

The Position of Man, and of the World, Before God

by John Nelson Darby

The sermon emphasizes the need for salvation through faith in Jesus Christ, highlighting the position of man and the world before God and the gift of righteousness through faith in Jesus.

Scripture: Romans 1:16

Topics: "Redemption", "Grace"

Description

John Nelson Darby discusses the position of man and the world before God, emphasizing the historical context of humanity's fall from grace and the introduction of the law. He explains how, despite man's disobedience and the resulting separation from God, divine grace provided a path to redemption through Jesus Christ. The sermon highlights the necessity of faith in receiving God's righteousness, as well as the transformative power of grace that leads to a new life in Christ. Darby underscores the importance of understanding our sinful nature and the role of the law in revealing our need for salvation. Ultimately, he points to the hope and assurance found in being justified by faith and the love of God.

Transcript

Rome was the centre of the universal empire of the world, the Gentile metropolis; and Paul had not been there; but God had made him apostle and teacher of the Gentiles; 2 Tim 1:11. In fulfilling his apostolic function, his heart was naturally drawn toward that seat of the empire and the Christians living there, or who flocked thither from all sides, to confirm them in the faith, and to establish the church forming in that important locality on the foundations of divine truth. This is what the epistle to the Romans presents us with. It is a summary of the great truths which form the groundwork of the gospel of Christ.

Let us consider a little the position of man, and of the world, before God. Christianity, it is evident, was not introduced at the beginning of the history of the human race. Already nearly 4,000 years had elapsed before the Son of God appeared among men. How many things had taken place under the eye of God during that long period!

Let us examine the grand traits of this history. God had created man innocent, and had placed him in a state of happiness in a terrestrial paradise. He, following the sad example of his wife who had listened to the seductive words of the tempter, disobeyed God, and lost at once his innocence and his happiness. He dares not to present himself before God. A bad conscience leads him to avoid His presence, even before

the just judgment of God drives him from the garden, and from Himself, source alone of true happiness. Man, ungrateful, disobedient man, who had taken Satan for his friend and his counsellor, in preference to God, having believed him rather than God Himself, was the slave of Satan and his own will, was lost! Being driven from the garden was but a natural consequence of his fall. The way to the tree of life was closed to him. He stays in the world outside, the slave of sin and death.

But God, in driving man out from His presence, had not forgotten to be gracious; and, in pronouncing sentence on the serpent, He speaks of a Redeemer who should destroy the power of the enemy of man. It was pure grace; and testimony was given of it in the very title of the Deliverer, "the Seed of the woman," of her who by listening to Satan had plunged man into ruin; but before sending the Redeemer for the accomplishment of the work of redemption, man must be tried, and in every way, to see whether, such as he is, he could attain to the power of life eternal, or secure himself in a state of happiness. God knew well what he was. Every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. But we are prone enough to entertain a good opinion of ourselves for it to be salutary for us to make trial of what we are, that the conscience, convinced of sin, may be willing to profit by pure grace and the goodness of God. So, during centuries, God left man without checks to the inclinations of his own heart. The Saviour had been announced, it is true, and a living testimony had been given on the part of God.

2 The names of Abel, Enoch, and Noah, shine in the pages of the holy scriptures, like lights in those remote ages. But the light itself shone in vain. Man corrupted himself more and more, so that after long patience God was led to wash corrupted humanity in the terrible scourge of the deluge. But He who is ever remembering His mercy in the midst of His judgments, pointed out a means of salvation to those who alone had listened to His word; and Noah, with his family, becomes the parent stock of a new world.

