

The Work of the Holy Spirit

in

Paul's Letter to the Romans

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1. The Ascent of Faith

Samuel Taylor Coleridge, whose “Rime of the Ancient Mariner” has always intrigued me, was an interesting character. In spite of the fact that he became hopelessly addicted to drugs, being a good friend of Thomas de Quincey who wrote “Confessions of an English Opium Eater,” he could never forget the impression made upon his mind by the study of the Bible in his early days at Cambridge. And he repeatedly said that Paul’s letter to the Romans was “the most profound work in existence.”

Then there was F. Godet, the eminent French professor of theology in the University of Neuchatel, whose commentary on Luke opened up so many new vistas of thought for me. He referred to Romans as “the cathedral of the Christian faith.” Martin Luther, whose name was always spoken in reverence in my childhood home, declared that Romans was “the chief part of the New Testament.”

If the Roman letter is the Alps of the new covenant scriptures, certainly chapter eight is the Matterhorn, looming high above and towering into the clouds. It will be my privilege (I do not count it a task) this year, to lead an expedition in scaling this peak, and to this exciting adventure we invite both you and your friends.

As one in scaling a mountain must first work his way up gentler slopes, it becomes necessary for us to mention the reasoning of the apostle leading up to this one great chapter. We shall try to avoid the temptation to peer into every nook and crevice on the way, and shall keep in view the snowy peak, which is our objective. The background will be painted in bold strokes and not in fine detail.

However, there are certain words in the Roman letter, which cannot be casually brushed aside. Unless we understand their true connotation all other effort will be in vain. If we seem to stop too long in some places, please remember that we are digging in toeholds for our cleats, and thus preparing for the ascent, which beckons us onward and upward. He travels at his own risk who thinks he can understand the word of God while ignoring the words of God.

Even the casual student of the sacred scriptures realizes that the letter to the Romans is different than any other letter, which Paul wrote. Certainly it more nearly approaches a systematic treatise on our relationship with the divine than any other. It does not contain the references to local problems, which are found in most of the rest. The reason for this appears to be quite simple.

Paul did not plant the congregation of saints in Rome, the capital city of the world. He had not visited the city and was dependent upon the report of others for any knowledge of the state of the believers. But he had long wanted to see them for two reasons. First, as an envoy of the King, he wanted to bestow upon them an enabling gift, and second, he desired to behold souls from among the gentiles gathered into God’s granary. Paul had a passion for gentiles. He was their very own ambassador.

Something had just occurred which encouraged Paul to hope that his dream might be realized. For a long time he had been planning how he might visit Spain, a great frontier of the Empire. He had been deterred from going into the regions beyond by the need to take up a contribution from congregations of Greeks to relieve the destitution and abject poverty, which persisted in Jerusalem and Palestine. The money had been gathered and he was ready to travel with it to Jerusalem and turn it over to the brethren.

While casting about for something to do after accomplishment of this mission, the thought came to him that it would be an opportune time to visit Spain, and to make a stopover in Rome enroute. There was really no place left in Asia Minor or on the Greek peninsula, which had not heard the Message. He had proclaimed it from Jerusalem round about to Illyricum. He would not consider going where others had labored lest he build upon another man's foundation.

So he sat down and wrote to those who were “loved of God and called to be Christ’s men and women” in Rome. He said, “Since for many years I have had a great desire to see you, I hope to visit you on my way to Spain. I hope also that you will speed me on my journey, after I have had the satisfaction of seeing you all.” While he was dictating the letter to Tertius, who took it all down, he decided to set forth for those whom he had never met what the life of faith was all about. And that is how we came to have this remarkable and thrilling personal letter.

THE CENTRAL THEME

At the very outset I must tell you that the theme of the letter is justification by faith. Unfortunately, in our day, we have put God’s revelation through theological wringers and dyed the fabric with sectarian tints. Thus, when we hear an expression such as “justification by faith,” our minds immediately refer it to some kind of partisan philosophy. We never really find out what Paul meant because of our intense anxiety to show what he did not mean. We cannot eat the bread of life because we are so busily engaged in showing what ingredients it does not contain.

It is important that we grasp what is meant in the expression “righteousness of faith.” Our hope for life is involved in it. And do not be disturbed that in one sentence I write justification and in the next righteousness. They are from the same word. Only in our English translation have we made a distinction. In doing so we have created mental confusion. Since it is so important that we lay a proper groundwork let me make a few general statements about these terms, and then, by God’s grace and mercy, we can enlarge upon them in subsequent articles.

Now it is true that faith is the belief of testimony but it is not mere mental assent to the veracity of that testimony. It goes far beyond this. It involves the surrender of self without reservation to him who is the object of faith. Faith in Christ is a pledge of allegiance to Christ. Inherent in it is the idea of trust, which leads to commitment, the utter abandonment of one’s self to another in the full confidence that what he has promised he will do.

In recent years certain men within our communion have been critical of the term “commitment to Christ.” It is their contention that the words are not found in the Bible. Of course, they refer to the English Version as commissioned by King James. But theirs is a shallow objection, for the very word for believe is rendered commit, or committed, no less than seven times in that version. The faith, which justifies in Christ is the faith which declares its utter bankruptcy of any other hope. It throws out no other anchor regardless of how strong the tempest or how rough the sea. It never panics or looks for another refuge. It recognizes there is no other Savior in heaven and none on earth besides him. It is not Jesus or someone else; it is Jesus or no one else!

So when I write about faith in this series I am not dealing with a mere mental concept related to Jesus of Nazareth. Neither am I referring to a verbal statement or confession of belief. I am talking about the reaching out of the inner man to embrace the Son of God so fully and completely as to lose one's own personality in identification with him. As Paul said to the Colossians, “You who were spiritually dead because of your sins and your uncircumcision, God has made to share in the very life of Christ.” Surely faith must reside in the heart, and certainly it

must be confessed, but it is more than a rational idea among other ideas, and far greater than the stumbling expression of it in words.

Let us now consider the meaning of justification. Justification is made necessary because of our guilt. To stand justified before God is to be guiltless. It is to be righteous, to sustain a right relationship with God. How can sinful man enter into such a relationship with a sinless God who hates iniquity, and whose very nature impels him to judgment upon every sinful act? Unless we can find a solution to this, we will be driven to despair and wallow in the blackness of recurring doubt.

Man cannot obtain justification by recalling or undoing a single act that he has committed. If one engages in the sin of adultery in an act of blinding passion, he cannot undo it. He may agonize in the burning hell of an accusing conscience and shed rivers of tears. He may rationalize within his disturbed heart and seek for mental comfort in the prevalence of such a deed in the social culture. But the act, once committed, cannot be burnt up, washed out or explained away. The doer is guilty before God. If he lives an exemplary sexual life the remainder of his days upon the earth he still cannot blot out the former act.

Nor can one be justified by law-keeping. Ideally, if a man could completely fulfill the law and perfectly obey its every jot and tittle, he would be justified (Rom. 2:13). But no earthly being has ever done this. No one ever will. The least infraction of the law, the very first deviation, places one under condemnation. Then he is helpless. Then, too, as Paul writes, "The commandment, which was meant to be a direction to life, I found was a sentence of death." That is why he also says, "No man can justify himself before God by a perfect performance of the Law's demands--indeed it is the straight-edge of the Law that shows how crooked we are" (Romans 3:20).

It is in the face of our helplessness to undo the tangled skein of life, and our hopelessness of perfect performance of a written code, that God offers us justification as a free gift. This is the fruit of abundant mercy and amazing grace. Justification is a judicial act of offended Majesty. Every sin, like the very first one, is an offense against God. Our only hope is to receive acquittal. We cannot win, merit or deserve it. Nor can God bestow it in such a way as to make it appear that he condones transgression or treats it lightly and as of little consequence. He cannot make himself unrighteous to make us righteous!

The problem of sin has to be met without equivocation. And it required propitiation which man could not provide. It resolved itself in the death for sin of a sinless person. "God has appointed him as the means of propitiation, a propitiation accomplished by the shedding of his blood, to be received and made effective in ourselves by faith." By this means God preserved his righteousness. He made it possible for justice and mercy to meet and merge without clashing. "Under this divine system a man who has faith is now freely acquitted in the eyes of God by his generous dealing in the redemptive act of Christ" (Romans 3:24).

Really, it is quite simple. Jesus gave up his estate in heaven to become identified with man in his sin. What he did for all men each man must now do for him. Each must give up his life on earth, the life of sin, to become identified with Jesus in his sinlessness. When a person does this God declares him justified. This does not mean that one has not sinned, or is not a sinner. It does not mean that he is worthy or pure. It does mean that he is forgiven because in Christ God counts him righteous, not reckoning sin to him. "If a man, irrespective of his work, has faith in him who justifies the sinful, then that man's faith is counted as righteousness, and that is the gift of God. This is the happy state of the man God accounts righteous apart from his achievements" (Romans 4:5).

Remember that it is not the sinless man whom God justifies. There is no such man on earth. God justifies sinful men. This is my only hope. It is the ground of my confidence. I am justified by the sinless life of Jesus, which I appropriate by faith. When I cut loose all of the ropes in which I have trusted for security and launch out into the deep with nothing but Jesus to bear me up, when I stake all I am or ever hope to be on him, then God bestows his righteousness upon me as a gift. So long as I keep a balancing pole of my own, or have a net below just in case, I can never be justified. I am still trusting in my own wit and achievement. In such a situation my sin must be reckoned unto me because I have not laid it all on him.

The good news that man can be justified by “the fact of his faith in God’s appointed Savior and not by what he has managed to achieve under the Law,” is the theme of the Roman letter. This is the gospel, the glad tidings. So Paul writes, “I am not ashamed of the good news about Christ, for it is God’s dynamic to restore to a state of wholeness all who believe it, the Jew first, but also the gentile. For in the good news is announced God’s program of justification by faith, in order to produce faith, for it was long since recorded that the just will live by faith” (Romans 1:16, 17).

This last statement does not mean that the just will walk, exercise or continue in faith, although that is certainly true. Nothing is clearer than the fact that “we walk by faith and not by sight.” However, the thought of the apostle here is that faith is the source of being, the principle of existence. Without this faith man is dead. I have no life of my own. I am under condemnation. I must either have his life or I am doomed. "But where sin was thus multiplied, grace immeasurably exceeded it, in order that, as sin established its reign by way of death, so God’s grace might establish its reign in righteousness, and issue in eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Romans 5:21). I am under the umbrella of God's love. I am living under the reign of grace.

THE FUTILITY OF WISDOM

When Paul wrote all humanity was divided into two classes – Jew and gentile. Both had to be convinced of the vanity of the means by which they sought for the meaning of life. The gentile relied upon man’s wisdom, upon his rational powers. The Jew trusted in his conformity to the law, which he possessed. The first sought to lift himself from misty mediocrity by his own bootstraps, the second by his own bootstraps, that is, by his own achievement.

The apostle deals with the gentile first, in Romans 1:21-32. This is one of the most revealing sections of sacred scripture. It belies the whole theory that man began with polytheism, or a multiplicity of tribal gods, and that Israel elevated a Palestinian baal to the place of a supreme deity and gradually shook off superstitious fear of other deities and came to proclaim that there was no other besides their own.

Instead, mankind began with a concept of one God, and gradually sunk into idolatry as a gross perversion. Man is not so much a creature of evolution as of “devolution.” The steps toward degradation are clearly identified. (1) A universal knowledge of God obtained. (2) A refusal to honor or respect him as divine. (3) Lack of thankfulness for the blessings bestowed by nature. (4) Futile thinking resulting from lack of a spiritual foundation. (5) A darkening of intellectual powers. (6) Boasting of wisdom while making fools of themselves. (7) Exchanging the splendor of the immortal God for an image made like mortal man, and even for images of creatures that run, fly or crawl.

It is axiomatic that man becomes like the object that he worships. The more he worships the more he adopts the traits and characteristics of the revered object. When a man worships animals

he becomes bestial. When such worship becomes general the environment, which he creates is that of the jungle with “the law of fang and claw.” When a society completely eliminates God from its thinking, God gives them up. God spreads before us the proofs of his existence and provides the instinctive motivations for our recognition of the divine will in the universe, but he will not intrude himself upon the sovereignty of the human will.

Three times Paul declares that God gave man up, and tells why. (1) “They gave up God: and therefore God gave them up – to be playthings of their own foul desires in dishonoring their own bodies” (1:24). This is the origin of “the playboy philosophy,” and it is not new. Poor deluded Hugh Hefner cannot hold a candle for the ancient Greeks in his attempted revival of the religion of hedonism. (2) “These men deliberately forsook the truth of God and accepted a lie, paying homage and rendering service to the creature instead of the Creator...so God gave them up to shameful passions” (1:25,26).

(3) “Thus, because they have not seen fit to acknowledge God, he has given them up to their own depraved passion” (1:28). With this we are supplied a catalogue of depravity, characteristic of paganism when it was shaped by those who “became fatuous in their argumentations and plunged their silly minds still further into the dark” (1:21). Noteworthy are the strictures against homosexuality, effeminacy and lesbianism. Instead of these being regarded as exhibitions of liberty of personality they are branded as disgraceful passions, abnormal, unnatural, shameful horrors and sexual perversity.

The crackpot advocates of unisex, the fanatical shattered defenders of homosexuality between consenting adults, are all representatives of Satan’s revival of the philosophic delusions of Grecian philosophy. Not a single new element has been added. The pornography in print is a commentary on that which was distributed in the Athenian agora as poetry; the exploitation of sex and nudity on the screen is rivaled by that which was portrayed on the walls of Pompeii and Herculaneum. Men still suffer from “bats in the belfry.” Only the belfry has been modernized. The bats are the same! “They know well enough the just decree of God, that those who behave like this deserve to die, and yet they do it; not only so, they actually applaud such practices” (1:32).

