). All who are "in Christ Jesus" are "in the Spirit." Wherever the Spirit of God has wrought in regenerating grace He takes up his abode, and the thorough change experienced by the believer, and manifested to others, gives the assurance of his having "passed from death unto life." This is the decisive test, for "if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His." This does not mean what men often call a "Christian spirit," or disposition, but the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. In the next verse we read, "If Christ be in you," showing that where the Spirit dwells as the Teacher and Guide, there Christ dwells as the willing and welcome Guest.

How searching are these words! Whilst many, with no profession of anything higher, walk "after the flesh," many take the place of being Christians and yet give no evidence

that they really know the grace and power of the Spirit of God and the Christ whom He reveals. The Spirit ever exalts Christ, and puts honour upon the Holy Scriptures which testify of Him. There may be much dealing with the Scriptures in an intellectual manner, or the practice of much ceremonialism after the precepts of traditional Christianity, without "the Spirit of Christ"; but it still remains true that "if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His."

III.

DEATH AND LIFE.

IN every one whom the Holy Spirit regenerates He dwells as "the Spirit of Christ" (Rom. viii. 9), to reveal in ever-increasing measure the fulness and preciousness of Christ, and to lead the willing disciple in the pathway of obedience which is well-pleasing to God. The body of the believer is the temple of the Holy Spirit and the habitation of Christ.

If it were not for the strange things so

often taught and received, through lack of attention to the Scriptures, it would not be necessary to point out that the body (verse 10) is not said to be dead because *Christ* is in us, but “because of sin,” and this is a proof that it is not “the flesh” or “*sin*” that is meant, but our natural body. The meaning of the verse is, “If Christ be in you . . . the spirit is life because of righteousness,” though it is indeed true that “the body is dead because of sin.” By nature we were altogether “dead in trespasses and sins”; we have now been “quickened together with Christ,” but His life which animates our spirits has not yet asserted its power over our bodies. By reason of the presence of sin the body is dead, but by reason of the possession of righteousness—first as imputed, and then as the very characteristic of the life that has been imparted—“the spirit is life.” How full are the expressions of Scripture! As elsewhere it is said, not simply, *Ye have* light, but, “*Ye are* light in the Lord,” so here it is not only that we *have* life, but, “the Spirit *is* life.” This, of course, is the believer’s spirit, as distinct from the Holy Spirit, who is

again named in verse 11, "But if the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, He that raised up Christ from the dead shall quicken also your mortal bodies by* His Spirit that dwelleth in you."

The change from "Jesus" to "Christ" here is full of significance. That God "raised up Jesus" was the earliest testimony of the Gospel, and is part of its fundamental truth. But God raised Him as "*the Christ*," "the Head of the Body, the Church," and this is the pledge that the "mortal bodies" of all His members shall be quickened. The word "quicken" takes in those who will be still waiting when the Lord comes, as well as those who shall have fallen asleep, and, indeed, seems designed to keep our thoughts upon His coming. "The Spirit is life" *now*; the body will be quickened when He comes, and then we shall indeed know the fulness and power of life, for "there shall be no more death."

"Therefore, brethren"—because we have been freed from condemnation, and freed from "the law of sin and death," and are no

* Or, *because of*; it is doubtful which is the correct reading.

longer "in the flesh," but "in the Spirit"— "we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh" (verse 12). Our debt to the flesh has been annulled; it has no claim upon us; it may *make* a claim, but it cannot *enforce* it, and we cannot allow its claim without practically ignoring for the time the great deliverance wrought for us at such a cost (verse 3). "We *are* debtors" indeed, but it is to Him who has loosed our bonds and made us "the servants of righteousness"; who has "freed us from our sins by His own blood," that we, as delivered ones, "might serve Him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before Him all our days."

Solemn is the word of warning that follows: "For if ye live after the flesh ye shall die." The Spirit of God often led the apostles to write such testing words to those who took the place of disciples of Christ. Doubtless they were needed then, but He also foresaw that in the course of centuries many would name the Name of the Lord without departing from iniquity, and under the "*form* of godliness" still live "after the flesh." He foresaw, too, how many would be induced

to seek the mortification of the flesh in ways that only pamper it and minister to pride, hence the word, "But if ye, *through the Spirit*, do mortify the deeds of the body ye shall live" (verse 13). This is the pathway of faith, and there are no other means of truly mortifying the flesh. Men and women may shut themselves up in monasteries and convents, but they carry "the flesh" with them, and cannot overcome it. As it is only by the death of Christ that we are redeemed from SIN, so it is only by the grace and power of the Holy Spirit that sin can be overcome.

The mortifying of the deeds of the body is the life-long business of the believer. The delusion that sin may be expelled from the mortal body while we are here below is not a harmless one. Sin is *present* to the end of our pilgrimage, and ever calls for determined resistance, and of all the sins through which the heart may be hardened and the conscience deadened perhaps the most delusive is the sin of pride and self-complacency, springing from fancied attainment in the way of getting rid of sin, for "if we say that we have no sin we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not

in us." Conflict to the end will be the portion of those whose aim is to "please God" in all things, and who seek nothing less than full and unreserved obedience to all His holy will as declared in His Word.

There are, indeed, no limits to the victory over sin which the Spirit of God can give us. As a departed brother used to say, "There is no sin which the blood of Christ cannot cleanse, and there is no sin which the Spirit of God cannot conquer." But if we desire this victory we must not be careless about what would hinder it. We cannot get beyond the tempter's reach, therefore we must "watch and pray" that we "*enter not into temptation.*" If we would overcome temptation there must be the abstaining from "fleshly desires," and a closing of the eyes and ears to much that would attract our attention, especially in the literature and teaching of the day. It is by means of these things that Satan often reaches some whom temptation to grosser evils would not affect. He well knows the tendency and the weakness of each one of us, and can adapt his temptations to each. Hence the need of *watchfulness* that we may discern the snare,

as well as *prayer* that we may have grace and wisdom to avoid it.

There are no short cuts to holiness, and it becomes us to be continually exercised before God as to our *growth* in spirituality of mind, and to consider carefully what may foster and what may hinder this. The secret of growth in spirituality is the diligent use of the Word of God, worship, and prayer, and specially meditation on the sufferings and death of our Lord Jesus Christ, which will lead to lowliness of spirit and exercise of conscience touching what is acceptable to God and what is not. Let us not evade the fact that the *cultivation* of "the mind of the Spirit" rests with ourselves, though it is only by His own grace that progress is made. The haste of the present time, which affects us even in the service of God as well as in all other ways, is not conducive to that quiet communion with God which is the secret of growth. But in spite of all difficulties we may, if we will, prove the sufficiency of the Holy Spirit to enable us to "mortify the deeds of the body" and so "bring forth fruit unto God."

IV.

CHILDREN AND HEIRS.

HAVING strongly brought out the contrast between those who "are after the flesh," and those who "are after the Spirit," the apostle introduces a new aspect of the subject by the statement, "For as many as are *led by* the Spirit of God they are the sons of God" (Rom. viii. 14). The word "they" is emphatic, and still keeps up the contrast, while it forcibly asserts the high dignity of those whom it includes.