But the terrible lesson of a world destroyed was lost upon man. Chastisements do not change nature. We soon find that idolatry is introduced and propagated in all quarters of the world. That is to say, to avail ourselves of the words of the apostle Paul, "the heathen sacrificed to devils and not to God." God called Abraham in order to preserve in the midst of the world the knowledge of the true God, and that he might be the depositary of the promises of God, and that the promised seed should rise from his family. And Abraham, as well as Isaac and Jacob, his son and grandson, were strangers and pilgrims on the earth through faith. Of his posterity the Lord raised up an earthly people (called Israel, known generally, in the present day, under the name of Jews), that it might be a witness and preserver of the doctrine of the unity of the true God, against the errors of the heathen. In Abraham the call of grace from out of the world, and free salvation through faith, had been signally shewn in the ways of God. Now, a striking testimony as to the deliverance by the blood of a victim, substituted for the sinner whose penalty it bore, was presented in a figure; and this thought, this answer to the needs of conscience harassed by the conviction of sin, was spread through all nations; disfigured, doubtless, by the gross and abominable ideas of idolaters, who falsified the character of God in worshipping demons; but, in its first principle, as in its origin, a divine provision for the necessity of the sinner before a just God. When God called Israel to Himself that they might be His people, He put ransom as the ground of their deliverance. The blood guarded them from the just judgment of God, and guarded them perfectly.

3 The people, come out of Egypt, are led through the desert to be tried, and at last are brought to Sinai. And now a principle quite new is presented to them. The covenant of the law is offered to the people; that is to say, the blessing and the enjoyment of promises under condition of obedience to the law of God. "If ye obey my voice," said Jehovah to the people; "thou shalt be a peculiar treasure unto me." "Do this, and thou shalt live." This then is the principle of the law of God, a principle perfectly just, like the law, which

was the rule of conduct which God proposed, and which the Lord Jesus summed up in those holy words: "Thou shalt love Jehovah thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy mind, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and thy neighbour as thyself." It was a perfect and admirable rule of what man ought to be, and which would secure happiness to the creatures living according to its requirements. Jehovah therefore proclaimed the law, under the form of Ten Commandments, with His own mouth to the people, at Sinai. If they kept it, they should be blessed; if not, they would be condemned and cursed.

Now the law, as it ought, proposed to them a perfect obedience, even (what is in fact alone such) the perfect obedience of the heart. "Thou shalt not covet." It is evident that, if God was entering into relationship with man, He must look to the heart. "Thou shalt not covet." To act otherwise would be to justify the hypocrite. The law was thus given. It was a holy, just, and perfect law, which declared what man ought to be, in order to please God, and to have life eternal. If God was pure, holy, and just, man must be so to be happy. But mark here, if the law described what man ought to be, it did not at all declare what God was, except that He was just, and would punish the sinner. It is the gospel which shining, while it fully recognises this justice and the perfection of the law, reveals what God in grace is to him who transgresses it. We shall speak of it presently. Here let us follow our subject. The law, which required perfect righteousness and obedience in man, had been given - to whom? To man already a sinner? What can a perfect law do (and the law of God must be such) for a sinner? Condemn him in convincing him of his sin. Was it the law which was in fault? Quite the contrary: it was its holiness and righteousness which did thus. It was the necessary result of a perfect law given to a sinner. A rule gives neither life nor strength; it requires certain things, it gives nothing.

4 There is another result of the law. There is a will of his own in man. One knows it, one feels it, one sees it. The law forbids the gratification of our will. It is the expression of the will of God which we ought to obey. Our wills kick against the will of God. We always desire to do that which is forbidden. Forbid a child to look into a basket to see what is therein, and a longing will begin to stir at once in its heart. It would not have thought of it, had it not been told not to look inside the basket; but now it wishes to examine it. Sin finds an occasion in the law. The unbeliever will say, perhaps, "How unjust to give us a law which can only condemn us!" One might say so indeed, however useless it would be to contend against God, if it were true that God had given it in order that we might be saved through its means; but this is what He has not done. God gave the law that sin might be made manifest, and that sin by the commandment might become exceedingly sinful - to shew, not only that man had committed sins, but that his will was wicked and corrupt, and so audacious, that he would commit them in spite of God's prohibition; and so wicked, as a will, that a prohibition was only an occasion for this will to wish to leap clean over the barrier which might oppose itself to it. It is Christ who saves, not the law. Israel, to whom God committed the care of this law, had transgressed it in making a golden calf even before Moses had come down from the mount with the tables upon which God had engraved it. The patience of God, however, still shewed itself in sending prophets to put Israel in remembrance of the requirements of the law, and of the goodness of God, proclaiming with increasing light the accomplishment of the promise of the Messiah. Israel despised their warnings and their testimony. At last John the Baptist, herald of the King of Israel, of the Christ of God, arrives; and soon after the Lord Himself appeared on the scene. "I have yet my Son, my only Son," said God, proclaiming Himself under the figure of a parable - "they will reverence my Son."