Man can never save himself by his own wisdom. He cannot think himself out of the dilemma of sin. It is sinful man who does the thinking and, regardless of his brilliance he will not free himself from the mire. “Where is your wise man now, your man of learning, or your subtle debater, limited all of them to this passing age? God has made the wisdom of this world look foolish” (1 Cor. 1:20).

THE LEGALISTIC APPROACH

Now we must turn to the Jew who trusted in legal rectitude. Like all legalists in every age, the Jew condemned himself by his judgment of others. It is the nature of prohibitory law to kindle desire and incite to sin. I have in mind a brother who never missed an opportunity to publicly condemn attendance at movie theaters, but who broke down and tearfully confessed that the whole time he had been frequenting a burlesque house with its striptease performances and suggestive jokes. I remember another who constantly belabored gambling in a congregation of humble saints, not a one of whom would purchase a ticket on a raffle. It was later learned that the vociferous teacher had long been betting on horse races and playing the ponies. Paul wrote, “The commandment which should have led to life proved in my experience to lead to death, because sin found its opportunity in the commandment, seduced me, and through the commandment killed me.”

This was literally true in the case of a much older friend of mine. He earnestly tried to live up to the idea of Christianity projected by our little congregation and the itinerant preachers who held our meetings. He heard all of the sermons about the hell that awaited the man who kept the whole law and yet offended in one point. He knew that he fell short in more ways than one, a fact of which his good nagging Christian wife continually reminded him. When he could take what he thought was his own hypocrisy no longer, he took his revolver and walked to the orchard and blew his brains out against the bark of an apple tree. I wish I knew what he was thinking before he pulled the fatal trigger. I wonder if he thought the rest of us were murdering him.

Law always starts with one who is helpless and leaves him hopeless. I know from experience. I tried for years to be justified by law and the whole time I was living behind a facade. I learned that there is no law in existence that one cannot mentally evade if he wants to do a thing enough to take the risk. The real power of law is fear. Its lash is a threat. But no fear of future judgment will deter from a present act, for every sinner thinks he can “beat the rap.” He will do it just this once and then live so good the rest of his life that God will be forced to let down the bars and let him into heaven. He fools only himself!

Did you ever study carefully the kind of pride bred in the Jews by their boast that they were God’s elect? One of the most blistering indictments ever made was pronounced against them. Listen! “You take your stand upon the Law, and are, so to speak, proud of your God. You know his plan, and are able through your knowledge of the Law truly to appreciate moral values. You can, therefore, confidently look upon yourself as a guide to those who do not know the way, and as a light to those who are groping in the dark. You can instruct those who have no spiritual wisdom: you can teach those who, spiritually speaking, are only just out of the cradle. You have a certain grasp of the basis of true knowledge.” Does this sound like a description of anyone you know? Then read on in Romans 2:18-24.

But cheer up! All is not lost! “What happens now to human pride of achievement? There is no room for it. Why, because failure to keep the Law killed it? Not at all, but because the whole matter is now on a different plane--believing instead of achieving. We see now that a man is justified before God by the fact of his faith in God's appointed Savior and not by what he has managed to achieve under the Law.”

Never forget this. Justification is on a different plane than that of legalistic conformity to a written code. If you revert to hope based on your own correctness, your own legal rectitude, you have not restored the life of the primitive Christians. You have simply revived the original Pharisees!

The apostle uses Abraham as an example. He was declared to be justified before he was circumcised and a long time prior to the advent of the Law. And he provides for us a genuine definition of the faith, which justifies. Discounting the weakness of his own vital powers and the deadness of Sarah's womb, he “remained absolutely convinced that God was able to implement his own promise. This was the ‘faith,’ which was counted unto him for righteousness” (4:21,22).

Let that seep into the pores of your consciousness. The faith, which is counted for righteousness, that is, which establishes a proper relationship with the eternal life of God is “the unshakable conviction that what God has promised he has power to fulfill.” This is important because I am constantly running into young people on the college campus, who are shaken up and claim to have trouble with their faith.

A lot of them do not have trouble with *their* faith at all. They are trying to operate on a set of values inherited from their grandparents, borrowed from their parents, or saddled on them by the congregation in which they grew up. Like David, when confronted with a giant, they find they

cannot fight in another man's armor. But instead of getting a good fit they throw one! One might as well try to eat with a set of dentures borrowed from his father as to tackle the philosophical fare dished up today while trying to operate on a "slightly used faith" brought with him from home. Most people do not know what faith is and they use it as one ingredient in a tossed salad of varied concepts flavored with a dressing of intellectual doubt. And some think it is a horrible sin to have such salad dressing in their mental refrigerators. They try to hide it from sight behind the effervescent mental soda pop. There was, for instance, the coed who tearfully confided in me that there had been questions raised in her biology class, which she could not answer. When I asked her why she felt obligated to furnish an answer for every problem that arose, she replied, "But can a person have faith and doubts at the same time?" Obviously one can have faith in the power of God and doubts related to the biological realm at the same time. Indeed, if he is normal this will almost certainly be the case.

I can never forget the dictum of Sir Francis Bacon, "If we begin with certainties, we shall end in doubts; but if we begin with doubts, and are patient in them, we shall end in certainties." It was the philosopher Colton who said, "Doubt is the vestibule through which all must pass before they can enter into the temple of wisdom." My own faith in God is much stronger because of the period of testing through which I struggled. Wrestling with one's self is real exercise. I know that my Redeemer lives. I know he will fulfill his promises. But it is one thing to believe this and to trust in it, and a wholly different thing to know how it will be done. Most of our doubts are related to the *how* and that is outside our sphere. Abraham did not know how Sarah could conceive, seeing that she had long since passed through the menopause, yet he "remained absolutely convinced that God was able to implement his own promises."

My faith is that of Abraham. The promise is different but the nature of the faith is not. I do not intend to be shaken in it nor shaken loose from it, by the wisdom of this passing age. There are not enough pseudo-scientists, pettifogging professors or perverted philosophers in this world to make me lose faith in my God. I am sold out to him, lock, stock and barrel. I have crossed the Great Divide and I am not turning back. I have bound myself to the mast of faith so that the siren voices of infidelity cannot lure me to set foot on the shifting sands of the island of unbelief. I have invested all I am and have in the life trust bank. There is nothing left with which to speculate. "I dare not trust the sweetest frame, but wholly lean on Jesus' name."

PEACE WITH GOD

This brings us to a great resting place in our ascent – Romans 5. It begins with a breathtaking conclusion introduced with the appropriate word "therefore." And it defines for us the remarkable results growing out of it. Drink in the first two verses. "Therefore, being declared free of guilt by faith, we have attained unto peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Through him we have been inducted into this new relationship of grace, and here we stand, in happy anticipation of the glorious things he has for us in the future."

Here is life in three dimensions--past, present and future. In the past, the pall of guilt with fear of what was to come. Faith reaches back to the remedy for guilt, for faith is based upon fact and fact is grounded in the act of God. God did something about sin! He drew the fangs. He milked death of its venom. "It is sin which gives death its sting, and it is the Law which gives sin its strength. All thanks to God then, who gives us the victory over these things through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. 15:56, 57).

Through faith in our Lord I am acquitted, made free, and given a new life. I am reconciled to God. I have peace with God. What does this mean? In the old covenant scriptures, which provide the vocabulary for the new, peace and salvation are the same. To save is to make whole, to restore the proper functioning and relationship of the thing under consideration. To save from sin is to restore one to the state of being with God which man enjoyed before sin came. When the psalmist said, "He restoreth my soul," the Hebrew is literally, "he taketh me back to the place of my beginnings."

Only grace can build the bridge across what man is, back to what he was, and forward to what he can become. And grace is a gift. It is not a toll bridge. It provides free access to the one who casts himself upon Jesus. It is false pride, which causes man to go until he gives out, when he can only really start when he gives in. I am thrilled that love pried open my clenched fingers so I could reach out the hand of faith and grasp the gift of God's grace. What confidence is bred by the peace of God, a peace, which is not negative, not merely a cessation of hostilities, but an active, vital, triumphant force!

And the future is more glorious to contemplate. Peace produces assurances of promises on the morrow. We rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. Now that I am justified through surrender to Jesus the future has lost its fear. I am steering into the sunrise and not the sunset. Doubt is gone! Despair has vanished! Listen! "But when the kindness of God our savior and his love towards man appeared, he saved us in his mercy – not by virtue of any moral achievement of ours, but by the cleansing power of a new birth and the moral renewal of the Holy Spirit, which he gave us so generously through Jesus Christ our Savior. The result is that we are acquitted by his grace, and can look forward to inheriting eternal life. This is solid truth. I want you to speak about these matters with absolute certainty" (Titus 3:4-8).

Absolute certainty about such matters as the kindness of God, the love of God, the mercy of God, the new birth, renewal through the Holy Spirit, acquittal through grace, and eternal life! Unless we can be certain about these we can never be sure of anything. I am certain! This is what peace with God has brought my once trembling soul. I shall meet him over there because I have met him over here.

Don't get me wrong. I am not postponing my joy until I wade out into the breakers and cross the tide. I do not take the position that the present is a time to fret, complain and look glum. My motto is not "Be morose today and merry tomorrow." I am thrilled to the depths with life as it is. I would not have it one bit different. Whatever happens to me since I am in Jesus is a part of the trip! I am on a package tour to heaven. I am not riding along with an arm or leg sticking out of the window to get knocked off by one of the devil's telephone poles. I am in him with everything that I have. Whatever happens to me will happen in him. Let it happen! It can only work good! Listen:

"This doesn't mean, of course, that we have only a hope of future joys—we can be full of joy here and now even in our trials and troubles. Taken in the right spirit these very things will give us patient endurance; this in turn will develop a mature character, and a character of this sort produces a steady hope that will never disappoint us, because God's love has been poured out in our heart through the Holy Spirit he has given us" (5:2-5).

Taken in the right spirit. A steady hope! I know some people whose level of hope goes up and down like the mercury in a thermometer. One day they are topping tall timber and the next day they are crawling through the thicket in a swamp. I am thinking of one man in particular. When things are going along smoothly on his job, he is the life of the party. But if by-and-by "hard times come knocking at the door," it is "Old Kentucky home, goodnight!" He gets so little he

could sit on the curb and not be able to hit the street with his feet. He exudes gloom so thick that you could slice it and serve it in gloom sandwiches. What's the trouble? That's easy. He has not developed the patience that develops a mature character. He is still selfish. His heart is shriveled up like a prune. He is waiting for others to serve him. The love of God cannot get in through the closed heart.

If you keep a puckering string on your heart you hurt yourself. It is true that what you have won't get out, but what you need won't get in. Suspicious, tight-fisted, bitterly critical people pollute the atmosphere with their unhappiness, but they also have to breathe it and while they may stifle others they are committing suicide. The love of God can change that. I happen to know.

I am acquainted with a man and wife who had no children but were blessed with an abundance of this world's goods. Their daily conversation at the table had to do with interest rates, and clipping dividend coupons. They lived for it. They were as tight as the bark on a hickory tree. They complained about having to pay school taxes, griped about the rising cost of food, and grumbled about government welfare programs. They chose as their friends the kind of people who were pessimistic and with whom they could share their prediction of impending disaster. And they looked like an accident going somewhere to happen.

Then a transformation occurred. The Holy Spirit entered their lives and you never saw such a change as took place. I know when it happened. Against their will they were persuaded to attend a small group session in a home. They consented to go only because they thought that those who were present would sit around and criticize the "institutional church" and its begging for money, and they knew that they could relate to such a sharing of dismals, dumps and doldrums. They craved the fellowship of the funereal and the love of the lugubrious. But it did not turn out that way!

The brother in whose home the meeting was held opened with the remark that God had been speaking to him through the written word in a remarkable way as he lately read it. He then turned to 2 Corinthians 13, and read these lines: "Then you will have the proof you seek of the Christ who speaks through me, the Christ who, far from being weak with you, makes his power felt among you. True, he died on the cross in weakness, but he lives by the power of God; and we who share his weakness shall by the power of God live in your service. Examine yourselves: are you living the life of faith? Put yourself to the test. Surely you recognize that Jesus Christ is among you? – unless of course you prove unequal to the test."

Closing the book, the brother said that he had a confession to make. He had been baptized when he was about thirteen years old, having "gone forward" with a group of others his age during a protracted meeting. In his teen years he had been guilty of every kind of indiscretion, and while going regularly to the gatherings of the church, he had lied to his parents, taken things which did not belong to him, and been guilty of immoral escapades with some of the girls in class. Later, he had been drafted, and in a foreign country had laid his religious convictions aside until he returned to his native land.

He continued his recital by telling how he married the wonderful wife whom he now had, and how their home had been blessed with three children. They never missed attendance at Sunday school but they went as part of a routine of life. He became successful in business, erected and paid for the luxurious home in which all were now sitting, but all of this time was haunted with an inner emptiness, a feeling that somehow there was something just beyond his grasp, which was the real secret of happiness.

A few months before, driven by a gnawing sense of his own need, he arose one morning while it was still dark and going into the den, poured out unto God all of the pent-up feelings in his inner being. He wept freely, and then of a sudden, he felt strangely relieved of anxiety and a peace came stealing into his soul, which he had never known before. He declared that he accepted this as peace with God brought about by the lifting of the sense of guilt, which had lurked inside and poisoned his whole being for years. He asked all who were present to pray for him that he would always experience that peace which passed human understanding.

This confession sparked a good deal of serious talk. There were no stale jokes told, and there was not one note of criticism. Mostly it resolved itself into testimonies of heart-searching upon the part of others. The couple I mentioned drove home lost in thought. They hardly exchanged a word. But that night the man could not sleep. After several hours his wife asked him if he was awake and confessed that she had not been able to sleep either. They got up and talked most of the rest of the night. As the streaks of dawn began to break across the eastern sky they had come to the place where they could pray together, something they had never done before in their lives.