This great truth of God as to the sonship of believers is opposed by two systems of false teaching. There are those who assert that all men *are* sons of God by creation, while others as confidently affirm that whereas by nature we are children of wrath, we may be *made* "children of God" by baptism. The upholders of either of these doctrines would deny that any can only become God's children by the regenerating grace and power of the Holy Spirit, while the adherents of both entirely fail to understand the true dignity of that heavenly relationship.

Being "led by the Spirit" does not *make* us sons, but it is the evidence that we *are* sons. It is by receiving Christ that we become God's children, for from such a reception of Him, by believing on His name, new birth is inseparable (John i. 12, 13). This blessed relationship originated in the sovereign will and grace of God, who "predestinated us to the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself" (Eph. i. 5), and its basis is redemption, as is clearly set forth in Galatians iv. 4, 5: "When the fulness of the time was come God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons." So in this Epistle to the Romans the apostle first deals with man's condition as a sinner and his need of righteousness; he then shows how righteousness reaches us through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, and it is only when he expatiates on the glorious results of justification that we find the blessed truth: "Ye have not received the spirit of bondage again unto fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption [or sonship],

whereby we cry, Abba, Father" (verse 15). It is through the atoning death of "His own Son" that God brings "many sons" to glory.

Our relationship to God is expressed by two words, *son* and *child*—the first indicating its dignity, and the second its reality. What can more fully declare the dignity of our position than the statement that Christ, the glorious Son of God, is not ashamed to call us brethren (Heb. ii. 11)? His words to Mary teach us that we stand in the same relationship as Himself to the Father: "Go to My brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto My Father and your Father, and to My God and your God." Yet we would never forget the fact that He was from eternity the Son of God (and that in a sense in which no creature can be), while with us sonship begins in time, and is of grace alone.

In verse 16 the apostle uses the word "*children* of God" to express the reality of a birth relationship. This is most fully brought out in the writings of the Apostle John. The Lord's words to Nicodemus, declaring the absolute necessity of regeneration for entrance into God's kingdom, carry in

them the proof that every one who finds a place in that glorious kingdom is “born from above,” and thus made God’s child. It is upon this truth that the beloved disciple dwells so forcibly in his first epistle, when he declares that it is a *present* as well as a *real* relationship—“Beloved, now are we children of God”—and those who are brought into it are distinguished from the rest of the world in that their course is one of righteousness and not of lawlessness.

It is a wonderful thing for a child of Adam, once a sinner by nature and practice, to be able in calmness and peace to look up to God, and in sincerity and truth utter the holy word “FATHER.” Many repeat the words “Our Father” in a formal way, but He who could distinguish the needy woman’s touch of faith from the jostling of the multitude discerns the true utterance that comes from any heart.

Of this relationship the Holy Spirit is the great Witness: “The Spirit Himself beareth witness with [*or to*] our spirit that we are the children of God” (verse 16). By revealing Christ to our hearts; by strengthening our

desires towards Him; by giving us delight in the Holy Scriptures, which testify of Him; by leading out our hearts to God in prayer and worship; by enabling us to trust in God in times of trial and difficulty, and to find our rest in Him in seasons of sorrow and affliction; by leading us in the way of truth and in the path of obedience, with the desire to glorify God in all we do—in these and other ways the Spirit of God witnesses to us of our new birth. To be able to address God as our Father, with the knowledge that all that hindered access to Himself has been removed by the Cross of Christ, is itself an evidence of being “led by the Spirit of God.”

God’s *children* are also God’s *heirs*: “If children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ.” The first and chief inheritance of Christ is God Himself—“Jehovah is the portion of Mine inheritance and of My cup,” and in this it is our privilege to find fellowship with Him. We are “heirs of God,” for He himself is our everlasting portion, and this is the guarantee of our eternal bliss. We are “joint-heirs with Christ,” for we share with Him that wealth

of the Father's love of which He is the supreme object, and He will share with us all those things which, in token of His love, the Father hath given "into His hand" (John iii. 35); yea, He will give a seat on His own throne to those who by faith overcome the world which He himself overcame.

But to this glory the appointed pathway is that of suffering: "If so be that we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified together" (verse 17). The character of this suffering is that it is "*with Him*," therefore we find it in resisting what is contrary to Him, whether around us or within us, and in the endurance called for in the path of service to Him. Outward persecution is not everywhere violent, though they that "are after the Spirit" are ever opposed by those who "are after the flesh"; but full obedience and true service will call for self-denial in many ways.

The apostle knew much of suffering for Christ (Acts ix. 16; 2 Cor. xi. 23-33), but God was pleased to give him a glimpse of much of the glory awaiting him (2 Cor. xii. 1-4), and thus he was able to compare one

with the other. Yet in another, sense he was *not* able to do this; for as he sought to measure the one by the other, he felt that, in the light of the coming glory, his sufferings, real as they were, sank into insignificance. That glory is set before *us*, and if only we accustom ourselves to look at the things which are unseen and eternal, we too shall be able to endorse his conclusion—"For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us," or *unto* us—the glory that shall soon break upon our vision, not only that of our own state, but of all our surroundings.

v.

BONDAGE AND DELIVERANCE.

HAVING spoken of the glory awaiting the children of God, whose proper pathway here below is one of suffering with Christ (Rom. viii. 17, 18), the apostle declares that "the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the

sons of God " (verse 19). The word rendered *creature* should throughout these verses be *creation*; it has reference to the whole terrestrial creation, and embraces all that was placed under the dominion of man at the beginning. The words "*in hope*" should be connected with verse 19, the rest of verse 20 being read as a parenthesis.

The solemn parenthetical statement reminds us that, though at the first " God saw everything He had made, and behold it was very good," it fell, through the sin of its head—Adam—into its present state of corruption and disorder. How beautiful must creation have been when God pronounced His " finished " work " very good " ! As Dr. Winslow says : " We read of no blight resting on the material world, of no suffering in the brute creation, prior to the period of Adam's transgression. The winds blew not rudely then, the verdure withered and died not then, the flowers drooped and faded not then. There were no tornadoes, no earthquakes, no volcanoes, no electric clouds. Innocence and happiness reigned over the irrational creation. There was nothing to

darken, to hurt, or destroy." Angels could delight in the work of God's hands (Job xxxviii. 7), and God Himself could take pleasure in visiting and speaking with the man whom He had formed in His own image and constituted the head of all things here below.

But that fair creation soon became "*subject to vanity.*" How expressive is the word *vanity!* Look at a fruit tree in early spring, full of blossoms and the promise of fruit. Suddenly a biting frost cuts the blossoms; the tree for the season becomes barren, and *fails to answer the end for which it exists.* Such is the present condition of creation as a whole. The question, How came this to pass? is answered in the verse before us. It was "not willingly"—not by its own will or choice, not through any inherent principle of decay—but "by reason of him who subjected it," that is, through the sin of him who was its head, and in whom, by the appointment of God, it stood or fell. In the words of Dr. Ellicott, "Man's sin, yea, one man's sin, cast all this shadow on creation"; "sin was such that it spread over a whole

creation, marred the harmonies of a world, pervaded the substance and the produce of a fruitful earth, entered into all the varied realms of animal life"; and again, "I do not doubt that the counter-law, by which the whole creation has been made subject to vanity, is to be referred to no other epoch than the fall of man."* It is the effect of that fall that we see on every hand, and hear in the groaning of "the whole creation." "Cursed is the ground for thy sake" was the solemn sentence of the Creator, and under that curse "the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now" (verse 22).