5 We all know what happened to the Man of sorrows. "Behold," said the husbandmen (to use still the words of the parable), "Behold the heir! come, let us kill him, and the inheritance will be ours." The Son of God appeared - they spat in His face, and crucified Him. Such is the history of the world: is man wicked or

not? And consider what the Son of man was - it was no more the law; for, although the Son was born, in His grace, under the law, He was the manifestation of the love and of the goodness of God, even towards those who had transgressed it. He did them good - He did not impute their sins to them. It was God in the midst of men and their misery - God delivering them from it without imputing to them the sin that had brought them there. He required nothing, bore everything, and healed their sick. He gave to eat to those that were hungry; He raised their dead. It was power and divine love; but it was the light, it was God Himself; and whatever His goodness might be, man would not have Him.

The Jew alas! hated Him; the Gentile, despising Him, rid himself of Him, to avoid the tumult raised by the jealousy of the Jews: all, unknown to themselves, accomplished the will and the counsels of God. The crime, without parallel, which the sin of man committed, was the testimony and the accomplishment of the perfect love of God.

The victim of propitiation was sacrificed. The blood which redeemed, which accomplished our salvation, was spilt. Man had been left without law - corruption and violence had characterised the world. Man had been put under the law, with all the privileges of the presence of God in His temple, with the testimony of the prophets, the ordinances and the direct government of God; he had transgressed the law, despised the prophets, and forsaken God for idols of his own choice. The Son of God Himself, God manifested in the flesh, had appeared on the scene of misery which man had created for himself by his own sin, the testimony of the infinite goodness of God. The world knew Him not, the Jews would not have Him - they all united together in rising against the Lord and His Anointed. They spat in His face and crucified Him; they hated Him without a cause. Sad picture! We prefer our own way to everything. Thus man has been tested in every way - the tree was bad. Now comes the question. What will God be with regard to man, wicked man? A just Judge doubtless, of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, to look at sin. Grace and love will He be before He begins with judgment.

6 It is here that the epistle to the Romans begins its instruction, addressing the Gentiles on the one hand, and the Jews on the other. Let us sum up in a few words the thread of thoughts which the Holy Spirit presents us with in this important part of the word of God.

In chapter 1, after having announced Christ as the Son of David, heir of the promises made to Israel, and Son of God in power, addressing himself affectionately to the Christians at Rome, he proclaims at once the gospel as the power of God unto salvation, to the Jew first; and also to the Gentile, because a righteousness of God is revealed therein. Man had none for God; God has one in His grace for man, sinful and wretched man.

Now, if God has revealed it as a righteousness which is His own, and which He has made available for man; if God, I say, has revealed it as a righteousness perfect and accomplished on His part, it is through faith that we must receive it. It is faith which receives a revelation; it is faith which lays hold of and trusts to an accomplished fact. The apostle Paul asserts that the wrath of God is revealed against all unrighteousness. What was there else amongst the heathen? Against all ungodliness in men who held the truth in ungodliness. Had not such been the case with the Jews up to that day? And may we not add now, alas, with many of the most orthodox persons who call themselves Christians. The patience of God had lasted long, but He has fully revealed Himself in Christ, and every sin whatsoever, put into the light, is unbearable.

In the course of chapters 1 and 2, the apostle shews the horrible iniquity which characterised the state of the heathen, and the culpability of the Jews. Noah's family had known God; his descendants would not retain this knowledge. Proofs also of scripture, and of the power of the only true God, surrounded them everywhere! They were inexcusable. They had degraded the very idea of God. They were left to degrade themselves. Philosophers and moralists judged well of this state of things. Were they changed themselves? By no means. Could God accept of such things? Surely not. What of the Jews who boasted of the law, and wished to be the instructors of the ignorant? They transgressed the law of which they boasted, and the name of God was blasphemed among the heathen through their means.