And God took advantage of the open door to come in. The love of God was poured out into their hearts by the Spirit. The selfishness was washed away. The dark corners of suspicion were flushed out by the waters of life. Their whole beings have changed. They are closer to one another than they have ever been before. They like to have young people around them and, for the first time, young people like to be around them. They are hospitable, they visit the sick, they help the needy, and they spend money like it was going out of style. The grace of God is reflected in their very persons. He no longer suffers from an "upset stomach," she no longer has frightful headaches.

Really, the years have fallen off their shoulders. They have begun to walk with a sprightlier step. Some who knew them before think they may be getting a little "balmy." They are not! Most members of the church think that real Christians are off in "the upper story" because they are still living on the basement level. The average person isn't hooked on to the power source. He is like a freight train that has come unhooked from the engine. He is all loaded up but is not going anywhere!

HOPE AND LOVE

Now, one who is in Christ has a hope, which will be realized. It will never disappoint because it cannot. Why not? For the simple reason that one who has peace with God opens up his heart. He isn't afraid to leave the door unbarred. When he opens the door the love of God pours in like the waters of a swollen river when the dam bursts. The King James Version says it is shed abroad. The original is the word for "poured out." Hope always goes hand-in-hand with faith and love. They are the three abiding principles!

But the love of God is like an ocean tide, which flows two ways. It is incoming, drawing us closer to the heart of God. It is outgoing, enabling us to touch the hearts of others. This is the principle of relationship with Jesus. This is the responsibility of discipleship. Think about two verses in Matthew 10. One says, "Then he called his twelve disciples to him." The other says, "These twelve Jesus sent out with the following instructions." All of us are called and then sent. Discipleship is not "hanging around" with Jesus, but penetrating the world. It is going out with the instructions.

I have no doubt the twelve would have preferred to stay around where Jesus was, but they were needed where Jesus was not. The love of God is not an escape hatch from responsibility. It does not provide a hiding place. It does not say, "There he is Lord, send him!" It never proposes, "Let's you and Satan fight." One who is full of the love of God has no need to hide from anything or anyone, not even from himself. And that is where most of our trouble lies.

God's undeniable, unquestionable proof of his love for us is that "Christ died for us while we were yet sinners" (5:8). We were powerless and we were God's enemies. Paul told Titus that at the time when this took place we were silly, stubborn, and slaves of sensuality. We could not stand ourselves and hated one another. If God had waited to get us out of where we were to love us we would all have been damned. Instead, he loved us to get us out of what we were. And that's the only way any of us will ever get out of our predicament. We have to be pulled out. We cannot extract ourselves. The more frantic our effort the deeper we sink. One does not fight his way out of quicksand!

But here is a true source of comfort and reassurance. God does not start something and leave it unfinished. He does not abandon the task when it is half done. It is reasonable to assume that if he loved us when we were enemies, he will not forsake us after we have become his friends. And this very thing is affirmed for us by the apostle, "Since we have now been justified by Christ's sacrificial death, we shall all the more certainly be saved through him from final retribution. For if, when we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, much more, in that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life."

I am not unaware that in the realm of faith, as in every other, there are grandstand quarterbacks. They are always eager to tell how God should have done it and point out where he made his mistakes. As they feed it to us, God should not have required sacrifices of blood under the Mosaic economy. This makes him appear inept and crude to modern men. It breathes of a slaughterhouse religion and God can be mistaken for a bloody butcher.

Too, the idea of offering his Son as a ransom for others was wholly unnecessary and useless. It puts the whole scheme of things in a bad light. God seems to be contradictory. He refused to allow Abraham to offer his son, and then turns around and does it himself. I cannot truthfully say that I dismiss all of this with but a passing glance for I do not even entertain it long enough to dismiss it.

You see, it is not a question of how men think God ought to act, but of how God acted. One who is subject to the judgment of fallible beings and who must allow them to "call the shots" would not be God. Finite men cannot project their ideas upon an infinite God. One quotation puts that thought to sleep! "For who knows the mind of the Lord? who can advise him?" (1 Cor. 2:16).

I am confidently expecting to be saved from the final retribution through Christ. That God made this possible by the death of his Son provides no mental stumbling-block for me. That he chose to teach mankind the value of substitutionary death of an innocent victim for the guilty through ages past in no sense minimizes my respect for his revelation in the word or through The Word.

It was through one man that sin entered the world, and death through sin. Death became universal, the penalty becoming as broad as the involvement. If the act of one man who obeyed the urging of sin affected all men, it would not be surprising that the act of one who did not sin would affect all. "For if by the wrongdoing of that one death established its reign, through a single sinner, much more shall those who receive in far greater measure God's grace, and his gift of righteousness, live and reign through the one man, Jesus Christ."

Please observe that the first order is sin and the reign of death. The next is grace and the gift of justification with the reign of life. It is not that Adam sinned and died while we do not sin and live. We sin as Adam did. But we live, not because of our sinlessness, but because of the sinlessness of Jesus Christ. Grace which immeasurably exceeds sin and death, established a reign of righteousness, and under it, through faith in the Lord Jesus, we are declared righteous. Our sins are not counted unto us! His righteousness is!

Having said this much we shall establish camp at this level and dig in for another month. If God wills, we shall move out again in four weeks, and work our way upward to the summit. We will begin with what happens when we are “baptized into union with Christ Jesus” (6:3) and work our way forward to an understanding of the power of the indwelling Spirit of God.

In closing, let me urge upon you to cast yourself upon Jesus. Most of us try too hard. We become frantic and tension-filled. We are frightened and fretful. We are afraid to lean back upon the everlasting arms although we sing about it quite lustily. If there seems to you to be an uncrossable gulf between our faith and that exhibited by the early saints, please read this from the pen of J. B. Phillips:

“The word of God which stimulates and sustains faith is eternal truth breaking through into this temporary world, so that the certainty of the early Christians which we may regard with a certain wistfulness means, not that they were men of exceptional spiritual caliber, but simply that they recognized the word of God as being quite literally the message, plan and command of God himself. It was a faith more rock-like than any human certainty which gave their lives astonishing quality.”

2. Flesh and Spirit

A month has gone by since we camped on the slopes of Romans 5. It is now time to shoulder our packs and start anew up the steeps of grace, gaining our initial toehold at Romans 6:1. Sin is flint-hearted and treacherous. And one of its potent weapons is rationalization. It uses this for self-preservation, seeking to hold captive those who are in its malign grasp and upon whom it feeds as a vicious parasite. Sometimes it approaches delusion from the negative side, sometimes from the positive, but always it has the black hood at hand to drop over the eyes of the victim, while the gallows starkly waits in the background.

Smiley Blanton, the psychiatrist, affirms that rationalizing ‘is the great narcotic that people use to anesthetize their consciences and justify yielding to temptation; an embezzler telling himself he is just ‘borrowing’ the money and will surely put it back. An unfaithful husband assures himself that what his wife does not know will not hurt her. In a thousand daily temptations from padding the expense account to exceeding the speed limit, the rationalizer’s attitude is ‘Everybody’s doing it, why shouldn’t I’?”

Paul anticipated just such an attitude toward grace. He had said some mind-staggering things about it. “God’s act of grace is out of all proportion to Adam’s wrongdoing. For if the wrongdoing of that one man brought death upon so many, its effect is vastly exceeded by the grace of God and the gift that came to so many by the grace of one man, Jesus Christ” (5:15). “For by the wrong-doing of that one man, death established its reign through a single sinner, much more shall those who receive in far greater measure God’s grace, and his gift of righteousness, live and reign through the one man, Jesus Christ” (5:17).

Then he dealt with the problem of law in respect to grace. “Now we find that the Law keeps slipping into the picture to point out the vast extent of sin. But where sin was multiplied grace exceeded it on an immeasurable scale...so grace could issue in eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord” (5:21). One can almost anticipate the reaction of the carnal mind to this. As sin multiplies, grace increases to exceed it, and since grace is essential to eternal life, the more it increases the better off are its recipients.

“What are we to say, then? Shall we persist in sin, so that there may be all the more grace?” From this, the apostle recoils and shows the absurdity of such a presumption. “No! No! We died to sin: how can we live in it any longer?” A dead building contractor does not draw plans for constructing a new housing project. A dead grocer does not propose to increase his income by expanding his business outreach. If the occupant of a casket suddenly sat up in his satin-lined box to discuss a blueprint with the mortician, it would be taken for granted he was not dead when they loaded him in the hearse. It would also have a visible effect on the funeral director.

Is it possible that a lot of people just play dead spiritually? When you see one who professes to be in Christ, but who is busily engaged in making plans to widen the scope of his sin, and extend his franchise for evil into new territories, can you not assume that he is employed by sin? The apostle uses his clincher argument. “Have you forgotten that when we were baptized into union with Christ Jesus we were baptized into his death? By baptism we were buried with him, and lay dead, in order that, as Christ was raised from the dead in the splendor of the Father, so also we might set our feet upon the new path of life.”

This is beautiful in its simplicity. It is regrettable that it ever got caught in the gears of the theological meat-grinder and was reduced to shreds. Certainly the apostle never dreamed that his statement would be put to the uses to which it has been subjected, to prove some things on one side and to disprove more things on the other. I do not propose to be lured from my theme to beat

the bushes and thump the thickets in argument. I shall indicate a few things which seem to me to appear obvious and move on up, leaving the professional pugilists to pummel each other into a loving pulp over peripheral matters.

GRACE AND BAPTISM

The apostle saw no conflict between grace and baptism. As the greatest exponent of grace the world has ever known he had no concept of an unbaptized person in union with Christ Jesus. The very thought of death to sin caused his mind immediately to revert to the burial with Christ in which they lay dead, as a prerequisite to being raised with him. No man can be a faithful expositor of the Roman letter who belittles or negates either grace or baptism.

Either all who died to sin were baptized or the entire argument is rendered ridiculous. That no explanation of justification by faith which excludes being baptized into union with Christ Jesus, is fair to the apostolic letter, is apparent to the concerned student. Paul accepts the postulate that his argument based upon baptism will be immediately understood by all who have died to sin. He makes no explanation of baptism for no one questioned it. It would be a little silly to say, "Have you forgotten that when we were baptized...?" if a bunch of them had never been and did not even think it was essential.

This is another good example of Paul's mastery of what I call the "as and so" reasoning. He employed it frequently. It is a balanced argument. On one hand you list under "as" all of the necessary elements. Then under "so" the same items must be catalogued. If one does not fit under "so" it must be removed from under "as," for these words signify a relationship of the identical.

What Jesus did to save all men, all men must do to be saved. The saving features of the Good News are three in number – that Christ died for our sins, that he was buried, and that he rose again (1 Cor. 15:3, 4). Christ identified with us in a body to die, be buried and rise again. So we must die, be buried and rise again, to be identified with him in a body. He did so according to the old covenant scriptures. We must do so according to the new covenant scriptures. As he died for sin we must die to sin. As he was buried we must be buried. As he arose from the dead in glory we must "rise to life on a new plane altogether."

I suspect there may be one little item in Paul's reasoning which a lot of my readers overlook. Because of the post-apostolic introduction of sprinkling and pouring as a ritual (they do not constitute baptism), a lot of us have been on the firing line and have sought for every argument to enforce our contention for immersion, which I accept as eminently correct. We have insisted that baptism is a burial, and it is, of course. But when Paul, who was not writing to supply our arsenal, speaks of being *buried in baptism* he uses two separate and distinct words.

It has been our contention that the original for baptism should have been translated immersion. To this, W. E. Vine takes pointed exception. He says that there is no word in the English language to translate *baptizo*, for it signifies more than dipping or plunging and includes coming out or being withdrawn. "The word *baptizo* was necessarily transliterated into English, as there was no equivalent in our language. 'To immerse' would be simply 'to plunge into.' To baptize is to put into water and take out again. It involves immersion, submersion, and emergence--death, burial and resurrection. The word was used among the heathen Greeks of articles which underwent submersion and emergence, as in the case of dyeing a garment" (*The Epistle to the Romans*, page 87).

If you have not read William Barclay's comments on how the Jews and the Greeks would understand Paul's reference to baptism and death, you have missed a great deal. We urge you to share in his insights by referring to his book in the Daily Study Bible Series, entitled *The Letter to the Romans*, pages 82-86. It will provide background material I have found in no other place.

To Paul, baptism was limited to believers, who were responsible adults. His very argument makes this essential. One would not ask a person who was sprinkled as an infant, "Have you forgotten that when we were baptized into union with Christ Jesus we were baptized into his death?" One cannot forget something of which he was never conscious at the time.

But we must get back to Paul's purpose in mentioning baptism. The man who has been baptized has died to sin. He cannot engage in it to promote an increase of grace. He is not his former self. That self was crucified so the tyranny of sin could be broken. "For a dead man can safely be said to be immune to the power of sin" (6:6). "In the same way look upon yourselves as dead to the appeal and power of sin but alive and sensitive to the call of God through Jesus Christ our Lord" (6:11).

The appeal of sin! The power of sin! These affect us only when we are alive to sin. Dead men are immune to that power. Law increases sin by making us conscious of it. It serves the same purpose as the nerves of the body. These do not create pain but they make us aware of all the places in which it is present. The nerve of law has been deadened and removed. "Sin is not meant to be your master--you are no longer living under law but under grace."

This makes legalists uncomfortable. A legalist must have a law or he cannot survive. He breathes law like the human body breathes oxygen. If God provides no law, he will take what God has provided and convert it into law. All of my life I have been around men who spin out their interpretations of God's word designed to show that the Holy Spirit lied when he said we were not under law but under grace. Grace itself is a written code revealed, they argue.