But there is a "*hope*," for the fulfilment of which "the *earnest expectation* of creation waiteth." The word rendered "earnest expectation" means a straining forward with outstretched neck, and expresses the attitude of one who is eagerly watching for something. Thus, by a bold and beautiful figure, creation is represented as looking for the

* I purposely quote the words of some who can scarcely be charged with ignorance of scientific researches, &c., and am thankful to find the expression of such regard for the teaching of Scripture on this solemn subject.

revelation of the now hidden glory of "the sons of God," in eager expectation of its own deliverance from "the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God" (verse 21). That hope will be fulfilled, for creation "*shall be delivered.*" It shall be freed from its bondage, delivered from its vanity, and its liberty will answer to that of God's children, being consequent upon their manifestation. Of this there will be a great foretaste in the millennial kingdom of our Lord, especially in the land of Israel — God's "holy mountain" — which "shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea," and in which nothing "shall hurt nor destroy." Then shall the word be fulfilled: "Ye shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace: the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands. Instead of the thorn shall come up the fig tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle tree, and it shall be to the Lord for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off" (Isa. xi. 9; lv. 12, 13).

Yet for the *full* realisation of this hope we must look forward to the “*new earth.*” Only when “there shall be *no more death*” and “*no more curse*” will all traces of *vanity* be for ever blotted out, and creation be worthy of its appointed Head. That Head is CHRIST. He is “the last Adam,” of whom “the first man Adam” was a type. “In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth,” and, when He had fashioned all things, He “formed *man* of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life,” and constituted him the head and ruler of all things on earth. But instead of maintaining his place of dominion by continuing in subjection to God, he yielded to temptation, and by his *disobedience* brought in death and disorder.

In due time He who once “spake and it was done,” will declare from His throne, “Behold, I make all things new” (Rev. xxi. 5). But this time the order is reversed, for He who is “the Beginning of the creation of God,” as well as its Head, has given full evidence of His subjection to the will of God by *obedience* even unto death; He

now lives in resurrection glory at God's right hand, and will never fail to make His dominion over all things contribute to the glory of God (John xvii. 1). By unfallen hosts, as well as by all His redeemed, He is already owned as fully worthy of the high position He fills and of the glory that must ever be His. He who "endured the Cross" will "bear the glory," and the new creation, which will owe its stability to His Cross, will never cease to be worthy of the description that tells of unfailing blessedness—*"the creation of GOD."*

VI.

SAVED IN HOPE.

HAVING dwelt upon the bondage, the groaning, and the hope of "the whole creation," the apostle goes on to speak of *our* groaning and *our* hope: "And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body" (Rom. viii. 23).

The Holy Spirit, who dwells in the believer, is the firstfruits and pledge of all future blessedness, and He gives us the earnest and foretaste thereof in present communion with God, thus causing us to feel the weight of that which hinders our full enjoyment of it. It is not therefore the one who knows least of the fellowship of the Spirit who experiences most of the groaning. Self-satisfaction with the idea of being "filled with the Spirit" is no evidence of His gracious working in the heart. The first-fruit of His ministry is poverty of spirit (Matt. v. 3), or in other words, "a broken and a contrite heart," with which He imparts true joy in the Lord. But the deeper our joy becomes as the result of the Spirit's revealing of Christ to us, and showing us "the things to come," the greater will be our sense of inability to fully enter into our blessings, whether present or future, and the deeper our groan of longing for the possession of what God has in store for us.

This is described as "sonship," and the explanation is "the redemption of our body." In one blessed sense the body is already

redeemed, for the *price* of redemption has been paid; but "the purchased possession" has not yet been claimed by Him to whom it belongs. When the appointed moment comes He will change our body of humiliation, so that it shall be conformed to the body of His glory; this will be redemption by *power*. The full and true glory of "sonship" we cannot know while in mortal bodies, or even in a disembodied state. The blessedness of this wonderful relationship to God is doubtless more fully entered into in the "far better" condition of those who are with Christ, for they are freed from many of the hindrances of which we are painfully conscious, but nothing less than the redemption of the body can put them or us into possession of "sonship" in its fulness. The Apostle Paul, indeed, spoke of his approaching death at the hands of the executioner as his "*release*" (2 Tim. iv. 6, *Gk.*), but it is not his teaching, nor the teaching of any part of Scripture, that being released from the body is the *fullest* liberty; it is only when the body itself is released from the bondage of corruption that the children of God can truly attain

their "glorious liberty," and then will follow their manifestation.

"For in this hope we were saved" more truly expresses the meaning of verse 24. The changeableness of all things below is often very apparent in a degeneracy in the use of words, and few words are more misused than the word *hope*. "I hope" generally carries in it the meaning "I am not sure," and in the things of God people have got so accustomed to this use of it as to settle down with the idea that we cannot be certain about anything, but must do our best, and hope all will be well in the end. Yet the word by derivation and in its early use signified, "*To expect, with pleasurable anticipations*" (Ogilvie), and a careful consideration of its use in Scripture shows that so far from expressing *uncertainty*, it implies the highest degree of certainty, for it denotes nothing less than the *confident expectation of what God has promised*. The figure used in Hebrews vi., "Which *hope* we have as an *anchor* of the soul, both *sure* and *steadfast*," is very expressive; but even if we confine ourselves to this epistle, the teaching is plain. The word *hope*

is not used (except with reference to Abraham) until the question of *justification* is settled. "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God, . . . and rejoice in hope of the glory of God" (chapter v. 1, 2). In chapter xii. we read "rejoicing in hope," and in chapter xv. the apostle first declares that hope is the fruit of the patience and consolation ministered by the Scriptures, and then prays, "Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost." "We were saved" when we received the Gospel, but the fulness of that salvation was still a matter of hope, and now is nearer than when we believed (Rom. xiii. 11).

Thus hope is never set in contrast with what is *certain*, but simply with what is *seen*, reaching forward by its very nature to what is out of sight, for "hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for?" As one has said, "We do not yet realise our heaven, but we *hope* for it; we do not yet see Jesus, but we *hope* to see Him; we do not yet exult in our eman-

icipation from corruption, but we *hope* to be free; we do not yet drink of the river of God's pleasures, but we *hope* to." "But," adds the apostle, "if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience [*or* endurance] wait for it." The word used throughout this passage for *waiting* expresses intensity of expectation. Ardent desire is not impatience, and an "expected end" encourages to endurance during the time of waiting. It is because our "hope" is so certain and definite that it becomes a purifying power, for if there be a growing knowledge of what awaits us, the heart must surely go out towards it with such intense desire as shall make us truly diligent in *seeking* to be *now* in life and conduct what we shall *then* be in every sense (1 John iii. 3).

And as we reach forward to the full realisation of what "redemption" is, and seek to turn our hope into prayer, we have a mighty Helper: "Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmity." The word "likewise" means in addition to all that has been said of the gracious work of the Holy Spirit in this chapter. He imparts life

(verse 3), dwells in us (9, 11), leads us (14), enables us to mortify the deeds of the body (13), teaches us to cry in truth, "Abba, Father" (15), and, now it is added, "maketh intercession for us" (26).