7 It was not the outward appearance of man that was of any value in the eyes of God. He looks at the heart. Did the apostle deny then the privileges the Jews had above the heathen? By no means. But the possession of religious privileges renders those who do not profit thereby more guilty; so likewise the doctrine of Christ renders more culpable those who possess it, if they are not real and living Christians. Now the apostle shews to the Jews, by passages taken from their own scriptures, that they were condemned; so that, he says, every mouth is stopped, and the whole world stands guilty before God. By the works of the law shall no man be justified before God, for those who had the privilege of that law were so much the more guilty in that they had transgressed it. Who can stand before the law of God? Who can say, "I have not transgressed it!" How can one justify oneself by a law one has transgressed? By the law is the knowledge of sin. What is to be done? Hear what the apostle says: "But now the righteousness of God without the law is made manifest, being witnessed to by the law and the prophets; even the righteousness of God by faith of Jesus Christ unto all, and upon all them that believe, for there is no difference, for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God; being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God has set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood."

It is the precious blood of Christ, the Lamb of God, which is the only answer (which God Himself has furnished to us) to the demand of the justice which condemns the sinner. It is the righteousness of God by Jesus that makes righteous the man who has no righteousness to present to God, so that God is just in justifying him that has faith in Jesus. What grace! What a blessing for the poor sinner who has a heart broken enough and cleansed, sufficiently true for him to condemn himself! Boasting is excluded through faith in Jesus. We have now summed up the great principles of the first three chapters.

8 In chapter 4 the apostle, in reasoning with the Jew, presents to us other considerations in support of the divine thesis which he treats of. What shall we say of Abraham, the honoured and recognised chief of Israel, and the father of the faithful? He was justified by faith before the law was given, before even he himself was circumcised. But this is not all. On what did he himself rest? On the power of God who raises the dead. For there he was, as to the promise that was made to him; and this was imputed to him for righteousness. "If we believe in him who has raised Jesus from among the dead." That is to say, faith is in Him who, not only by the blood of the precious Saviour has satisfied the demands of the justice of God; but (when Jesus has borne in our place the punishment due to sin, has borne our sins in His own body on the tree, has been delivered for our offences and died for us) God, in His mighty power, raised Him, and has there done with our sins once for all, and has placed us (who believe in Jesus) in Him, in His presence, fully justified by means of what Jesus has done, since He has done it for those who believe. In believing, therefore, in this work of Jesus, we know that He has taken away our sins, and has placed us in the actual enjoyment of the favour and of the grace of God, before whom we find ourselves according to the efficacy of the work of Christ, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. This is what chapter 5 reveals to us. There also we find two principles of infinite importance.

The love of God does not find any motive in us, but in Himself, in His nature, all the while that it finds the occasion of displaying itself in our misery. The gospel is the glad tidings, that the love of God has made provision of a perfect righteousness in Christ Jesus for poor sinners who had none - a righteousness which we enjoy through faith in Jesus, so that all is a gift - all is gratuitous - to Jesus belongs all the glory - He alone is worthy. We are made partakers of it through grace. Perhaps a man would die for a good man. It was when we were yet without strength that Christ died for the ungodly. We may reckon on that love. If God has reconciled us by the death of Jesus when we were enemies, He will save us to the end through His life.

The second principle in this chapter is, that the question is not only concerning the law, we must go back as far as Adam, the head of the human race. All fell and were ruined in him, having superadded, at the same time, their own sins - "The law entered to make the offence abound." Sin was already known as a principle: the law in forbidding it, made of it an offence, a positive and formal transgression of every act which sin has produced in us. But God be blessed! Where sin abounded, grace has much more abounded. But as by the disobedience of one (that is to say, Adam) many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one (we are made just through the obedience of Jesus) many shall be justified; so that as sin has reigned in death, grace has reigned through righteousness unto life eternal by Jesus Christ our Lord.