The problem is that legalists always exercise selectivity. They choose some features of the law to which they willingly submit, while ignoring others. But those, which they choose, then become the criteria of righteousness. To these men must conform even though they utterly neglect other valid and vital provisions of God's will. Men who live and walk by law have no idea of the restraint of perfect love. There must be a whip to crack. There must be threats issued and intimidation involved. Frequently those who bluster and abuse are insecure, walking after the flesh, hiding their emptiness with their fulminations, and in constant fear that they will be found out!

How can we keep men under control without law? How can we exercise supervision over them, and guarantee that they will cower and kowtow to the will of their spiritual superiors? Paul apparently anticipated the questions that would be engendered by the agitated souls who suddenly find out that law has abdicated and grace occupies the throne. "Now, what shall we do? Shall we go on sinning because we have no law to condemn us any more, but are living under grace? Never! Just think what it would mean" (6:15).

We shall allow you to read for yourself what it would mean in the ensuing context.

THE FREEDOM LEVEL

I am standing firm on the promises! I am not taking orders from the tempter any longer. I owe no debt to the old man. My former self is dead, buried and done for. I've moved on up to "a new plane altogether." On this level law cannot touch you. "Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the lower nature with its passions and desires." I'd as soon take orders from a corpse in a crypt as to be subject to the demands of my former life. Listen to this! "But now, freed from the commands of sin, and bound to the service of God, your gains are such as make for holiness, and

the end is eternal life” (6:22). I believe that!

I do not intend to be ordered around by sin any longer. I shall not bow in meek subservience to the tyrant who once occupied the throne in my heart and drove me like a slinking slave. The blood of God’s Son paid my price. He ransomed me. The old man has been dethroned, driven out, shot down by the shaft of grace. I am committed to the service of God. Where he leads me I will follow! It makes no difference what others do or say. I shall walk through detractors like Israel crossed the Red Sea. Every gain I make will be in the direction of holiness. And the end is eternal life.

I would not exchange the freedom I have for all the world has to offer. What a thrill to be in Christ! What a feeling of heady enjoyment comes from imbibing the Spirit. What an adventure to be able to go anywhere, to speak to anyone, to listen to anyone. My compassion reaches out to those who murmur and mumble, carp and criticize, whine and whimper. They never really died to the lower nature and are condemned to walk in a perpetual shadow, dragging along the heavy weight of their own foreboding. They are prophets of doom and presagers of evil. The sun is shining but they do not know it.

This kind of talk upsets a lot of folk. As they see it, those in Christ ought to be gloomy, alert for the worst, and alienated from sinners – other sinners that is! They mistake being somber for being serious. Instead of having happy feet on a joyous mission, they would prefer that everyone walk like a pall-bearer. But I want you to know that I have found that joy is a person. I am in that person. Don’t try to sell me a bill of goods about Christianity being on the wane. Jesus Christ is not about to shut up shop and board up the windows. He is here to stay and I am going to stay with him. I am going to walk in the Spirit and not shuffle along with my head down. I have eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. That is my gift and it is from Him.

Now, let’s move on to Romans 7, where the first six verses are powerful medicine. Paul begins this account with a universally acknowledged fact. A man is subject to law – any law – only during his life span. “You cannot be unaware, my friends – I am speaking to those who have some knowledge of law – that a person is subject to the law so long as he is alive, and no longer.” To enforce his point he gives an illustration. “A married woman, for example, is bound by law to her husband so long as he is alive. But if he dies, then his legal claim over her disappears. This means that if she should give herself to another man while her husband is alive, she incurs the stigma of adultery. But, if, after her husband’s death, she does exactly the same thing, no one would call her an adulteress, for the legal hold over her has been dissolved by her husband’s death.”

This seems plain enough, but, in making the application a good many brethren get the illustration and miss the point. They conclude that God killed the law so we could be married to Christ. But this is not the case here. It was ourselves who died, and not the law. “So you, my friends, have died to the law by becoming identified with the body of Christ, and accordingly you have found another husband in him who rose from the dead, so that we may bear fruit for God” (7:4).

The body of Christ is the body that died on the cross. We became “incorporate with him in a death like his” (6:5). Jesus was crucified and those who were under the law, and accepted him, were crucified with him. They thus severed any relationship, which they sustained before death. This included relationship with the law, which was binding only until death. Jesus was raised from the dead. The crucified believers were raised from the dead. It was the resurrected ones who married, and the purpose of that union, as of marriage from creation, was to bring forth fruit unto God.

The prior marriage to law also produced fruit. But the union was on an inferior level. The parties lived in a basement apartment. The marriage was marred by sinful passions encouraged and stimulated by the party of the first part. "While we lived on the level of our lower nature, the sinful passions evoked by the law worked in our bodies, to bear fruit for death." The law could not change the unspiritual nature of those wedded to it. Law is external. Its goal is conformation. What we needed was transformation.

Despite the good intentions of law, it only incited to sin. Its very prohibitions encouraged experimentation. Its denunciation created determination to taste the forbidden fruit. It was not the law that was weak, but the flesh. It perverted what it came to protect. Obviously a whole new plane of life had to be created with a level of life to which law could never aspire. It would not do to die to one law and then marry another one. Law has nothing to offer one who is raised from the dead. To be joined to another law would be to leap from the frying-pan into the fire! And the flames of legalism are hot.

The Christian who claims to be under law is really in bondage. He is carrying on an affair with another beneath his station. Law is only adapted to the lower nature. As Paul puts it, "We also know that the Law is not really meant for the good man, but for the man who has neither principles nor self-control" (1 Timothy 1:9). When a good person gets yoked up with one who was not meant for a good person, there's going to be serious trouble. Brethren who insist that they are going to be under law regardless of what anyone says, are like a good girl who gets taken in by a lecherous man. She isn't going to have an easy time of it.

That is why Romans 7:6 is a real fountain in the desert for me. "But now we are freed from the Law; we are dead to that which once held us fast! and so we are free to serve God in a new way, the way of the Spirit, not in the old way, the way of a written code." I confess that when I first became aware of the implications of this, I could not accept them. I didn't want it to read that way. If it did, I did not want it to mean what it appeared to be saying. I doubt that you can realize the inner turmoil churned up inside a heart, which had been trained in the arrogant assumption that a certain faction contained all of the righteous people on earth, and their righteousness must be judged by their subscription to our partisan interpretation of a written code.

Such a party is always subservient to a clerical clique. The men who compose that clique are the real power behind the paper curtains. They determine for all what items belong to faith, to opinion, or to the realm of the indifferent. In their hands the word of God becomes a cudgel, a club with which to crush the skulls of brethren. By insinuation and innuendo they can ruin one who does not take his signals from their dugout. They hurl the thunderbolts of wrath through the pages of the printed media. They control the lectureships and manipulate the meetings under guise of loyalty to Christ. "They lean on the law and make their boast of God, and know his will, and understand the difference between right and wrong" (Romans 2:17,18).

Thank God for deliverance from "The System." Thank God for grace! I do not care by what name "The System" is called. I do not care who the "some-whats" are who exercise dominion, be they popes, prelates or just plain preachers. I simply say that every sectarian attempt to enforce coercion by threat or compulsion is alien to the spirit of freedom, which the blood of Jesus makes available. Infallible elders are more dangerous than an infallible pope, for they are closer at hand.

Every factional editor and leader on this earth, without exception, is erratic, inconsistent and capricious. Legalism produces that kind of character. It enslaves and degrades. It places a premium on ignorance and forbids one to learn beyond the limits of the organizational brain. The best member is not the one who thinks but the one who does not. I was in that kind of bondage. I served under it, promoted it, defended it and proclaimed it. And I am ashamed of it!

Now I am freed from law! I am dead to that which once held me fast in its talons. I am free to serve God in a new way, not under a new law, but in a new way! It was this I was afraid to acknowledge at first. I felt secure in the old way. There were no decisions to make because they were made for me. I was safe with the safety behind prison walls and bars. And then I found that God had built no walls. He had forged no bars. He had set no bounds except those of love for Him in his infinite mercy, and for my fellowmen in their infinite need.

I cannot get enough of His wonderful book. I turn to it with eagerness as a student who lays aside his textbook on jurisprudence to read again the love letters from his only beloved. I no longer search for “sermon material,” but for means to share the heart-swelling, soul-stirring, blood-tingling message of a love so great human spit and iron nails and acanthus thorns and a wooden cross could not stop it until it reached down and touched me and left its brand of crimson stain.

I no longer engage in “acts of worship,” which become stereotyped and conventional, prosaic and professional. Now I praise him in song and prayer and sharing. I want to give. I want to know the fellowship that enters into human sorrow and suffers with those who have not found the still waters, and whose restless souls cannot lie down because they have not discovered the green pastures.

The new way is exciting, fascinating, animating, and infectious. It is personal and persuasive. After trying for so long to find him in the pages of a book, in the letters and words and punctuation marks, I came to him fully, completely, and learned that he had found me first. I know how the disciples must have felt when they realized they had been walking with him, talking with him, questioning him, and listening to him. “Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him.” Paul’s precious prayer has been answered for me. “I pray that your inward eyes may be illumined, so that you may know what is the hope to which he calls you, what the wealth and glory of the share he offers you among his people in their heritage, and how vast the resources of his power open to us who trust in him.”

The great thing about the new way of serving God is that once you strip off the tattered garb of law and put on the new garment of grace, nothing else matters. You can be lied about, attacked, assailed, misrepresented, and cast out of the synagogue, but none of these move you. You can love your enemies and pray for those who spitefully use you. And you can do so honestly. That is something. Nothing that men can do will hurt you. You are not trusting in your own righteousness. “For now my place is in him, and I am not dependent upon any of the self-achieved righteousness of the Law. God has given me that genuine righteousness which comes from faith in Christ. How changed are my ambitions” (Phil. 3:9, 10). *How changed are my ambitions!* You can say that again, Paul.

The new way is the way of the Spirit. It is not the way of a written code. And that is a good point of contact with chapter 8. This is the magnificent chapter of the spiritual outlook, which is life and peace (verse 6). It is the chapter of divine-human sharing of suffering here and of splendor hereafter (verse 17). It is the chapter of a universe on tiptoe waiting for the glorious hope (verse 19). It is the chapter of overwhelming victory, the march of the “more than conquerors” (verse 37). It is the chapter of the indwelling Spirit, directing, empowering, giving

life, assuring of sonship, helping in weakness, and culminating the divine purpose in victory through Jesus!

THE POWER OF SIN

One who takes up the Roman letter and turns to chapter 8, and allows his eyes to wander over the words, is immediately confronted with the thought that he has a power-packed message of exciting encouragement in his hands. God has not simply “thrown the Book at us” and retired from the scene to watch from afar and see what kind of mess we make out of life. He invests us with a legacy of might and strength in the inner man, which is incalculably greater than any force without.

And this is the most important fact on earth right now. Sin is not simply an intellectual concept with which to reason and wrestle. It is not just a skulking force without which we can overcome by flailing about us in the dark. Instead, it is a power, which has seized the throne room of our hearts and through years of domineering in which we have been reduced to abject slavery, has weakened the will to resist. In fact, the inclination to give in and go along has made all of us victims of our own feebleness in the conflict.

Even though sin is driven out, and the heart washed and cleansed, it still lurks expectantly in the shadows. For sin is the weapon of a master-strategist who knows every weak spot in our character. He can exploit every fear, every emotion, every desire, with such a surge of strength that we feel resistance is useless. He can take human loneliness and use it as a wrecking bar to tear down the strongest determination. He plants a seed and waits until it is matured and pushed out through the chinks of despair and despondency.

All of the good resolutions on earth will not offset this power. Each man is like a lost traveler in the snowy waste of the Yukon Territory, surrounded by a pack of fiery-eyed wolves. The pack awaits the inevitable moment when the fire goes out. Sleep will overcome the will of the man, or his meager fuel supply will become exhausted. The slavering jaws will move in for the bloody kill.

What is needed is for Someone to move into the inner compartment vacated by sin, someone who can man “the hot line” to heaven, who can buttress the sagging places in the dike and repair the faults and cracks with the cement of love. The relationship created must be one so personal that there is never a sense of being alone, forsaken or deserted. It must be Someone who neither slumbers nor sleeps, but who watches the battlements with unflagging zeal.

Moreover, the consciousness of this power within must be reflected to others. They must be able to tell that the house is occupied. The light must gleam through the windows. The flag, which betokens that a royal guest is being entertained, must be flying from the mast. There must be a change, a tremendous and startling change. Old things must pass away. All things must become new.

All things! Habits, disposition, tendencies, character! “You’ve changed,” must become the greeting of past acquaintances and accomplices. “You’re not the same man,” must be on the lips of those who still cling to sin and envy the swine the husks that they eat. It is my contention that precisely what I have described is what the Father has provided for those who become the willing captives of the Son. Anything less than this is life on the carnal level, and the person who indulges it is holding a gun against his own temple and robbing his own pockets.

It is my conviction that when Jesus left this earth to return to heaven, he requested that another helper be sent who would abide with us through the ages of his absence. That helper came! He is the Holy Spirit. He is here now and he dwells in me, empowering me to withstand the cosmic forces of evil. The Father, according to the wealth of his glory, makes me strong with power through his Spirit in the inner self (Eph. 3:16). This is the glorious promise. I accept it, acknowledge it and rejoice in it. Even though our struggle is against “unseen rulers and powers, against the lords of the darkness of this world, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly world.” I am not even trembling. “I will fear *no evil*, for thou art with me.” No evil!