"We know not what we should pray for as we ought." Subjects for prayer are indeed abundantly found in our circumstances and around us, and yet do we not often feel that we do not quite know what to ask for? Even such a man of prayer as the apostle once made a mistake in asking that a gift of God might be taken away (2 Cor. xii. 8); but behind those requests of his lips the Lord read the true desires of his heart, wrought by the Holy Spirit, and answered *them* rather than the actual petition. But the special reference here doubtless is to the great prospects set forth in the preceding verses, and if we so feebly comprehend them, how shall we put our desires for them into words? When we are thus conscious of our inability to express ourselves before God it is a comfort to be assured that our unutterable groanings are fully understood by Him: "He that searcheth the hearts knoweth what

is the mind of the Spirit," and with Him there can never be any *mistaken* desires, for it is "according to God" that "He maketh intercession for saints." Shall we not then seek to know more of walking "in the Spirit," and being led by Him, that we may have more of the consolation which the knowledge of His intercession within us must bring?

VII.

ALL THINGS WORKING FOR GOOD.

THE connecting links of Scripture are sometimes overlooked, and thus, while much is gained from two statements, much is lost by not observing the link between them. It is very blessed to enter into the truth expressed in these words, "We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose"; and the words which follow are also very blessed, "Whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of

His Son" (Rom. viii. 28, 29); but it is only when due emphasis is laid on the "FOR"—the link that binds these two truths together—that we feel the force and beauty of the whole. We are thus taught to compare God's ways with "His own Son," and His ways with the "many sons" whom He is bringing into fellowship with Him, and we learn that God has a purpose to accomplish, towards the carrying out of which the powers of earth and hell must—whether willing or unwilling—be subservient.

We see this in the case of the Lord Himself. It was the design of God to lead Him by the pathway of suffering to that high position of dignity and glory which He now fills; "for it became Him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings" (Heb. ii. 10). And while Judas and Caiaphas and Pilate, and all who took part in the crucifixion of the Lord of glory, were doing their own will, and seeking their own ends, they were but the instruments of carrying out God's purpose. This was

equally true of Satan, who led them on to murder Him whom by temptation he could never overcome; and it will be no small part of his eternal shame, and the eternal shame of all the enemies of the Lord, to discover that, not simply in spite of their opposition, but by means of that opposition, God has fulfilled His own counsels.

But that which is true in the case of the Lord is also true of those who are His. It always has been so, and will be so to the end. Whatever comes to the child of God, whether directly from the hand of God or, by His permission, from Satan, is sent or allowed with the one definite aim of conforming him in heart and spirit to the blessed One unto whom he will soon be perfectly conformed, even in body as well as spirit, for ever.

We should also mark the word *together*. On this Dr. Winslow remarks: "Observe the unity of operation. They 'work together,' not singly and separately, but conjointly. Seldom does affliction come solitary and alone; the gentle wavelet upon the surface forebodes the agitation of the waters, and is often the precursor of the mountain billow.

Trace not the wisdom only, but the love of thy God, O child of suffering, in ordaining your path to heaven through *much* tribulation. Single and alone, the good these trials were designed to convey were but partially accomplished, and the evil they were designed to meet but imperfectly cured. How would the adjustment, harmony, and symmetry of God's arrangement be destroyed if one dark dispensation were lacking of, perhaps, the many which hover upon our horizon! It is the combination of sound, the harmony of many and often discordant notes, that constitutes music. Oh, how imperfectly are we aware, not of the necessity of trial only, but of a plurality of trials, in order to wake from our lips the sweetest, loftiest anthem of praise to God! Thus it is that the most deeply tried believers are the most skilful and the most melodious choristers in God's Church. They sing the sweetest on earth, and they sing the loudest in heaven, who are passing through, and who have come out of '*great tribulation*'."

This is often quoted "*shall* work together," as though it had reference to future result

only; but the apostle speaks of an ever-present working: "All things *are working* together for good." While this is a great reality to faith, it is not evident to the eye of sense. When Jacob had lost Joseph, and Simeon was detained in Egypt, and the governor made the presence of Benjamin the condition of a further supply of corn, he exclaimed, "*All these things are against me;*" but when he reached the end of his course he could say, "*The angel which redeemed me from all evil.*" We can see that when he uttered his doleful complaint the things he lamented were really working together for his good. The lost son had been sent beforehand to save their lives by a great deliverance; the son retained in Egypt was kept as a link between Joseph and his father, who mourned him as dead; and the demand that Benjamin should be taken was part of Joseph's wise scheme to bring about a desirable conclusion. All was working under the hand of Him who "called for a famine" to fulfil His purpose of taking Israel to Egypt and keeping them separate from the nations that He might truly bless them.

So with Joseph. He had "anguish of soul" when he was sold by his brethren; and when, under a false accusation, he was cast into prison it is expressly said (according to the old version of Psalm cv.), "the iron entered into his soul." When the chief butler, to whom he had showed kindness, and from whose intercession he expected help, "did not remember Joseph, but forgot him," it must have been another bitter ingredient in his cup; but again we see how all was working together to bring about the end God had in view—not merely the deliverance which Joseph sought, but honour and service.

We see "the end of the Lord" in these things, as well as in His dealings with Job, and He has graciously given us these records of His ways, that we may so profit by them, and by all His words of promise, as to be able to say, "*We know* that all things work together for good to them that love God." Through His grace we can say, "We love Him because He first loved us"; and in unchangeable love and infinite wisdom He is ordering all for our good. The Apostle

Paul did not simply state this as a truth for the Church of God, but as a truth *experienced by himself, and endorsed by others*. The late Dr. David Brown beautifully says: "It was a household word with the household of faith; not that, *as here exhibited*, it had perhaps ever before struck one of his readers; but with the teaching they had already received and the gracious experience which was common to all who had tasted that the Lord is gracious, it had but to be put before them to be recognised as an undoubted and precious truth."

When we reach our home, and retrace our earthly pathway, with God's perfect light shed upon every part of it, we shall *see* how blessedly true this was. Till then "we walk by faith, not by sight," and we fear not, even in the dark, and it may be at times with tearful eyes, to set our seal to the words, "We know that *all things* work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose."

VIII.

FOREKNOWLEDGE.

THE Gospel comes to us as *lost sinners*, not as *elect saints*, and it carries with it the guarantee that every one who as a lost sinner will receive Christ the Saviour shall be received by Him, and having been received, shall in no wise be cast out (John vi. 37). Then, having through Him come to God, and being at home in his holy presence, we have both the desire and the ability to "behold the beauty of the Lord, and to enquire in His temple." We have "the Holy Scriptures" (*lit.*, the *temple* Scriptures) for our instruction, and also a heavenly Teacher, even the Holy Spirit of God, whose delight it is to unfold to us "the things that are freely given to us of God."

One of the first lessons learnt in that temple is that our coming to Christ was the result of God's gracious drawing and teaching (John vi. 44, 45), and that these were the outcome of an eternal purpose of mercy towards us. We discover that God "hath

saved us, and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace"; and as we enter into this great truth our hearts are bowed before Him who fills that temple, and breathe forth the song, "Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb."