9 Now the unbeliever, man's wicked heart, may be ready to say here, "Ah! since it is through the obedience of One that we are constituted righteous from being unrighteous, which I am; and since where sin abounded grace has much more abounded, let us sin that grace may abound." Doubtless that is what the flesh likes. Here is the answer of the apostle. How are you made a partaker of this divine righteousness in Christ? It is because He has died to sin, that He has done with sin in His death (He, who always was without sin), and that He is risen; and that you have been baptised unto His death, in order that you might thus have part in His resurrection. Now if you are dead to sin by faith in Him (and that is what faith would say, that is the meaning of your baptism), how live in sin? You have no part in the death of Christ if you still live in the flesh. If you are made partaker of justification, it is in Christ, by the power of the life in which He is risen. To have part in Christ as being dead and risen, is not to live in sin, but quite the contrary. So that to enjoy this perfect justification in the soul implies necessarily the death to sin and the life of God in the soul, because we possess this justification in Him alone, who, for us, has died to sin once, and lives to God always. But what is to be done with the law? Here is the answer. We have shewn that the true Christian is dead with Christ, being made a partaker with Him who died on the cross. Now, the law knows not how to accuse a dead man: so that instead of being condemned by the law as sinners, we live (as of a new life) unto God, in order to glorify Him by good fruits, which we bear by His grace, being already fully justified by the work of Christ Himself.

10 At the end of chapter 7, the apostle pictures the inward conflict which is found in a soul, which, being renewed, loves the righteousness of the law; and in its desire to fulfil it, makes experience of its own weakness and want of capacity, and which has not yet learned, notwithstanding its sincerity, to submit itself to the righteousness of God - a righteousness already accomplished through grace. The moment it submits and seeks (not to do something to make itself better, but) the Deliverer, it is made free. The soul is made free - fruit of grace - when, instead of looking to itself, it looks to Jesus and to His work. It will never be satisfied with itself if it is sincere, and if it recognises what it ought to be before God. But God Himself is satisfied with Jesus, and with the work He has done for that poor soul. He has been fully glorified as to His love, as to His righteousness, as to His majesty and His claims for the obedience of man, as to His truth, in every way. God has been glorified in the work of Christ on the cross, and the soul can trust itself to it fully

before God. There is, therefore, no condemnation for those who are in Christ.

Now if they are in Jesus Christ, what belongs to them? what characterises them? "NO CONDEMNATION."
- Then they are made free from the law of sin and of death. Sin, as a principle of their nature, is no more a law to them. The conflict still continues; but sin is no more a law to us, because the power of the Spirit of life that is in Christ Jesus has made them free, which the law could not do because of the flesh. God has made for us, by the coming of Jesus, sacrifice for sin. He has condemned sin in the flesh. That is to say, the law could not get to the end in condemning this criminal, this rebel, who always justified himself in the flesh which nourished him, and which the law could not change. Now Christ, as sacrifice for sin, in delivering us from the imputation of sin, having taken it upon Himself, succeeded in condemning sin in our nature, while making us ourselves free from the condemnation.

Having life in Him, sin is no more really as it was before; the believer, born of God, and quickened by the Spirit of life, loves the things which are of the Spirit; as those who are of the flesh love and seek after the things which are of the flesh.

Now we thus make this solemn discovery, that the affection of the flesh (that is to say, our whole nature before we are renewed) was enmity against God, and thus it was impossible that we should please God. Now it is evident that a real change of heart is necessary when the question is about enmity against God. For what art thou that provest that we are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit? It is not something of man, it is that the Spirit of God dwelleth in us. But if it be thus, the body is not the source and the motive power of our life. It is considered dead, for it produces nothing but sin. It is the Spirit who is life, for He produces righteousness. Now we have this precious confidence, that if the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus dwells in us, this same power operates likewise in us, and God will raise up again our mortal bodies by His Spirit which dwells in us.

11 It is those that are led by the Spirit who are real children of God. And what a blessing! Children of God! This is no vain title. It is to enjoy the love of the Father - it is to be assured of His favour. It is to be accepted in the Beloved. It is to be able to trust ourselves (without the thought that He is imputing to us our sins from which Christ has washed us) to the goodness, to the fatherly affection, of God. The Holy Spirit dwells in the children. He can do so since they are washed in the blood of Christ, He gives them the full assurance that they are the children of God. This is then Christian life. Washed from our sins in the blood of Jesus, the Spirit that dwells in us leads us by spiritual affections, and at the same time gives us the perfect assurance that we are children of God.