But what about those who say the Holy Spirit does not dwell in them, that God has furnished them a guidebook and written map and started them out on their own? I never argue with any person who says he does not have the Holy Spirit. I agree with him. I suspect he is right. Of course I feel sorry for him as he slogs along, lashing out in his own frustration at every brother who overtakes him while he is staggering along under the huge pack he is trying to carry by himself. But there is too much to do without stopping to flail away at folks who are happy in their misery and miserable because I am happy.

Romans 8 is one great chapter. It was originally written to men and women in a great metropolis sprawled along the banks of the Tiber River. Some of these were slaves, mere human chattels in a teeming, crawling, creeping mass of vice and corruption. One noted historian, after several paragraphs swimming in a depletion of unbridled degradation, writes: “But to dwell upon the crimes and the retributive misery of that period is happily not my duty. I need but make a passing allusion to its enormous wealth; its unbounded self-indulgence; its coarse and tasteless luxury; its greedy avarice; its sense of insecurity and terror; its apathy, debauchery, and cruelty; its hopeless fatalism; its unspeakable sadness and weariness; its strange extravagances alike of infidelity and superstition” (*The Early Days of Christianity*, by Frederic W. Farrar, page 2).

Here, in the capital of this pagan world came this word of light and hope to brighten the hearts of the humble and to make out of them a fighting force which would capture the world while shedding no blood but their own. I claim for myself that inner might which cannot be defeated by death. On the basis of this blessed chapter I expect to become more than a conqueror. And I invite you to explore it with me and savor that potential so great that it toppled the Caesars from their throne and made the name of Jesus known “from sea to shining sea.”

NO CONDEMNATION

There is therefore now no condemnation to them, which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

Condemnation is the exact opposite of justification. Since the latter means to declare one guiltless, the other means that one has heard the sentence, “Guilty!” He is amenable to punishment and subject to death. One cannot be esteemed as guilty and guiltless at the same time, so those who are justified by faith and have gained access to grace are not under condemnation. There is no guilt assessed against them. They are free!

To be in Christ Jesus is to sustain an intimate relationship with him. It is not so much a matter of place or position, but of participation in a life, eternal life. In him no condemnation resides, for through faith one appropriates unto himself that righteousness which is Christ’s.

What is the flesh? What is it to walk after the flesh? We must be very careful here. There is ever the danger that we will equate flesh with the material body, and like modern gnostics,

assume that matter is evil. That “the flesh” cannot refer to the physical body, its natural cravings and desires, is evident from verse 9, which says, “You are not in the flesh.” All of us are in the physical body even when we walk in the Spirit.

Nor must we associate the flesh with sex, which is a provision of God, and in no sense unclean of itself. Certainly, in its gratification it may be abused, and such abuse is a symptom of subservience to the flesh, but many other things not directly related to sexual passion are also a part of the flesh, as one may learn by reading the works of the flesh as listed in Galatians 5:19-21.

W. E. Vine says, “The flesh here stands for corrupt human nature, the dominating element in unregenerate man.”

William Barclay, in the concluding sentences of one of the most analytical treatises I have ever read, entitled, *The Enemy in the Soul*, has this to say: “The flesh is human nature as it has become through sin. Man’s sin, his own sin and the sin of mankind, has, as it were, made him vulnerable to sin. It has made him fall even when he knew he was falling and even when he did not want to fall. It has made him such that he can neither avoid the fascination of sin nor resist the power of sin. The flesh stands for the human nature weakened, vitiated, tainted by sin. The flesh is man as he is apart from Jesus Christ and his Spirit.”

C. H. Dodd says, “The flesh is the common stuff of human nature which we inherit.” He says it is in itself powerless for moral ends. He also affirms, that “We are given a bias from the first by heredity and environment tainted with these things. Paul is right in seeking at a level deeper than individual choices for the roots of our moral malady.”

Ragnar Bring, who is an excellent example of the Scandinavian school of theological thought, and who produced the most provocative commentary on Galatians that I have ever read, says, “The flesh is therefore not conceived of as sexual desire, *libido carnis*, but could be described instead as a power in control of this existence which has taken possession of man’s soul and body and has perverted their activity.”

C. Norman Bartlett affirms that the flesh is unsanctified human nature, and represents all that we are apart from God.

Albert Barnes regards the flesh as human nature, corrupted by sin and selfishly concerned only with its own gratification.

My own “working definition” of the flesh is the nature of man, invaded and captured by the power of evil, which exercises the thoughts, desires and passions to produce destruction of the personality and decay of all those relationships in which man can become involved. It is man without God in the relationships of life.

Marriage is one of those relationships. Designed by a beneficent Creator for the propagation, perpetuity, protection, and happiness of a race made in his own image, under the dominance of the flesh it is often made into a living hell, ripping sensitive personality to shreds, and leaving the participants empty and wrung dry of the motivation or will to even go on living.

The social culture is another of those relationships. In a trenchant statement on this very matter, C. H. Dodd says, “But when all discount has been allowed, is it not true that the world into which we are born is under the dominion of false gods? Is it not true at this moment that, although the experts know the kind of thing which could and should be done to deal with the present world-wide depression, yet envy, hatred, greed, and fear so rule the peoples that little can be done?”

The word for walk is *peripateo* and it signifies “the whole round of the activities of the individual life,” as W. E. Vine so aptly phrases it. To walk after the flesh is to exist under the constant domination of the power of evil, that is, “to live on the level of our lower nature.” It is to surrender oneself to the force of evil, to simply drift with the tide, to go along with the unsanctified crowd.

It is my thesis that we do not reason ourselves out of this frightful state. We are captives and prisoners, part of the chain-gang of sin. We can no more free ourselves by thinking good thoughts, than a man can think himself out of the penitentiary dungeon. We have to be rescued. We must be saved. And that requires a savior. There must be a superior power, which can invade the inner depths of the heart and throw the usurper out.

And there must be a power, which takes up his abode in us, remains with us, and strengthens us with might in the inner man. Modern man is all hung up on outer space, which is merely a matter of adjusting computers and launching machines. But his real trouble is inner space, for here no machine can enter. It is the realm of the spiritual and is reserved for the Spirit.

It is all well and good to tell prisoners to do their best and try to improve their lives from day to day. What they need is to be set free and given a new life. Turning over a new leaf only gives you one more blank surface on which to scrawl your abject failures. It is here that any well-designed plan fails. After you try to dig yourself out and then come to the surface you find you are still inside the walls. We were made to be men and not moles!

FUTILITY AND FRUSTRATION

This has been the experience of countless souls of my acquaintance. They were “reared in the church” as they put it, and when they arrived at puberty, that traumatic period triggered off by the master switch of the glands, filled with vague fears and searching for stability, they went through “the steps leading to salvation.” Often this occurred in an emotional setting designed to bring them to a “response,” and occasionally there was an atmosphere bordering on mass hysteria. But they were now “in the church,” and for awhile there was a glow of inner satisfaction as they grew under the watchful care of the family circle at home.

Then it happened! Perhaps it occurred in college, perhaps not! How tragically simplistic we are when we lament, “College ruined my boy!” How easy it is to blame things, institutions and organizations, rather than to get to the real seat of the difficulty. Many of you will not like what I am now going to say. But I am weighing my words carefully and in full cognizance of facing them at the judgment.

There is no plan on this earth involving human obedience and acts of compliance, which can of itself provide the power to live on the spiritual level.

There is no *organization* composed of human beings, membership in which can act as a force to free from the lower nature. And I mean *no organization!*

It is true that such membership may act as a deterrent to overt acts which are frowned on by the membership, or which run counter to “what is expected of one.” But very frequently such membership only encourages hypocrisy of the deepest dye, and develops a form of cowardice, which restrains one from ever saying what he really thinks until he dies of bleeding ulcers or becomes a first-rate religious schizophrenic. And because of our neatly-contrived little plans created by playing tic-tac-toe with the scriptures, a lot of people at baptism change nothing but their clothing.

Certainly they are sorry for their past sins. Certainly they want to do better. They have resolutions firmly mixed up with their mental reservations and doubts. They are going to try and live more decent lives with their wives, their children, their neighbors, and even with “the Negroes who have pushed themselves into the factory and taken the jobs of white men.” They are going to watch television less and read the Bible more. They are going to go to baseball games only half as often and give the money to the church. They are going to get involved in “church work” and go out on “calling night” and see if they cannot talk others into being baptized. I hear about scores of them! “Jack has started hitting the bottle and swearing again. He has quit going on Sunday and Wednesday nights, and is grumpy most of the time.”

“Bill has started staying late at the office again with his secretary. He had lipstick on his shirt collar the other night. He says the church is full of hypocrites and has quit attending with the children and me.”

“Jane gave me to understand that she wasn’t going to miss out on all of the fun since Jeff walked out on her. She has slept with three different men the last three months, and when I called her to invite her to the women’s meeting she said it was composed of a bunch of old biddies who don’t even know the game, much less the score. She still keeps the Bible on her living-room table and sometimes sets a can of cold beer on it.”

“Carl, what can I do? You remember that I wrote you three years ago how glad I was that we talked Jim into being baptized before the draft called him. Well, my heart is broken! He was placed in the stockade for defending himself when a bunch of no-good trash who are soldiers, attacked him. When he was home I found a letter from a girl when I searched his pockets. It was absolutely filthy. It seems she had made over my boy and talked him into doing something he shouldn’t. When I mentioned it to him, he flew into a rage and called me names. I am afraid the preacher and elders will find it out and want to drag him before the church, although God knows two of the elders have sons that are a lot worse than Jim!”

Empty lives will find something to occupy them. And you cannot pack in enough Bible verses to fill a human heart. Men can commit adultery, who can quote every passage where the word occurs like a living concordance. They can give you the Greek so you can tell whether their acts should be classified as fornication or adultery. Packing a Bible in with your son’s shirts or socks when he drives his Volkswagen off to the university will not guarantee his moral purity.

I am sorry to disillusion you, but membership in the religious clan, cult or community cannot provide the power to keep one holy when the chips are down and the fires are up and the demons are at the door. Some of the most unhappy, frustrated, bitter people on earth never miss a meeting of the church. Some of them have to go. They are the preachers! Others drag themselves in on Wednesday night even if they have had a “knock-down and drag-out” fight with the kids until they are so churned up inside they cannot even remember a thing as important as how many Philistines Samson clobbered with the jawbone of an ass, when the preacher directs the question to them!

What we must have in order to overcome is an inner dynamic, which stems from relationship with the power source of the universe. And that is exactly what the Father has provided. The very Greek word for that power is *dynamis*. From it we derive such words as dynamite, dynamic, and dynamo. This power is the direct result of the indwelling Spirit. It is not self-generated. It is a gift. So Paul prays, “I ask God from the wealth of his glory to give you power through the Spirit to be strong in your inner selves” (Eph. 3:16).

To walk after the flesh is the fate of once-born men; to walk after the Spirit is the feat of twice-born men. This last is simply living the whole existence on the spiritual plane. The feet have been planted on higher ground. And on this level the power available to the individual is the “same mighty strength, which he used when he raised Christ from death, and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly world.”

POWER AND PERSONALITY

This is a good time for me to say that I do not regard the Spirit as a nebulous mass or a gray cloud of protoplasm hanging over the world of mankind. Neither is the Spirit an attitude, temperament or inclination. Instead, the Spirit is a personality, a divine helper who understands, sympathizes with and encourages the child of God. The Holy Spirit is the presence of God in his life-giving force in the only temple he ever made – man himself! God is not an “oblong blur,” and the Spirit is not merely the corporate *esprit de corps* or morale of the community of saints.

Although by rational process as applied to the new covenant revelation, one can make a rather intricate and elaborate presentation in favor of the personality of the Spirit, I prefer to assign four simple grounds upon which I base my conclusion.

1. *Attributes and Abilities.* The Spirit possesses a mind (Romans 8:27). The Spirit has the power of knowledge and comprehension of divine thoughts (1 Cor. 2:11). The Spirit is able to convey thoughts by speaking (1 Timothy 4:1), and to do so in words by which spiritual truths can be understood and interpreted (1 Cor. 2:13). The Spirit is capable of bearing witness to facts relating to another, on exactly the same basis as human witnesses may do so (John 15:26,27).

Regardless of the position one may take as to the continuation of charismatic bestowals by the Spirit, no one who accepts the new covenant scriptures as authentic will deny that in Paul’s day there were “varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit,” and that “all these are inspired by one and the same Spirit who apportions to each one individually as he wills” (1 Cor. 12:11). One cannot give another what he does not possess, so the Holy Spirit shared with individuals what he personally possessed. It is obvious that these gifts were to be utilized by persons, and it seems just as obvious that since their possession was personal, they were bestowed by a person. The attributes of the Spirit are such as can only belong to an intelligent and communicative being.

2. *Ascriptive Terms.* The personal pronouns relating to the Spirit indicate personality. Jesus told the sorrowing apostles, “I will pray the Father, and he will give you another Counselor, to be with you throughout the age” (John 14:16). There are two Greek words for another – *heteros* and *allos*. *Heteros* means another of a different kind. *Allos* means another of the same nature. Jesus requested the Father to send another (*allos*) Helper like himself, who could encourage, strengthen and support the saints during the age when he was absent. A great many of my friends are tripped up by the fact that this promise was made directly to the apostles. The apostles were the only ones with Jesus at the time when he spoke. But we must never forget that the apostles were also disciples, and the promise was made to them in both capacities. Whatever the Spirit was to do for them in the apostolic office was limited to them as ambassadors and envoys. But whatever was done for them as followers of Jesus, as his disciples, belongs to all of us until he returns at the end of the age. We all need help, comfort and strength! Turn to John 16:7-15, and notice the term of address used with reference to the Spirit.

“When he comes, he will convict the world of sin...he will guide you into all truth...he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears, he will speak...he will glorify me...he will take what is mine and declare it unto you.” Suppose you just read these words to someone, and

asked him if he thought the reference was to a person. He would be forced to answer in the affirmative. Jesus was not speaking of something, but of Someone. Certainly a person would be grinding a theological axe to reach any other conclusion.