In Romans viii., having expressed the assurance that all things work together for good to God's called ones, who love Him, the apostle adds, "For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son" (verse 29). Thus *foreknowledge* is distinguished from *predestination*. Peter speaks of believers as "*elect* according to the *foreknowledge* of God the Father." The effort to explain the word foreknowledge as simply meaning that God knew who would believe, is only a device to get rid of a truth that humbles the pride of man. Let us look at it in another connection. The Son of God was delivered up according to "the determinate counsel and *foreknowledge* of God" (Acts ii. 22), for as the Lamb of God He was "*foreknown* before the foundation of the

world" (1 Peter i. 20, Gk.). Do these statements mean nothing more than that God knew beforehand what men would do to Him? Do they not tell of God's gracious design to deliver up His Son for our redemption? Again, of Israel Paul declares, "God hath not cast away His people whom He *foreknew*" (Rom. xi. 2). That He knew beforehand what they would be is indeed true, as He says by Isaiah, "I knew that thou wouldest deal very treacherously" (Isa. xlvi. 8); but that could hardly be a reason for not casting them away. The whole argument of Romans xi. shows that because God *foreknew* them they must be blessed.

Thus the word is quite equivalent to *fore-ordained* as given in 1 Peter i. 20, and can denote nothing less than the sovereign choice of a people to life and glory. As distinguished from predestination, God's *foreknowledge* seems to express that gracious act by which He marked out a people for Himself, setting His heart upon them, and making them the objects of His love, in the outflow of which their eternal bliss is secured, while in their blessing His affection is gratified. This is

beautifully illustrated in the words of Moses to Israel. He tells them that the Lord had chosen them to be a "*special* people unto Himself," and no reason could be found for this but the fact that the Lord loved them (Deut. vii. 7, 8). He further says, "The Lord had a delight in thy fathers to love them, and He chose their seed after them, even you above all people, as it is this day" (Deut. x. 15). Here is the explanation of the words "*whom He foreknew*," and in each case this is pressed as an incentive to obedience and faithfulness on the part of Israel. So now, in the case of those who are "the elect of God, holy and beloved," this truth of God's having set His love upon them, and chosen them in His rich grace, and not because of any merit on their part, is ever set forth to move them to praise, and devotedness, and obedience.

Those whom God thus in His absolute and infinite grace *foreknew* "He also did *predestinate* to be conformed to the image of His Son." God's *predestination* therefore has special reference to the *high estate* to which He purposes to raise those who, receiving

the Gift of His love, even His own Son, are by that love for ever embraced as His children (John i. 12). Thus we read in Eph. i. 5, "Having *predestinated* us unto *sonship* by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will." In order to conform us to the image of His Son, God bestows *sonship* upon us; that is, brings us into the blessed relationship of sons to Himself, and this relationship is so great a reality that it necessitates such conformity. As *the Son of God* is distinguished from *all creatures* by the high and glorious title, "the only begotten Son," so in a sense no less real is the family of grace distinguished from *all other creatures* by the fact that they are begotten of God (John i. 13; 1 John ii. 29; iii. 9; v. 4, 18). On the ground of creation no creature has any right to address God as Father. The highest creature of God, who has served Him faithfully from the moment of his creation, is not able thus to address his Creator. The position of "the elect angels" is one of glory and dignity beyond our conception, but they are *servants*, not *sons*. By an act of *creation* God could surround

Himself with these glorious beings ; but, as we have before seen, it needed *redemption* to enable Him to bring creatures into the relationship of *sons*, and the marvel of His grace is seen in raising so high those who by sin have sunk so low.

Thus are we even now brought into fellowship with Him who is not ashamed to call us "brethren," and to use the wonderful words, "*My Father and your Father*"; and in due time this fellowship must be perfected by our being perfectly conformed to His image. This result is secured by the counsel of God and the grace that has already made us His children, so that we can say with confidence, "As we have borne the image of the earthly, *we shall also bear the image of the heavenly,*" and again, "*We shall be like Him,* for we shall see Him as He is." This fact we know ; but all that it involves we do not know, for "it doth not yet appear what we shall be." Not until we stand with Him in resurrection glory, and our eyes rest upon Himself, can we form any true estimate of what the high estate of *His brethren* must be. Then we shall with Him fully delight in the pres-

ence of the Father, and share his joy in seeing that Name which He revealed for ever hallowed. To glorify that Name will still be *His* pleasure, and it will never cease to be *ours* also.

It will equally be the Father's delight *and ours* to "honour the Son." If God predestinated us to be conformed to the image of His Son, it was "that He might be the Firstborn among many brethren"; and the difference between "the FIRSTBORN" and all others will never be forgotten. We shall never forget that it was His *graciousness* or *condescension* that made us great (Ps. xviii. 35); that to make us partakers of His glory, He once took our sin and shame, and for our sakes sank into the lowest depths. The fact that He joyfully owns us as brethren will never prevent our full and hearty response to the word, "*He is thy Lord, and worship thou Him.*" We shall do this perfectly then. Oh, that we may do so in increasing measure while we "hope for that we see not," and "with patience wait for it"!

IX.

CALLED AND JUSTIFIED.

IT has been well said that in Romans viii. 29, 30 we have a "golden chain," each link of which is very precious. Having dwelt upon that link which relates to the *past*, we now take up the two which describe the action of God's grace in the present: "Whom He did predestinate, them He also *called*; and whom He called, them He also *justified*."

The utterance of Wisdom (Prov. viii. 4), "Unto you, O men, *I call*; and my voice is to the sons of men," well befits the Gospel which the same Speaker commanded to be preached "to every creature." It is by that Gospel that God calls to salvation and glory (2 Thess. ii. 13, 14), and as, when He was upon earth, the Lord said, "I came not to call the righteous, but *sinners*," so now it is to *sinners* that the Gospel comes from God, and its first declaration is that of "the forgiveness of sins." No sinner in any nation under heaven ever responded to the call of

God's Gospel without proving to the satisfaction and joy of his soul that all its rich blessings were intended for him, and no one ever can come to God as a hungry and needy sinner and be sent empty away. If a man does not welcome the Gospel it is because he does not feel his need of it. He either disregards the claims of God his Creator, or refuses to believe that he is altogether "without strength," as well as "guilty before God," and therefore unable to make himself or his works acceptable to God.

But whilst a sense of sin and need makes us glad to turn to Christ and trust Him as the Saviour of the lost, it is only when we have been brought into the light that we discern how dense our darkness was. We then see that had we been left to ourselves we should still have gone on without Christ, and though we might have desired to escape the *consequences* of sin when they really come before us, we should never have loathed sin itself, or had any true thirst for the Living God. We learn that if we have sought and found Christ, it is because He sought and found us, as He said when

Zacchæus had *received* Him, "The Son of Man is come to *seek* and *save* that which was *lost*."

The words of our Lord in John vi. show us that while this is the expression of the grace of His own heart; it is also a carrying out of the will of the Father who sent Him. It is because lost ones are given to Him by the Father that He seeks them; it is because they are drawn to Him by the Father that He receives them. Thus words which stir the pride of the natural heart, and even become an occasion of stumbling to unbelievers, are found by the renewed soul to be full of consolation. When "taught of God" we acknowledge that we were so sinful and helpless that we could not have come to Christ had we not been drawn by the Father.