Now see the beautiful reasoning of the Spirit of God. If I am a child, then am I an heir, an heir of God, and a joint-heir with Christ. What titles to the glory! Then the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. Afterwards the creation itself, not only the soul, at the time of the glorification of the children, shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption. Grace delivers the soul from it now. Glory is about to deliver even creation itself. We have salvation. We are waiting for the redemption of the body. While waiting we have the earnest of the Spirit who dwells in us, and He groans in us according to God, and gives a voice to the actual sufferings of the creation, although often we ourselves know not what we should pray for - to help us in our infirmities. Now God who searcheth the heart knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit when He intercedes thus in us. Thus, in the real believer, who has submitted to the righteousness of God accomplished in Christ, the Holy Spirit dwells, as the spring of a faith holy and infinite, while giving me the consciousness of being a child of God and heir of the glory, and as Comforter amid the sufferings of the present time, urging the soul to seek relief in God,

with groanings that cannot be uttered.

12 Now in all this, that happy soul is the object of the thoughts and of the counsels of God. It is not of our own will that this has happened; neither the Gentile nor the Jew sought Jesus according to the Spirit. It is of grace. It is the counsels of the God of love. He makes all things work together for good - for the very best - to those who love Him, whom He has called according to His purpose. For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son - what grace! - that He might be the firstborn amongst many brethren. Those whom He did predestinate, them He also called, and whom He called, them He also justified, and whom He justified, them He also glorified.

What precious links in God's ways to assure our blessing! So that as there is no condemnation for those that are in Jesus Christ, there is no separation from the love which has placed them there - never. Behold where grace, where the love of God, puts us. Through Him we are more than conquerors in all the difficulties and sufferings which happen to us on the road.

Here terminates the doctrine of the epistle properly so called. In the three chapters which follow, namely, chapters 9, 10, 11, the apostle answers an objection which an unbelieving Jew might very well make to trouble a sincere believer of his own nation. "If you say that there is no difference; that Jew and Gentile are equally sinners, and that we must, as being in the same abyss of condemnation, submit to God's righteousness; what do you do with the promise made to Israel? How reconcile the privileges of that people, as descendants of Abraham, with the complete levelling of everything, in order to make of all men, without distinction, a race of sinners in Adam?" In chapter 9 the apostle answers, "You cannot support your own thesis. If you trust to your descent from Abraham, without having respect to the sovereignty of God, you must admit Ishmael to the privileges of Israel; moreover you must admit the Edomites as the posterity of Esau.

13 "God has been sovereign to your profit, and it is well He is so. Now, He will exercise this sovereignty in favour of some poor Gentile sinners, in calling some to participate in the salvation by Christ. But if you will have righteousness, you have made the golden calf. God did spare you on the principle of His sovereignty - the passage is quoted from Exodus, and it is what God told Moses on the occasion of the idolatry of Israel at Sinai - 'I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion; and I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy.' Now, if He spared you on this principle, He will do likewise towards some poor Gentile sinners."

Afterwards, it is proved by the prophecies, how God had foretold that there would be only a little remnant that would be saved from among the Jews; that the nation would stumble upon the stumbling-stone, that is to say, upon Christ (He being the end of the law for righteousness to every believer), and that God had declared at the same time, that whosoever should call on the name of the Lord should be saved. Precious promise! Thereupon He shews that consequently the gospel was to be preached to all, that they might all call on the name of the Saviour. And he quotes the testimonies of the prophets against Israel as a proof of their rebellion against the gospel of Christ. In chapter 11 He asks, "Will the promises of God fail towards this people?" By no means.

1. "Already," says he, "there is a residue according to the election of grace."

2. God called the Gentiles to provoke the Jews unto a holy jealousy: therefore it was not to reject them.

3. In the latter days they will certainly be brought back to the enjoyment of their privileges according to the promises and the testimony of God. But that God had shut them up in unbelief, as were the Gentiles by nature, in order that it might be pure grace on His part towards all, whether Jew or Gentile.