3. *Actions.* The word for Comforter is *Paraclete*, which means “one called to the side of another.” It expresses the purpose for which the Spirit comes. He takes our part and stays with us to help. We must not be led astray by the word Comforter. In our day it may mean one who dries our tears in time of grief, or one who speaks reassuringly when the going gets tough. But it means much more than that. The word “fort” is used of a stronghold, a place where one can defend himself against attack. So a comforter is one who comes with strength or power to enable us to hold out and to resist.

Jesus says that the world cannot receive the Comforter. The world does not know him and will not admit him. But he also says, “You know him, for he dwells with you, and will be in you” (John 14:17). I know that this is true.

I have no empty apartment in my heart. There’s an “occupied” sign on the door. W. E. Vine writes: “*With and in!* What a power for every experience in life.”

The Spirit teaches and recalls to memory (John 14:26). The Spirit reproves (John 16:8). The Spirit guides, hears, speaks and reveals (John 16:13). The Spirit transfers things from one person to another (John 16:15). The Spirit can be grieved, and grief is an emotion, which can only be experienced by rational persons (Eph. 4:30). The Spirit makes intercession, as does Jesus, thus proving that he is truly a helper like the Son (Romans 8:26). These are all the actions of a living person, not of a fuzzy mental concept. The Spirit is not a state of mind. He is a being with a mind.

4. *Associations.* The Spirit is always associated with other persons and these constitute the *Godhood*, a much better word than godhead, embracing all that we regard as Deity. There is a great difference between *recognition* and *definition* of Deity. The first is possible for human beings, the second is not. The limitations of the finite mind make it impossible to gather the infinite up into any kind of container or enclosure, verbal or otherwise.

We are to baptize into (not in) the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit (Matt. 28:19). With reference to spiritual gifts, the three divine persons are associated. There are varieties of gifts, but bestowed by the same Spirit; varieties of service, but rendered to one Lord; varieties of working, but all motivated and inspired by one God (1 Cor. 12:4-6).

The apostle includes in his benediction the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit (2 Cor. 13:14). God is love; this is his essence. Grace is bestowed through and in the Lord Jesus Christ. Fellowship is that state of sharing in eternal life which results from the indwelling Spirit. Man can no more create fellowship than he can create the love of God or the grace of the Lord Jesus. He can only share in them. He has no power to turn them off and on. If the love of God or the grace of Christ were subject to whims and eccentricities of men, they would not be worth having. The same thing can be said of what men call “fellowship,” but which results from a coalition of the party spirit and not from the consolation of the Holy Spirit.

If you wonder why I omit 1 John 5:7 at this juncture, let me state that I think it is an interpolation. I do not wish to try and bolster or shore up a contention by employing such a shaky timber. But I have already presented enough proof to demonstrate that the Holy Spirit is associated with the Father and the Son, and upon the basis of sound interpretative rules we have no right to assume that two of these are personalities while the third is not.

It will be my position, as we study further our relationship to the divine through the Spirit, that the Spirit is a personality, and that our bodies are temples created for a sanctuary in which the Spirit may dwell. God has no holy places, holy days or holy things, in the kingdom of heaven. He has only holy persons. He is not worshiped in temples made with hands. Buildings of brick and stone may be “dedicated” to the service of God, and be empty of the power of the Spirit. Man has no power to consecrate or sanctify. That is the domain of the Spirit, and we are usurpers when we seek to capture the right.

We must now lay away the pen for another month. What a thrill to know that we are guiltless by divine declaration because of the relationship with Jesus. “There is no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.” The past holds no remorse. The future holds no fears. The present has no sense of guilt, no shadow hanging over the soul to obscure the sunlight of His blessed love. Praise God for that righteousness which is by faith, and not by legal rectitude! Praise God for the opportunity to serve Him by loving and helping all who were made in His image!

In our next issue we will explore what is meant by the law of the Spirit of life as opposed to the law of sin and death. We shall determine what the law could not do because it was robbed of its strength and power by our own lower nature. Most important of all we shall study the difference between life in the basement and life in the penthouse, life on the lower level of nature and life on the spiritual level. William Barclay writes:

“The Spirit-controlled life, the Christ-centered life, the God-focused life is on the way to life. Daily it is coming nearer heaven even while it is still on earth. Daily it is becoming more Christlike, more one with Christ. It is a life, which is such a steady progress to God that the final transition of death is only a natural and inevitable stage on the way. It is like Enoch who walked with God and God took him. As the child said, ‘Enoch was a man who walked with God – and one day he didn’t come back.’” And let me add in closing that when a Christian dies, he does not leave home, he goes home!

3. The Spirit of Life

“For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death” (Romans 8:2).

What is “the law of the Spirit of life?” A law is a rule of action, a governing principle. In Christ Jesus the animating principle is the Holy Spirit and the life we share is the life of the Spirit. It is the Spirit who quickens. In this passage, W. E. Vine says, “The phrase ‘the Spirit of life’ is not subjective, ‘the Spirit who has life;’ but objective, ‘the Spirit who gives life.’”

In the physical body, the spirit is the vitalizing or animating principle. All that I am able to accomplish in physical existence is dependent upon that spirit. Without it the body is dead. By the same token, it is the Holy Spirit which makes possible my functioning as a spiritual being. Without the Spirit I am merely an automaton, a mechanical doll, a puppet, going through religious motions, but with no real life or power. It is possible to have a form of godliness but deny the power thereof (2 Tim. 3:5). This is the state of millions. They are dolls, not children. They toy with life but have never really lived!

What is “the law of sin and death?” It is the principle, which is described in the previous chapter, by which evil exercises dominion over the desires and prompts one to sin even against his own wish. It is described as “sin that dwelleth in me” (7:17), overpowering the will and rendering personal resolve as helpless. “I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me” (7:21). Paul declares, “This is in continual conflict with my conscious attitude, and makes me an unwilling prisoner to the law of sin and death. In my mind I am God’s willing servant, but in my own nature I am bound fast, as I say, to the law of sin and death.”

Barclay says that Paul is here describing “an experience which is the very essence of the human situation.” He declares, “He felt himself to be a split personality. It was as if two men were inside the one skin. He felt himself pulled in two directions. He knew himself to be a walking civil war. He was haunted by this feeling of frustration, the ability to see what was good, and the inability to do it; this ability to recognize what was wrong, and the inability to refrain from doing it.”

I know, both from personal experience and from observation, the frustration, which comes from trying to find your way out of the labyrinth which sin has constructed. I know how, when one is bounded and harassed by his own inner compulsions, he resorts to false bravado and arrogantly seeks to throw his weight around to project an image, which is really a shadow. No one is a bigger hypocrite than the preacher who leaves the impression that he has thought out all of the answers to the problems of life, while on the inside he is a seething mass of his own unfulfilled desires, some of which would hardly bear exposure to the light.

Paul said, “It is an agonizing situation, and who on earth can set me free from the clutches of my own sinful nature?” Human nature can take a lot of beating and we keep trying. Preachers, counselors, doctors, psychologists, astrologers, soothsayers – we frantically run here and there every time an acquaintance mentions a new guru. In reality, none of these can help. They bring temporary relief because we have to talk and anyone who will listen provides respite from the ghastly emptiness within. But inevitably we have to go back home, and we are not fit for ourselves to live with.

There's no use getting a new moral prescription. Morality is simply trying to live up to a code, whether devised by one's own thinking or dreamed up by someone else. But we cannot free ourselves. And no one on earth can free us. Not until we come to realize the staggering implications of this fact will we ever be free. We can listen to sermons every Sunday morning from now on and be no better off. Sermons can be preached to prisoners. They can also be preached by slaves. We need to be free from ourselves. The old man of sin is a rotting, decaying putrefying corpse to which we are chained.

THE WAY OUT

Paul says there is a way out! "I thank God there is a way out through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom. 7:25). This is the greatest news ever brought to a man lost in a cave, a man behind bars, a soldier held captive by the enemy. There is a way out! And that way is provided by the indwelling Spirit. The Spirit does not simply cut one strand of the rope, which binds me to my lower nature. He cuts the rope. He frees me from the unending cycle of sin and death! I am infused with new life, not confused by the old one. Love supplants carelessness, joy supplants despair, peace supplants inner turmoil. It is not a new way of life, it is the new life of the Way! The way out is the way in – to Christ!

"The law never succeeded in producing righteousness – the failure was always the weakness of human nature. But God has met this by sending his own Son Jesus Christ to live in that human nature which causes the trouble. And, while Christ was actually taking upon himself the sins of men, God condemned that sinful nature" (8:3).

This is a fascinating statement of two things – the utter incompetency of law and the magnificent provision of grace, which stops at nothing in the rescue mission of the ages. The law could only succeed in condemning man even while seeking to condemn sin. It could never produce a right relationship with God, for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.

Law demands absolute obedience in every particular if it is to justify. There can be no deviation, not even in the slightest issue. Perfection in conformity is demanded and the very moment one falls short he is under condemnation. Thus, before one can keep law he must be perfect, but in such a state he would need no law. The giving of law is postulated upon man's weakness, and he is thus condemned by the very thing which was to save.

The lower nature makes it impossible for man to achieve righteousness by law-keeping. Regardless of how powerful law may be, man is powerless to obey it in perfection. He continually suffers from remorse, guilt and fear, as he lives in the three dimensions of time – past, present and future. There was no need for God to repeal one law and then impose another. What was needed was a transformation of nature. God did not send a new law. He sent his Son. The first covenant was one of law. The second was a person.

Jesus adopted our human nature. He emptied himself and took upon him the form of a slave. He was made in the likeness of man. He was tempted in all points as we are. He tested the strength of law and triumphed over it. He fulfilled the law and in doing so earned the right to adopt men unto himself rather than adapt them to the demands of law. Because he was sinless he could take our sins and he did so. By his own blood he purchased our freedom from the guilt of sin.

It is sin, which is now under condemnation, not persons who are in Christ. They are free from condemnation, being declared guiltless in Him. What does this mean to me? It means the difference between slavery and liberty. I am no longer under the dominance of sin. Sin is now the prisoner in the dock. I am free! The culprit who sought to destroy me has been apprehended

and found guilty. I have been declared guiltless. Praise God that sin no longer has dominion. Its reign has been broken. It has been dethroned, disgraced and degraded.

“That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit” (8: 4).

The righteousness of the law is the state or condition at which the law aimed. Law was intended to provide justification by creating a code of conduct to which a man must subscribe and by unremitting obedience earn the right to be guiltless. But there was “a fly in the ointment,” and a flaw in the system. It was human nature, the lower nature, in which dwelt no good thing. The will was there “but how to perform that which is good I find not.”

It was for this reason that the law which was intended to work good actually became an instrument of death. As we learned before, the very prohibitions of the law became suggestions and invitations to sin. What God did was to send Jesus to redeem us from the power, as well as from the guilt and consequences of sin. In order to accomplish this our old man of sin was crucified and we were made partakers of the divine nature, a nature, which rises above the need of law.

Through this means, the righteousness, which the law attempted to produce, was made possible. The law was a failure because the lower nature was a failure. We were elevated to another and superior plane in which we were no longer under the dominion of the flesh and sin could not exercise dominion over us. On this spiritual plane, and through the power of the Spirit, man was able to attain unto justification.

“For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit” (8:5).

There are two kinds of persons who will read what I am writing. One is described as “after the flesh;” the other “after the Spirit.” They may both have their names on the same church roster. Indeed they may be husband and wife. Those who are after the flesh live in the domain of the corrupt human nature. They are directed and controlled by it in every phase of existence. It determines what their reaction will be to any facet of life. They respond on the animal level.

The word for mind is *phroneo*. It means to think, to set the mind in a certain direction. It is not mere acting upon impulse or casually. Instead, it involves reflection and determination. Those who are governed by the flesh have surrendered themselves to the lower nature. They are guided by the things of the flesh.

In Galatians 5 there is a catalog of the things of the flesh. Included in the works of the flesh are sexual immorality, impurity of mind, sensuality, worship of false gods, witchcraft, hatred, quarreling, jealousy, bad temper, rivalry, factions, party-spirit, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like that. Satan has cleverly disguised some of these and deadened our sensibilities to them.

“For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace” (Romans 8:6).

I know a man who lives in a moral sewer. The fingers of his mind grope in the muck and he feeds his soul on slop and garbage. Every sentence he utters is sprinkled with profanity. There is nothing sacred to him. He will twist any statement in his warped mind and give it a suggestive

slant. His throat is an open sepulcher. The poison of asps is under his lips. His mouth is full of cursing and bitterness.

One day a friend said to me, “What will happen to a man like that when he dies?” I replied, “He is already dead.” We make a mistake when we always equate death with the cessation of the intake and expulsion of air through the nostrils, or the failure of a muscular organ to palpitate. There can be an insensitivity of the heart to the purer things of life. Rigor mortis of the soul can occur while fleshy tissue walks about. God speaks of those who have “hardening of the heart” even when there may be no hardening of the arteries.

There is a lower level of the human nature in which one exists as in a state of living death. It is a penal colony in the dark jungles of corruption. Here the understanding is darkened and the dwellers are alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart. Being past feeling they give themselves over to lasciviousness and work all uncleanness with greediness.

Death is a separation, a disintegration, an alienation from life, and one who is alienated from the life of God is dead in trespasses and sins. He walks according to the evil ways of this present age. He obeys the commander of the spiritual powers of the air, the spirit now at work among God’s rebel subjects. This is the realm of sensuality where men obey the promptings of their own instincts and notions. It is a fearsome valley of the dead, and over it hangs the dark cloud of God’s impending dreadful judgment. One who is given over to self-indulgence is dead while he lives (1 Timothy 5:6).