But this *drawing* and this *teaching* are the gracious work of the Holy Spirit, and that which is set forth by these words is expressed in the Epistles by the word "*called*." Careful examination shows that in the Epistles this word is never used of one who has not responded to the call of God, but always of those have been inwardly and efficaciously

called, and have obeyed from the heart the Gospel that has reached them. (See especially 1 Cor. i. 23, 24; Rom. ix. 23, 24.) So in Rom. i. 6 believers are described as "*the called of Jesus Christ,*" which seems to mean *the called ones belonging to Jesus Christ*, the act of calling being generally traced to God the Father.

The frequent use of the words *called* and *calling* seems designed to keep prominently before us the fact that it is GOD who makes us to differ from those who are still content to be without Him. We can take no praise to ourselves, but can only own that the same grace which made full provision for our salvation constrained us to come to Him in whom alone it is found. Thus all ground of human boasting is removed and God secures to Himself the full glory of the salvation of His people. And the more we know of that grace the more shall we seek to respond in every way to the claims of Him who has called us to be His, and to yield ourselves and all that we have to Him and to His service.

Those whom God calls He *justifies*, and as "peace with God" can be the portion only

of those who are justified, any who would have settled and abiding peace in their souls must enter into the reality of this justification. The meaning of the word *justify* should be carefully pondered. It expresses the sentence of a judge, and signifies *to acquit* or *to pronounce righteous*. That *to justify* is exactly the opposite of *to condemn* is clear from Deut. xxv. 1 and Prov. xvii. 15. If an earthly judge pronounced a wicked man righteous it would be an abomination to God and man; but God is perfectly just when, through the sacrifice of "His own Son," He declares the ungodly, *on their believing in Jesus*, to be free from any charge of guilt (Rom. iii. 26; iv. 5).

Justification is more than forgiveness. In an earthly court the judge can only justify when the accused is proved clear of that with which he is charged; one who needs forgiveness can never be justified, and one who is justified, *i.e.*, acquitted of the charge brought against him, needs no forgiveness. In the heavenly court, "God, the Judge of all," both forgives and justifies, for in this matter He has to do with those who

own themselves guilty, and whose eyes are turned from themselves to find in their accepted Surety the ground both of forgiveness and justification. Pardon discharges us from punishment and delivers from the consequences of sin, while justification bestows upon us that title to glory which could be given only through the precious blood and perfect righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ.

No *sinner* can ever show a *title* to be *justified* or declared righteous; therefore if we are thus blessed we are "justified freely [*i.e.*, *gratuitously*, or *without cause*, as the word is rendered in John xv. 25] by His grace"; but the righteous God can never pronounce an unrighteous sentence, and therefore, while the justification springs from His infinite grace, it reaches us "through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus" (Rom. iii. 24), even "by His blood" (verse 9) that has atoned for, and for ever put away, the guilt from which the just God pronounces us free. The believer is also said to be "justified by faith" (verse 1), because, owning himself to be both guilty and helpless, he *relies* solely on the

Lord Jesus Christ and the value of His precious sacrifice for acceptance in the presence of God.

It is important to keep clearly before us the exact meaning of the word *justify*, as shown above, because Romish teachers assert that it signifies *to make righteous*, and lead the sinner to look into himself, or to his "good works," for the ground of justification, the natural conclusion being that no one can be justified till death, or some time after. Such teaching is necessary to the maintenance of any system of human priesthood; for if it be taught that a sinner, being justified and accepted as absolutely righteous in Christ, has free access to the holy presence of God, and an assured standing there, a human priesthood is instantly seen to be an imposture.

That those who are justified are also *made righteous* is indeed a blessed truth, for by the renewing grace of the Spirit of God, the new man "is created in righteousness and holiness of truth" (Eph. iv. 24); but however inseparable from justification is the gracious act of regeneration, it must not be

confounded with it. God does not justify a sinner because he is regenerated, or because of anything in himself, but solely on the ground of the atoning death of His Son.

It may be well also to add that while a man is "justified by faith" alone, the faith that justifies is not a barren faith, but "*faith which worketh by love,*" and purifieth the heart (Gal. v. 6; Acts xv. 9). James, expounding, so to speak, the words just quoted, shows that "faith, if it hath not works, is dead." The faith that does not show itself by its results is not "the faith of God's elect," inwrought by the Holy Spirit; but a counterfeit that brings no blessing to man and no glory to God.

x.

GLORIFIED.

THOSE whom God justifies He *glorifies*. So unquestionable is this, that in Romans viii. 30 the past tense is used, as of a thing already accomplished—"Whom He justified, them He also glorified." The

purpose of God being unchangeable, He can call things which are not as though they were. Each of the comprehensive words of this verse is a golden link of a chain that can never be broken—a chain that stretches from the eternal past into the eternal future. “The lovingkindness of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him” (Psa. ciii. 17)—*from* everlasting in purpose and design, *to* everlasting in rich fruit of blessing to His redeemed and glory to Himself. He sees the end from the beginning, takes into account all that can ever come to pass, and fully provides for the carrying out of His holy will.

Dr. Handley Moule well remarks: “It seems difficult, without violence to both the letter and spirit of this passage, to deny that it represents the salvation of ‘the children of God’ as a line drawn from eternity to eternity: first, a sovereign choice of souls; then the call of the chosen, resulting in their faith and their acceptance; then the final entrance on heavenly bliss of these same called ones; and also their note and characteristic now—love of God.”

God who has glorified "His own Son" will with Him glorify those whom He owns as His brethren. The prayer of the Lord, "*Father, glorify Thy Son,*" was answered by His being raised from the dead and exalted to God's right hand, and the glorifying of "the many sons" involves their being brought into the same resurrection state, either by being *changed* or *raised from the dead* (1 Cor. xv. 51, 52). Of "every one that beholdeth the Son, and believeth on Him," and who thus eats His flesh and drinks His blood, and receives eternal life, the Lord says, "I will raise him up at the last day" (John vi. 40, 54). The apostle Paul, like his Master, dwelt much on resurrection. He declared that God who raised up the Lord "will also raise up us by His own power," and earnestly enforced the blessed truth when some denied it (1 Cor. vi., xv.; see also 2 Cor. iv., v.).

Long after Paul's course was finished the apostle John wrote: "It doth not yet appear what we shall be"; but we know that "we shall be like Him." That also is the "hope" which the apostle Paul specially cherished: "As we have borne the image

of the earthy, *we shall also bear the image of the heavenly*”; and again he tells us that the Lord, as SAVIOUR, “shall fashion anew the body of our humiliation, *that it may be conformed to the body of His glory*” (Phil. iii. 21).

Though we cannot take in what this means till we “see Him as He is,” we may note some unquestionable features of our future blessedness. In the resurrection body will be found no memorial of the havoc wrought by sin. Every trace of the mortal and corruptible will be banished—mortality will be swallowed up of life; incorruption will take the place of what is corruptible. The “*natural* body,” which, even in its sinless state, was only suited to an *earthly* paradise, will give place to a “spiritual body” fitted for that “kingdom of God” which “flesh and blood cannot inherit.” A body with no trace of weakness, and a mind that shall never become weary, will be subservient to a heart that shall never fail in its full response to infinite love and its perfect devotedness to Him who has redeemed us for Himself. Ignorance, too, will be numbered amongst the things that have

“passed away,” for “then shall I know, even as also I am known.” We shall know God, and our knowledge will beget lowliness and worship. We shall *know*, and we shall be *learning*, and surely our chief subject of adoring contemplation will be the cross, and the LOVE therein expressed. It will still be the Holy Spirit’s delight to unfold the Father and the Son to willing learners, and thus to deepen that fellowship which through His renewing grace is already ours (1 John i. 3).