In the chapters following the apostle rests on these principles (mercy in God) - exhortations to a walk that responded to this goodness, and that sought only His perfect will with the intelligence of a renewed mind. He exhorts them to moderation, to meekness, to use their spiritual gifts, whatever that might be, with diligence, confining themselves to what God had communicated to each of them, to the spirit of grace - of kindness towards the saints that were in want, to patience when they suffered wrong ("vengeance belongeth to God"), to submission under the authorities as being ordained of God; in short, to imitate Christ in their walk, and not to seek to satisfy the flesh. He sums up his doctrine in chapter 15, and confirms it by quotations taken from the Old Testament, and sends affectionate salutations to the Christians whom he personally knew at Rome.

Introduction

The following little work is composed of notes taken down from lectures, which had an entirely practical object. They have been corrected, as such notes generally need to be; but I have thought, as the aim was entirely practical, a short analysis of the structure of the epistle might help the reader in understanding it.

There are two great subjects in scripture, when the truth is fully brought out as in the New Testament: the responsibility of the first Adam and his children; and the purposes of God in the last Adam. The work of Christ accomplished in His infinite love meets both for those that believe. He has met their responsibility in dying for them, and bearing their sins; and, glorifying God in that death, laid the ground of the accomplishment of those purposes in their favour. Of this latter part, the epistle to Romans only just leads us to the edge in Romans 8, and the very last verses of the epistle. The epistle to the Ephesians unfolds it fully. Hence the epistle to the Romans considers men as walking in sins - the Ephesians as dead in them, and establishes the truth of a new creation, not the justifying of a sinner, though sealing that truth. Colossians is between both. This I cannot go farther into here. These truths are incidentally mentioned in other parts of the New Testament. But the structure of the epistle to the Romans is very important as to the truth it contains, and this I will now endeavour to point out.

The first 17 verses of Romans 1 are a kind of preface, in which, in the first instance, the person of the Lord Jesus, the Son of God, is put forward as the primary subject of the gospel: seed of David according to the flesh, and so fulfilment of the promise, and proved Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness, in which, while His life was according to that power, resurrection was the proof of it, so that power was witnessed as well as promise fulfilled, and that in the place of man's weakness and Satan's power, and even where man in life was tempted.

At the close of this passage he declares he was not ashamed of the gospel, for it was God's power to salvation to every one that believed, Jew first and then Greek. Because God's righteousness was revealed in it on the principle of faith, and so to faith wherever that faith was found. He was a willing debtor in grace to all, according to this gospel. He then shews why God's righteousness must be revealed, the only ground for man to stand on. Because the wrath of God was revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness where the truth was held in unrighteousness; not governmental judgments, as in the Old Testament, in Israel, and even in the flood, but the necessary rejection and judgment of all sin by the very nature of God. He then proceeds to shew the state of sinfulness which called for this wrath, and

made this righteousness necessary.

16 All are under sin. This reaches from Romans 1:19 to Romans 3:20, when he returns to the righteousness of God again. Gentiles are proved guilty, chapter 1:19 to the end; moralists, chapter 2:1-16, where responsibility and the place of conscience are dealt with; the Jews, Romans 2:17 to 3:20 (in the last section, verses 1-20, admitting their claim of the law as theirs, and addressed to them, and shewing what it said of them). Then, from verse 21, the righteousness of God is treated of, and declared in propitiation through Christ's blood for Old Testament past sins of believers, and present revelation of it, so that God was just, and justified believers. This only confirmed law in its requirements.

Romans 4. The resurrection of Christ is applied as the seal of this work, but it does not carry righteousness farther than forgiveness, and all applies to sins and offences - things done when each individual has his own place.

Romans 5:1-11 draws the blessed conclusion, peace, favour wherein we stand, and hope of the glory of God; then glorying in tribulations, God's love being known for the profit derived, and finally in God Himself, through Jesus, through whom we have received the reconciliation. Here first the Holy Ghost, as given to us, comes in.