I am not so irrational as to think that this is a dominion without a ruler or a kingdom without a monarch. The “kingdom of darkness” has its sovereign as does “the kingdom of light.” There are evil ones, but there is also “an evil one.” “We know that we are God’s family, while the whole godless world lies in the power of the evil one” (1 John 5:19). “Everything the world affords, all that panders to the appetite, or entices the eyes, all the glamour of its life, springs not from the Father but from the godless world. And that world is passing away with all its allurements, but he who does God’s will stands for ever more.” This I believe!

The evil one has no greater weapon at his command than confusion of terms and values. The faithful prophets have always known this and cried out against it. “Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter” (Isaiah 5:20). It is noteworthy that in this context there are five specific woes pronounced.

One is against syndicates, combines and monopolies, organized to build houses and apartments so close together that there is no room for privacy and meditation (verse 8). Another is against those who turn day and night into feasting coupled with hard drinking and blaring music (11,12). Another is against those who are so tied to sin that they openly flaunt it while challenging God to do anything about it (18, 19).

The fourth is against intellectual snobbery, which causes its victims to parade their learning as the ultimate in wisdom and prudence (21). The last is against those who brag about their ability to hold liquor, and who concoct new recipes for mixing their whiskey, wine and vodka (verse 22), and defend the wicked for political prestige. Human nature has not changed, and for this reason the need and nature of the prophetic message has not changed.

But I hold that in our day the most deceptive trick employed by “the dark ruler” is to confuse the minds of men as to what constitutes freedom. By this they are led to feel that they are free to sin, while sin is the greatest enslaving force of the universe. The flattering of the ego by a false

use of the word “free” is the very technique employed by the spider to entice the fly into his death lair. Men who heed the siren call to this freedom are free only to die. To be carnally minded is death – death by one’s own choice, suicide!

To be spiritually minded is life and peace. To be “spiritually minded” is not simply to think nice things, but to live on the upper level where the Spirit controls. It is to be in the dominion of the Spirit. It is to be made new in mind and spirit, to put on the new nature of God’s creating, which shows itself in the just and devout life called for by the truth. It is important to see that it is not merely cleaning up the old life, but the reception of a new nature, a complete transformation. Man can no more create himself again than he could create himself originally. Creation is a work of God, not of creatures.

To live on this new level is to be constantly renewed in the image of the Creator and to come to know God. It is to be incorporate with him, and thus to pass beyond the reach of the elemental spirits of this world, to be no longer subservient to the flesh and its demands. Having been raised to life with Christ, we are enabled to aspire to the realm above that is still higher, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God.

In this present thought-realm one is able to project his thoughts still higher, being freed from the quicksand, which formerly sucked at his feet. One who is being pulled into the mire can only concentrate on the mire. The apostle writes, “Let your thoughts dwell on the higher realm, not on the earthly life. I repeat, you died; and now your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, is manifested, then you too will be manifested with him in glory” (Col. 3:3,4). The reason the spiritually minded have life is because in the Spirit they have Christ, and Christ is our life!

They also have peace, peace with God. This is also through Christ. It is his peace, and we share in it. “Let Christ’s peace be arbiter in your hearts: to this peace you were called as members of a single body. And be filled with gratitude.” An arbiter is an umpire, one who rules and regulates the game. Those who are not in Christ are playing without a referee. They are also playing without a ball, and merely kicking each other.

The field of action is the heart. When decisions must be made the peace of Christ makes them. When peace blows the whistle it is always right and just. Peace settles things and inner serenity is the result. There is no taking a chance, no losing the game, no failure to score. There is no remorse, no weeping in the dressing-room, no second-guessing, no wishful thinking. In Christ one cannot lose. “If God is on our side, who can be against us? (Romans 8:31). “It is God who pronounces acquittal: then who can condemn?” (Verses 33,34).

“Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.” So reads Romans 8:7.

We have already learned that “the flesh,” as Paul uses it, does not refer to the physical body composed of tissues and cells, and carrying out its various organic functions designed to exhibit life. Now we must learn that “the carnal mind” does not refer to the brain with its cells and convolutions. The flesh and the carnal mind are the same. They are terms used to designate the lower nature, which is under captivity to sin. It describes man as a sometime unwilling slave condemned to do the bidding and bow to the whims of a harsh and cruel master.

On the plane of this servitude one cannot rescue himself. That which is righteous is always beyond his grasp. Man is like Tantalus, condemned to stand in a stream whose waters always receded when he stooped to drink, while the fruit on the branches dangling above always

remained just out of reach. There was ever the growing intensity of agony created by the sense of helplessness and futility. “I discover this principle, then: that when I want to do right, only the wrong is within my reach” (Romans 7:21).

It is at once apparent that on this level of hatred, recrimination and growing bitterness, a mind incapable of thinking its way out of the predicament, stymied in every move, will be at enmity with God. Driven by passion, motivated by lust, and with only wrong within reach, there will be only depraved reason. In such a state there is no recognition of or subjection to God.

Here is a description of what the carnal mind, alienated from God and shrouded in a dark curtain of blackness, produces. “Thus, because they have not seen fit to acknowledge God, he has given them up to their own depraved reason. This leads them to break all rules of conduct. They are filled with every kind of injustice, mischief, rapacity and malice; they are a mass of envy, murder, rivalry, treachery and malevolence; whisperers and scandalmongers, hateful to God, insolent, arrogant, and boastful; they invent new kinds of mischief, they show no loyalty to parents, no conscience, no fidelity to their plighted word; they are without natural affection and without pity.”

It is specifically declared that those in this condition are not stupid or unlearned fools. Quite the contrary, they are informed in the lore of this passing age. But “their thinking has ended in futility, and their misguided minds are plunged in darkness. They boast of their wisdom but they have made fools of themselves.” The carnal mind is a misguided mind that has sought to eliminate God from his universe, a mind that postulates existence and order without a Creator, and ends up creating disorder, which threatens its own existence!

4. The Indwelling Spirit

“But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his” (Romans 8:9).

Once more we must remind you that to be “in the flesh” has no direct reference to being in the physical body. It is contrasted with being “in the Spirit.” One of these is antithetical to the other. But the Spirit dwells in or abides in the body as in a living organism. “Do you not know that your body is the sanctuary of the indwelling Spirit, and the Spirit is God’s gift to you?” (1 Cor. 6:19). We must abide in the body to provide a temple for the Holy Spirit, but we dare not be “in the flesh,” that is, on the lower level of the human nature. That is the plane in which sin rules as a tyrant and moral anarchy is the order of life.

This passage is important because it uses the terms Spirit, Spirit of God, and Spirit of Christ in one verse. All apply to the same personality. Peter declares that the prophets were motivated and instructed by the Spirit of Christ, even before Jesus came (1 Peter 1:11). He informs us that this was the Holy Spirit sent down from heaven to prompt the apostles. The term Spirit refers to the nature, Spirit of God to identification with Deity, and Spirit of Christ to his affinity to the Word who became the Messiah. The Anglo-Saxons employed the word “ghost” for the inner man, while the Latins used spiritus. Thus, the Authorized Version uses these interchangeably. But because of the way the word “ghost” is used in our generation it should no longer be applied to the Holy Spirit, although it was legitimately so used by King James, who commissioned the translation which often bears his name. The Spirit is a holy guest, but not a holy ghost.

Thus, the Spirit is said to dwell or abide in us. This is not a brief stay by a passing friend, but tenantry for life, or so long as we permit. The proof that we are living on the higher plane of spiritual existence is the indwelling Spirit. God moves into a meaningful personal relationship with us on the upper level and rules over our life. The dominance of sin is broken. It has no more claim upon our members. We are set free by the grace of God.

Regardless of what claim may be made or what acts are performed, one simply does not belong to Christ if he does not have the Spirit of Christ. Man is an earthen vessel, a pot of clay, and the indwelling Spirit gives him value. Without the Spirit man is an empty jar occupying space on life’s shelf, but providing no real contribution to the world. The value of a jar is determined by its content.

We have been tricked into thinking that if we go through certain motions on particular days of the week, reciting rituals, fiddling with forms, and piddling with platitudes, this proves that we are alive and in tune with God. But Walt Disney Studios produced a mechanical Abraham Lincoln who duplicates in every lineament and feature the Great Emancipator. You purchase a ticket and take a seat before him and when the clock reaches the proper minute the robot gets up, steps forward and recites the Gettysburg Address.

A lot of awe-struck tourists think this is wonderful. But I've been accustomed for years to seeing men and women arising mechanically on Sunday when the clock struck a certain hour and moving to a meetinghouse where they woodenly recite "The Lord's Prayer." Then they retreat to their original position as if it were all over until the clock strikes again a week later. They are no more real than Disney's Lincoln. The spirit is absent from the latter and the Spirit is absent from the former. Regardless of what else one may have, if he does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. Every person who is Christ's has the Spirit of Christ, every person who has the Spirit of Christ is Christ's. It is just that simple.

"And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness." (Romans 8:10).

Christ dwells in us in and through the Spirit. This union is spoken of from two aspects. We are in Christ and Christ is in us. This means that the attributes, which belong to the divine nature, are ours in which to share. They are available unto us. Paul wrote to Corinth, "All things are yours, whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours, and ye are Christ's: and Christ is God's" (1 Cor. 3:21-23).

It is difficult for most of us to accept this. We are so conditioned to thinking about what we "give up" to follow Jesus that we never think of the gains, which accrue. There is deposited for us in the bank of heaven tremendous resources upon which we can draw, but often we do not know the account has been opened, or we are reluctant to draw upon it. We want to keep it for "a rainy day." We forget that things to come are ours as well as things present. In Jesus there is no rainy day.

God has provided us a book of prayer checks. The supply is as inexhaustible as was the oil in the widow's cruse (2 Kings 4:1-5). There is sufficient to meet every need. Unfortunately, we think of Christ as a mere historical figure in the past, or as a far-off ruler who is coming again. Both of these describe him, but they ignore the "things present" facet. Christ is in us. He is the same Christ he always was. His power has not eroded away or become depleted.

He is "made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption" (1 Cor. 1:30). Whatever is implied in these glorious terms we have in Christ. He is our peace (Eph. 2:14). Our peace is not based upon a creed, concordat or conciliar agreement. It is not a pact, proposal or prepared document. If Christ dwells in me I am at peace with God. And I am at peace with every other person in this universe in whom Jesus dwells. That is why it is a universe and not a multi-verse. Versus means to turn, and universe means to "to turn or bring together in one." The Spirit of God, which originally brought order out of chaos in creation, brings the new creation together in one body. This is the action of the Spirit and not the result of human arrangement.

That is why the only unity of which God speaks is "the unity of the Spirit." It is a gift. It can neither be achieved nor attained. It must be accepted. Our responsibility then is to guard and keep it with the bond of peace. It is silly for men to hold conferences and

arrange conventions to promote unity. Unity does not need to be promoted. It has already graduated. Our task is not to promote it but to appropriate it. If Christ is in you, peace is in you, because He is our peace.

This does not mean that you will not die a physical death. It is appointed unto men once to die. We must either all die or all be changed. Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom that is everlasting. Sin has taken its toll. Death has passed upon all men. So we must either be resurrected or reconstructed. The trumpet will sound and the sound will not be uncertain. The fact that Christ is in me is no guarantee that my body will not die. It simply removes the venomous sting of death. If Jesus is in me while I am awake and alive, I will sleep in Jesus when I die.

Jesus did not remove physical death. He simply conquered the one who wielded the power over it, and delivered those who were all of their lifetime subject to bondage through fear of death. Death is not a monster any more than sleep is a monster. It is not a tragedy but a transfer. "Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord." To die in the Lord means that the Lord lives in you!

If Christ be in you, the Spirit is life. It is eternal life. "He that hath the Son hath life" (1 John 5:12). "And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son." If the Spirit dwells in you, eternal life is yours now. You do not have to die to collect it. The life of God is the gift of God to His children. It is our present possession.

The Spirit is life because of righteousness, just as the body is dead because of sin. My body is not dead because of my sin, but because of sin, the sin of one man. So the Spirit is life, not because of my righteousness but because of the righteousness of another, which is imputed unto me. "As by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation, even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life." It is not my righteousness, which makes life, but his righteousness. I could never be righteous enough to merit eternal life, but thank God, it is not on the natural plane that I receive it. This is the promise of God. I do not stagger at this promise through unbelief. I accept it, thrill to it, and rejoice in it, as one who is strong in faith, giving glory to God. The Spirit is life! Praise God for that!

"But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you" (Romans 8:11).

The most momentous fact of history was the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. On this fact all else in our relationship to God depends. If Christ was not raised the Christian message is empty and there is no content to faith (1 Cor. 15:14). If Christ was not raised the apostles are liars (15:15). If Christ was not raised those who died in him are gone. They have perished (15:18). If Christ was not raised all hope is limited to this life and we are miserable above all men (15:19).

Jesus did not prove he was the Son of God by dying on the cross. That proved he was the Son of man. He proved divine Sonship by his resurrection (Romans 1:4). It is true that Jesus said no man could take his life from him. He had power to lay it down and he had

power to take it again. But he also said that he had received this commandment from the Father (John 10:18). God raised him from the dead as the first fruits of the great harvest of those who are asleep.

The same power that was exercised in raising Jesus from the dead dwells in us through the Holy Spirit. “How vast the resources of his power open to us who trust in him. They are measured by his strength and the might which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead, when he enthroned him at his right hand in the heavenly realms” (Eph. 1:19, 20).

God will quicken our mortal bodies by the Spirit. To quicken means to make alive, to empower with life. The word “mortal” means subject to death. Its root form occurs in such words as mortician, mortuary and post-mortem, all of which relate to death. Of course God will raise us from the dead, but he will give us life and power now. The “resources of power” which were employed to raise Jesus are now available to all those who live in him.