We “rejoice in hope of the glory of God,” and of that glory grace is the pledge, for he who receives *grace* will obtain *glory* too (Psalm lxxxiv. 11). We cannot scrutinise the counsels of God, but we can know whether the grace that bringeth salvation is dear to our hearts, and whether He by whom that grace came is the object of our trust, and love, and devotion. Grace is the bud of which glory is the full-blown flower, and so Peter speaks of the very glory as “the *grace* that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ,” and Jude exhorts believers to be “looking for the *mercy* of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal

life." Those who are "prepared unto glory" are "vessels of *mercy*," and this they gratefully own. Christ could say of Paul, "He is a chosen vessel unto Me"; Paul's account of Himself was that He "obtained *mercy*." The sense of the riches of God's mercy which will be ours, when we first behold our Lord and shine in His image, will far surpass the present experience of the most advanced saint of God. Beautifully is this expressed in the verse,

"How shall I meet those eyes?
Mine on Himself I cast,
And own myself the Saviour's prize—
Mercy from first to last"!

"The Lord will *give* grace and glory." The glory will be as truly a gift as the grace. He does not bestow grace and leave us to earn glory. The Lord Jesus said, "The glory which Thou gavest Me, I have given them." Of that gift He was worthy; the grace that makes *us* worthy to shine in His glory is all of Himself. So in the words of the risen Lord to the Churches we have the word *give* several times. To the overcomer He will "give to eat of the tree of life," will

“give to eat of the hidden manna,” will “give the crown of life,” will “give a white stone,” will “give power over the nations,” and, finally, “to him that overcometh will I give to sit with Me in My throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with My Father in His throne.” It is indeed those who overcome that receive these gifts; but *gifts* they are nevertheless to those who will never allow the thought that they have merited anything.

May we, while cherishing the hope of glory, have an ever-deepening sense of the grace that is already ours, and prove its power so to discipline our hearts as to lead us to “live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world,” and thus “adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things”!

XI.

GOD FOR US.

HAVING reached the grand climax of the eternal glorification of God’s called ones (verse 30) the apostle asks, “What

shall we then say to these things?" What *can* we say, except that "The Lord hath done *great things* for us, whereof we are glad," and in this gladness "we will bless the Lord from this time forth, and for evermore."

But the apostle answers his question by asking another: "If God be for us, who can be against us?" It is indeed true that we have much against us—Satan and the world without, and the flesh within—but, though this makes our conflict a very real one, what are all combined "if God be for us"? The way in which this question is asked implies that what has previously been stated is sure evidence that God *is* for us. And truly this is a clear and blessed deduction from all the previous teaching of this wonderful epistle, which sets forth "the Gospel of God concerning His Son Jesus Christ our Lord" (chap. i. 1-3). Had not God been "*for us*" there could not have been any Gospel, for there would have been no propitiation to set forth, no reconciliation to bestow, no justification to declare.

The late Dr. Hodge remarked, "The conclusion of the chapter is a recapitulation

of all the apostle's former arguments, or rather the reduction of them to one, which comprehends them all in their fullest force—**GOD IS FOR US.** As our Judge, He is satisfied; as our Father, He loves us; as the supreme and almighty Controller of events, who works all things after the counsel of His own will, He has determined to save us; and as that Being whose love is as unchanging as it is infinite, He allows nothing to separate His children from Himself.”

The blessed truth that “God is for us” may be traced from the beginning of His gracious revelation of Himself. What was the solemn utterance to the serpent in Eden —“I will put enmity between thee and the woman”—but an intimation that God would interpose on man's behalf? And was not the assurance that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head a pledge of his final overthrow and the deliverance of those whom he had enticed to ruin? Every type of Christ and every prophecy of salvation declared this with ever-increasing fulness; but it was when “the Son of God was *manifested* that He might destroy the works

of the devil" that the truth shone out in all its brightness.

Saints of old made much of having God on their behalf, and the words in which the psalmist expressed his confidence—"The Lord is on my side, I will not fear"—are put by the Holy Spirit into the lips of believers now (Psa. cxviii. 6; Heb. xiii. 6).

It is because the Cross of Christ is the fullest proof that God Himself can give of His being on our side that our thoughts are once again turned to the death of our Lord: "He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?" The verse should begin, "He surely." "It is a pity," says Dr. David Brown, "to lose the emphatic particle of the original"; and Bengel remarks that it conveys "an abundant sweetness of exultation."

We may well—in these days when the glory of Christ, as the Son of God, is by many denied, and by many, who even profess His Name, ignored—note again the force of the words which occur twice in this chapter—"His own Son." The expres-

sion is evidently designed to contrast Him with those who are spoken of as "sons of God," being *made such* by new birth. *Their* relationship to God as sons is indeed a very real one; but *His* relationship to the Father is one that could not be bestowed upon any creature. The expression is the same as in John v. 18, which the Revised Version rightly renders "*His own Father*," and which the Jews understood better than many teachers of this day, even though they would not receive the truth.

It is the fact that He "spared not *His own Son*" that makes the gift so marvellous, and the argument from it so powerful, enabling us to ask,

" What will He not bestow,
Who freely gave this mighty Gift unbought,
Unmerited, unheeded, and unsought—
What will He not bestow? "

But all other gifts that God bestows are "*with Him*." There are many things we might desire, which, if granted, would come between us and Christ; such things could not be given "with Him," and therefore in tender love and infinite wisdom God withholds

them. God can only keep from the objects of His love what would be hurtful to them, or would hinder their growth in faith and communion with Himself; and though this is not always clear to us, let us seek so to learn the lesson of the Cross that we may trust in Him at all times, and in due time we shall *see* and *approve* His wisdom and His goodness, and praise Him that He did not yield to our folly. We shall then learn that many prayers have been answered in the fullest manner when the actual things sought have not been obtained.

The apostle is still confirming the truth that "*God is for us*" when he asks the further questions of verses 33 and 34, and furnishes triumphant answers to them. "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?" There is indeed one who seeks to do so (Rev. xii. 10); but the triumphant answer to every accuser is, "It is GOD that *justifieth*," implying that he who brings a charge against God's elect calls in question the justifying sentence of the heavenly court, and must reckon with Him who pronounces it. And if none dare bring a *charge*, who shall be found

to *condemn*? To the question, "Who is he that condemneth?" a fourfold answer is given:

(1) "It is Christ that died." Christ "died for *our sins*," bearing them "in His own body on the tree": by His death he met all the requirements of divine justice, and thus removed for ever all ground of condemnation for those who are in Him (verse 1).

(2) "Yea rather that is *risen again*." The resurrection of Christ is the great proof of the perfection of His work of atonement. "If Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins" (1 Cor. xv. 17); not because the resurrection *adds to* the value of the great sacrifice, but because had Christ not been raised, it could only have been because His death had failed to accomplish that for which He died. This was impossible.

(3) "Who is even *at the right hand of God*." He who, as our *Surety*, gave Himself to bear our condemnation, now occupies the highest place in heaven. What a proof that no condemnation remains for those who are in Him! He is in the place of power, and all authority is His. He lives to carry out the purposes of His death, and can never fail to do so.