From verse 12 of chapter 5, the apostle treats not of sins, where all must be individual, but of sin, and so heads all up in Adam and Christ, the disobedient man and the obedient man, and distinguishes the law as that which came in by the bye to make the offence abound; but what were really in question, were sin and grace - grace reigning through righteousness by the obedience of Christ. The question here is not of sins, but of sin; one man's disobedience. not each man's offences, though the obedient man had to meet these too. But if one man's obedience made us righteous, might we live on in sin? This leads to the truth that the profession of Christianity was the profession of having a part in death, hence not of living on. Christ died to sin once and lives to God; we are to reckon ourselves dead and alive to God in Him. Thus the old man is counted dead: how shall we live in it? This sets us free - free to live to God.

17 Romans 7 applies this to law, because law has power over a man only as long as he lives. We are dead to it by the body of Christ; and are married to another, Christ risen. The end of the chapter gives the salutary experience of the state of the renewed mind under the law, which leaves a man captive under the law of sin in his members. In Christ all is changed, the man is delivered, though the flesh, as such, would serve the law of sin; but (Romans 8) there is no condemnation in Christ, the power of life in Him has set us free, and sin in the flesh has been condemned when He died a sacrifice for sin. Then comes the Holy Ghost in us; first as the power of life and the new man, and deliverance into resurrection (v. 9-11), then His presence in us, a person dwelling in us. Being sons, He gives witness with our spirit that we are so, shews us the glory in hope, and helps us in our infirmities on the way, gives a voice in our hearts to the sorrows of a creation subject to vanity, of which we are a part as to our body.

From verse 28 we have the security and portion in every respect derived from God's being for us, from His own foreknowledge, to glory itself.

Romans 5:1-11 gives what God is for sinners in grace and its fruit; chapter 8, the state of the delivered soul before Him. What leads up to the former being our sins met in grace, in Christ's propitiation - to the latter, our sin from which we are delivered by our having died with Christ, and so being freed from it, and alive in Him. In the former case the sins are forgiven, in the latter the sin has been condemned, but in a sacrifice for sin, and we, having died with Christ, are delivered. This finishes the doctrine of the epistle -

the way in which God in grace has met the sins, and the sinful nature of man, his whole condition in Adam, through Christ.

The place of Romans 9 to 11, as reconciling the obliteration of Jew and Gentile in Christ with the special promises to the Jews, is sufficiently indicated in the notes themselves. On the hortatory part which follows no notes were furnished me. I give here a general idea of the contents: the details must be learned from the chapters themselves.

18 It begins with the principle of all practice connected with the doctrine of the epistle, which supposes man a sinful creature, and dealt with in grace. The Ephesians takes higher ground, as the Christian is there simply a new creation, and so associated with God; and as dear children, God's own ways and dealings are the principle and pattern of the Christian's walk. His works are fore-ordained, as is his place. See Romans 4 and 5, where God, as love and light, gives the measure of our ways. In Romans we have sinful man dealt with in mercy, the death of the old man being alone the means of walking aright. In both Ephesians and Romans Christ is the pattern in absolute giving up of self. "I beseech you," says the apostle, "by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice." The two hinges of all Christian service - the mercies of God, and our presenting ourselves, made free by grace, as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God. The unity of the body is then assumed, which is no part of the doctrine of the epistle; any more than our resurrection with Christ, which involves it; on this are grounded our duties within amongst the saints, and as such.

Romans 13 gives our duties to those around, with a double motive: love to the neighbour fulfils the law, and the night far spent, the day at hand, full deliverance drawing near. Then in chapter 14 is our relation to Christ, and consequently to all who belong to Him, that we should not put stumbling-blocks before the feet of those with whom we are alike subject and responsible to Him, and for whom He died. This part goes down to the end of verse 7 of chapter 15. Then he sums up what he had been teaching concerning Jew and Gentile, to whom reference had been made in what precedes concerning the weak in faith.

The whole closes with the statement of his thoughts and plans, and his salutations, which are more numerous than usual, as forming a link between him and the saints at Rome, whom he had never seen. The last verses of all are a statement of what the work was that was going on by his means according to eternal counsels, and now made known for the obedience of faith by prophetic scriptures.

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