(4) "Who also *maketh intercession for us.*" Christ in glory is actively occupied on behalf of His own, and if His being at God's right hand tells of His *power* to carry out the purposes for which He came into the world and died, His intercession for us no less declares His unchanging *willingness*. For an example of His intercession we must turn to John xvii. How gracious of the Lord to give us that wonderful prayer! Let us specially mark verse 13: "These things"—which befit and belong to the heavenly sanctuary—"I speak in the world, that they"—for whom I pray, knowing how I am occupied for them in the holiest—"might have My joy fulfilled in themselves." Thus did the Lord lift the veil, and give us a glimpse of His wonderful intercourse with the Father, that we may have some idea of the meaning of His making intercession for us.

As we thus recall these evidences of the blessed truth that "*God is for us,*" may we not ask ourselves whether it is as evident that *we are for Him?* Are we yielding ourselves to God as those that are alive from the dead, and our members as instruments

of righteousness unto God? (chap. vi. 13). This surely is the only worthy response to the mighty actings of His grace on our behalf, and this is the way to enter more fully into the knowledge and enjoyment of that grace.

XII.

NO SEPARATION.

QUESTIONS springing from unbelief, which, alas! are so common in the present day, damage the soul and dishonour God; but there are questions the very asking of which strengthens faith, hope, and love. Such are the questions of the closing verses of this glorious chapter. They are like the enquiries in God's temple of one who is dwelling in His house, where the sunshine of His presence and the unfolding of His beauty dispel all the mists of unbelief (Psa. xxvii. 4). Having shown in the most forcible manner that no accusation can be brought against God's elect, and that no one can

condemn those for whom Christ died (Rom. viii. 33, 34), the apostle asks yet one more question (verse 35), only to answer it in such a manner as to set forth the *faithfulness* of the blessed God whose *grace* has been so abundantly unfolded.

“Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?” Strange it seems that any should ever have asked if this means *our love to Christ!* No; it is Christ’s love to us—the love in which He gave Himself for us, and in which He now maketh intercession for us. The apostle (as Calvin remarks) says not “*what,*” but “*who,*” just as if all creatures and all afflictions were so many gladiators taking arms against Christians. We should never forget that Paul knew by experience the power of those things of which he spoke, as he said plainly when his own spiritual children put him on his defence, so to speak, as a minister of Christ (2 Cor. xi. 23-27). He quotes Psalm xliv. 22, which, while it may have special reference to the sufferings of a remnant of Israel under the antichrist, is really a description of what God’s faithful people may expect whenever

the angry passions of those who hate righteousness are unrestrained. No outward veneer—even of Christianity—can change those who are “born after *the flesh*”; birth of *the Spirit* alone can produce that love which is the true characteristic of all the family of God (Gal. iv. 29; 1 John v. 1), and anything short of this may soon find expression in the form of hatred (Gal. iv. 29).

But if children of God are “as sheep for the slaughter,” they are still sheep in the hand of the Good Shepherd, whence no one can pluck them (John x. 28). To say that none of those things enumerated in verse 35 shall separate us from the love of our Lord is only half the truth: “Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us.” It is as if Paul had said, “We do not merely escape from our foes without being overcome or taken prisoners; we ourselves are *great gainers* by the conflict. Faith and patience are strengthened by their very exercise, and the sufficiency of ‘Him that loved us’ even unto death, and loves us still with the same unquenchable love, is proved as need alone could prove it.” Thus

the very capacity of the soul of the overcomer is expanded and strengthened to know God as his "exceeding joy" (Psa. xliii. 4; Rev. xxi. 7), and to delight in Him as such in that eternal day when no foe shall ever again lift the hand against Christ and those who bear His Name.

It will be no small part of our joy in that bright future to learn from those who have been called to the forefront of the conflict what they proved of the Lord, who covered their head in the day of battle (Psa. cxl. 7), and sustained them by the manifestation of Himself. All this they, too, will joyfully declare, at least as far as they *can* do so, for there will ever be a joy in each heart—a secret between each one and the Lord—with which no stranger shall intermeddle (Prov. xiv. 10; Rev. ii. 17).

The *partial* history of God's Church furnishes blessed illustrations of being "more than conquerors" in the time of trial; what will the *complete* history of that Church unfold? The noble Perpetua and the slave Felicitas, a little more than a century after these words were written, when, all difference

of rank forgotten, they encouraged one another as sisters in Christ, and in spite of persuasions and threats stood firm in the confession of Christ till they were cast to the wild beasts, gave evidence of the sufficiency of His grace even for such an end. The words of Perpetua —“ The dungeon became a palace to me ”— tell of glorious victory. They were but two among thousands in those early days, and the same spirit of triumph has shown itself all down the centuries, even to our own day. These two had a noble successor in a young Chinese woman who, when a magistrate offered to set her free and make her his wife if she would renounce Christ, chose rather to go to death, and encouraged those who suffered with her.

Such conflicts, indeed, are rare just now, yet the dangers for us, if more subtle, are as real; and it may need keener vision to discern them, and not less grace to overcome them. “ Life ” has its snares, if “ death ” has its terrors. But whatever form the struggle takes, he who is behind it all is the great foe of God and His Christ, and the secret of victory is the Blood of the Lamb and the

Word of our testimony, and not loving our lives even unto the death (Rev. xii. 11).

“I ask them whence their victory came;
They with united breath
Ascribe their conquest to the Lamb,
Their triumph to His death.”

We may know little of the kind of testing that comes with persecution; but if we are overcoming in the circumstances in which God has placed us, we may count upon Him for grace to overcome in trials we scarcely dare contemplate if He should call us to face them. It is true in this respect also that “he that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much.”

We cannot enter particularly into the many things named by the apostle in these verses, but may note that, lest any troubled soul should stand face to face with something not mentioned, the enumeration ends with “*any other created thing.*” Of all hostile powers or conceivable events the apostle says, “I am persuaded that” none of them “shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

It is instructive to see how, while writing

by the Spirit, he expresses his own assured convictions. He says above, "*I reckon*" (verse 18), and "*we know*" (verse 28), and now "*I am persuaded.*" How did he get this persuasion? Was it not by the constant contemplation of that love of God which He commendeth "toward us, in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us"? By thus dwelling upon God's love he so learned its vastness and strength as to be persuaded that it can never relinquish its mighty grasp of those embraced by it; and let us never forget that it does embrace all who, being taught by His Spirit, flee to Christ for refuge, and believe the love in which God gave His Son to die for the lost. In verse 35 the apostle had asked, "Who shall separate us from the love of CHRIST?" here he says, "The love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." The Father and the Son are *one* in their love, and the sheep that are in the hand of Christ are in the hand of the Father too (John x. 28, 29).

May an ever-deepening sense of this love of God, which is our eternal portion, lead to truer devotedness on our part to Him and His holy will! And surely, as we ponder

that Cross in which the love of God and of Christ finds full expression, we shall set our hearty "Amen!" to the ascription of worship penned by the beloved disciple, "UNTO HIM THAT LOVETH US, AND FREED US FROM OUR SINS BY HIS OWN BLOOD . . . BE GLORY AND DOMINION FOR EVER AND .EVER!"

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