It is a great source of comfort and reassurance to realize that whatever God demands of us he furnishes the power to accomplish. We need not be hesitant about moving into any situation to which God calls us. He is able to bring us safely through. We need not fear what men shall do unto us. The shield of faith is capable of deflecting all of the fiery arrows of the evil one. Most of us are defeated by our own doubts.

A great watchword of the faith is found in these words, “The Lord is near; have no anxiety, but in everything make your requests known to God in prayer and petition with thanksgiving. Then the peace of God, which is beyond our utmost understanding, will keep guard over your hearts and your thoughts in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 4:6, 7). The encouragement to allow God to deal directly with every problem of life by making our requests known to him in everything is a powerful incentive. All that we need he will supply, richly and fully. Life itself is the gift of his Spirit.

“Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh” (Romans 8:12).

The lower nature, the old life of sin, has no further claim upon us. We have been ransomed from its grasp. We have been redeemed from the slavery and bondage in which it held us. I owe nothing to my unregenerate nature. I have been born again. Old things have passed away. All things have become new. My previous concerns “I count so much garbage for the sake of gaining Christ and finding myself incorporate in him” (Phil. 3:9). “Circumcision is nothing; uncircumcision is nothing; the only thing that counts is a new creation! Whoever they are who take this principle for their guide, peace and mercy be upon them, and upon the whole Israel of God.” If the only thing that counts is new creation it is obvious that what belongs to the old life is no longer to be valued at all.

Paul said he wrote off all supposed assets of his past because of Christ. He did not merely discount them. He counted them sheer loss. He took out bankruptcy on his past and placed all of his hopes in Christ Jesus. There was nothing left but Jesus. This is not just a good way to live; it is the only way to live!

Fully understood this means, for instance, that the former alcoholic needs alcohol no longer as an inward booster. Alcoholism results from fear of inability to cope with problems. The alcoholic feels a sense of rejection and compensates for it by leaning upon liquor as an escape. This settles nothing because he must return to reality or drink himself into oblivion. Good resolutions will not solve the problem. When the going gets rough there is an overpowering temptation to take a drink to fill up the emptiness. Preaching and counseling will not overcome it. There must be a real vital sense of relationship to God including a recognition of an indwelling Helper who is the power source for conquest of self.

Paul knew the reason for alcoholism, so he wrote, “Do not make yourselves drunk with wine; that leads to loose, wild living; but be filled with the Spirit” (Eph. 5:18, 19). One who is not filled with the Spirit is empty and vacuous. But filling with the Spirit is the alternative to drinking for the man who is insecure. I do not share the view of those who talk about “intoxication of the Spirit,” for the very word means to poison. There is no toxicity of the Spirit. One cannot drink of the Spirit too deeply. The more he drinks the better off he is. We are stimulated by the Spirit in the inner man but not drugged by him.

Indeed, I am quite thoroughly convinced that an acceptance of the Spirit as a result of genuine faith in Jesus Christ can recover one from the clutches of drug addiction. There is a physical aspect to the problem, which means that Satan must be conquered and thrown out of his stronghold. This means that the frightful symptoms of withdrawal must be undergone and the living hell involved must be faced. One can be helped through the awful ordeal by those who once had the clawing monkey on their backs but who won through to victory. (Here I must mention that at least two college people who were addicts and who came to know Jesus testified that they escaped the withdrawal symptoms through prayer. I am sure that it will not always be this way).

The devil does not turn any of us loose easily. He fights for his territory where he staked his claim. But “the Son of God appeared for the very purpose of undoing the devil’s work” (1 John 3:8). It is affirmed that Jesus has overcome the world. This includes the power structures of the world. The fact is that we need no longer be under the dominance of any sin. Even drugs, which distort brain images and disorient life can be thrown out by the Holy Spirit. Best of all, the indwelling Spirit can give meaning to life so that the factors, which led to drug addiction, can be alleviated and corrected.

Many of our social problems are related to the sense of loneliness, which accompanies our computerized culture. It is true that man is in a crowded world, pushed and shoved about by the teeming mass. But it is also true that there is a lonely crowd. It is evident in the gigantic mass of tranquilizers and soothing drugs, plus pain relievers, consumed every year. Our society is dependent upon foreign substances introduced into the body to enable men to eat, to refrain from eating, to sleep and to stay awake.

A realization of the closeness of God, a sense of the power provided from on high, a positive acceptance of the Spirit to dwell within, can change all of this. The Holy Spirit is not provided as an esoteric or mystic influence, but as a positive helper, enabling us to love ourselves and to love others, including our enemies. Thus we can share in the

creative force of the universe, which can re-create our personalities. Much of what we call recreation only fatigues us more and wears us out. It saps our strength and vibrancy.

It is not enough “to feel like a new man.” We must become new men. And that is exactly the function of the Spirit of God. It is unfortunate that a lot of pseudo-sophisticates in our day dismiss what we have been saying as a species of wishful or fanciful thinking. They are content to believe that they are big enough to bear all of the problems of life without help from God. They think that “all of this talk about the Spirit” has been concocted and dreamed up by mental weaklings.

But life has a way of catching up with us. When we played marbles as boys we spoke about “taking roundings,” which meant that we moved around the ring and got into a position from which we could shoot a rival out of the ring. And life does not remain static. It “takes roundings” on us. The cumulative tensions stretch us taut on the inside and break us. The rug is jerked out from under us when we think we are standing firm. We are kicked out of the plane without the parachute of faith. We wanted to be free and now we take a free fall!

The wisecracks about religion fail us when we crack up ourselves. In his book *Modern Man in Search of A Soul*, Dr. Carl Jung writes, “I should like to call attention to the following facts. During the past thirty years, people from all civilized countries of the earth have consulted me. I have treated many hundreds of patients...Among all my patients in the second half of life – that is to say, over thirty-five – there has not been one whose problem in the last resort was not that of finding a religious outlook on life.” But the great psychoanalyst was unable to help a lot of his patients because of his own denial of the factuality of the testimony concerning Jesus of Nazareth. When you hand people a rope with which to pull themselves up it will do little good if it is not fastened to something above.

As I write I cannot forget a girl in a Midwestern college. When I first met her on a speaking trip she was a gay dropout from Christianity. She came up to taunt me and tell me that she thought I was a quaint throwback to medieval times, and she didn’t think there was anyone else like me on earth. She couldn’t understand why I was so positive and unrelentingly certain about God and why I insisted upon an ethical soul slant and mental bent, which was based upon an absolute.

She went the route and had her fling, laughing at old fuddy-duddies who still talked about such things as faith and hope, as if they were real. Drinking, gambling, toying with sex and using her body like a passport to the dream world of popularity, she came to the end of life’s alley. And it was bricked up and she was walled in. Jilted by the man who had impregnated her, disillusioned, bitter, helpless and hopeless, sick and vomiting, she decided to end it all.

But she decided while her eyes were red with weeping and the sobs were catching in her throat, that she would call and confess she had been wrong and now it was too late. She then expected to gulp down a handful of “goodnight” capsules and go the way of all flesh. But I convinced her that man’s extremity was God’s opportunity, and prayed for her over the telephone, talking to God for her while she listened. She is now back in the fold. She came in out of the cold. Here’s a brief quote from one of her letters:

“I’m home again, home with God and the angels, with the Spirit in my soul and heaven in my heart. I’m home with my parents, with Dad and Mother, and it is wonderful to have peace and a clear conscience from God’s forgiveness.” She is right, so right, and I am glad that she found the way home through the Spirit! Home is where the heart is!

5. The Spirit of Adoption

“For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live” (Romans 8:13).

I know a man who is on “Skid Row.” He is *unkempt*, unshaven and filthy. The cast-off clothes, which he wears, hang loosely upon his gaunt frame. His sockless feet can be seen through the holes in his worn shoes. He is a “wino,” a human derelict cast up like a piece of driftwood on the littered beach, which is a city street. Each evening at dusk he shuffles into Lighthouse Mission and sits stolidly through a religious service so that he will be entitled to the bowl of steaming stew and the mug of hot coffee. If he has the thirty-five cents, panhandled from passersby earlier in the day, he pays it for a place to “flop” and sleeps in a stupor, oblivious to the groans and snores and sodden curses of the roomful of men who often snarl at one another like so many caged beasts.

The man was not always thus. I knew him in better times. In fact I baptized him many years ago. He was one of a number of people whom I led out into a clear Ozark stream one Sunday afternoon for the purpose of immersing them into Christ. It was at a spot of such natural beauty that the angels must have smiled upon it. I heard of him again when I got a letter from his anguished parents telling me he had run away from home in a violent rage when they had tried to thwart some of his wild tendencies. They wanted me to find him and talk with him. I did so. He seemed to respect me – in a detached sort of way, but he told me he was going to have his fling and he did not want anyone standing in his path.

I went to see him later when he was in jail. He was ashamed and he could not understand why I would come. He told me he was not in my class and that I should not waste my time on people like himself. I pointed out that we were two sinners talking together and that both of us were in need of God’s mercy, and neither of us had anything to brag about. I asked him if I could pray with him, and although it embarrassed him, he replied, “I guess so.” But before I prayed he said, “It won’t do any good. I’ve tried and I haven’t got what it takes. I’m too weak. You might as well forget me and let me go to hell!”

It was by sheer accident I saw him again. I parked close to a liquor store downtown and I saw him coming out. I hardly recognized him. He was bleary-eyed and had a raw inflamed cut on his face where he had fallen and struck his cheekbone on a rock. He had a bottle of the cheapest wine and he was fumbling with it trying to open it. I stepped in front of him and he shuffled to a halt. I said, “Do you remember me?” He shook his head in negation. I said softly, “Do you recall when I baptized you in the creek down home one Sunday afternoon?” For a moment it appeared that he would strike me or shove me out of his way. Then he turned and walked away. He did not look back and he said no word.

I have often wondered if it could have been different. When I baptized him I knew little about the Holy Spirit. I was concerned about getting people into “the right church” and having them go where the correct slant of doctrine was taught. I wanted them to be sheltered under an umbrella where the issues, which seemed of such tremendous importance to us, were emphasized always. I think now, although the thought is abhorrent to me, that baptism may have been an end, instead of a means. I am persuaded that all too often converts were so many “scalps” to dangle from the poles of our factional tepees. We were interested in getting people into the water. We may have thought that mere performance of an act automatically brought them into a vital relationship with Christ Jesus.

I am not sure that we talked a great deal about mercy, loving-kindness and grace. To us grace had but one office to perform, the writing and imposition of another legal code, the least infraction of which would damn us. Certainly, as I look back on the meetings, which I conducted, I have little recollection of delivering messages about the empowering of the Holy Spirit from within. So those who “came forward during the invitation hymn” were left to go it alone in an unfriendly world, still beset by the same desires, drives, urgings and fleshly compulsions as before.

We gave them a sense of forgiveness for their past transgressions and they often wept in the knowledge that the old things had passed away. But it was not true that all things had become new. Some things became new. They had a new set of duties. They had to “attend church” three times per week. They had to give money into the treasury on Sunday so the church could “get the glory.” They had new people to whom they had to be hostile, friends and neighbors who went where they had instrumental music or opposed Sunday Schools. Before they became identified with “the loyal church” they could attend meetings with any of these, but now that they had been made free by the blood of Christ they must show their “loyalty to the church” by spurning invitations, which others mailed to them.

We created conformists but they were void of life. They were puppets, who acted when we pulled the strings. They responded automatically, like a congregational machine. If one objected to our procedure, or questioned our right to prescribe life like a factory schedule, we circulated word around that he would have to be watched. He was a potential troublemaker. If he insisted on thinking for himself we charged him with “rebellious against the elders,” some of whom never had an original thought in their lives. Then we withdrew from him. This made it scriptural to ignore him and insult him, to treat him like “a heathen man and a publican.”

We left people empty. There was an inner void, a vacuum, a secret chamber created for the Spirit of God to occupy, to fill with divine love, to flood with power. Unoccupied, it became a dark dungeon of futility and despair. The black bats of doubt flew in and out. Dusty cobwebs of moral weakness, woven by poisonous spiders of suggestion, hung from the rafters of the soul, filtering out the gentle sunlight of divine concern. And a spirit of languor and lassitude made the muscles of the inner man flabby. He became unable to resist the whispering of the demons, the burning desires, the flaming darts of the wicked one. The shield of faith lay rusting on the floor of life’s closet, buried beneath the soiled

clothing flung off in moments of remorse created by times of indulgence in gray yesterdays which were all alike, times of battles halfheartedly fought and always lost.

“I’ve tried and I haven’t got what it takes. I’m too weak. You might as well forget me and let me go to hell!” He was staring at me through bars when he said this. His face was puffed and bloated. He was not at all the same fresh-faced country lad who took his turn and waded out to where I was braced in the swirling waters of a stream so clear that I could see the darting minnows as I gently laid him back and buried him in the liquid sepulcher. That day he was not thinking of going to hell. He was starting on the road to heaven. He was strong in determination and resolute in his promise to God.

But I knew little to tell him about the Spirit who would come in and help in time of need when the adversary was pressing hard and the going was rough. Even when I visited him in jail, I was still trying to encourage him to reform on his own, to lead a better life, and to behave differently. So I wonder what might have happened if I would have told him at the beginning how we can become more than conquerors through that inner power which is a blessed gift from above. It might not have made any difference, but I wish I had known.

If you live a certain life you will die. If you die a certain death you will live. That is what Paul is saying. If you live on the lower plane of your natural life, down on the ground level, the end is death. Sometimes it is a living death, agonizing and drawn out like that of the one whom I have described. It is possible to walk around dead. The world is a living charnel house, a place of ghosts and corpses, masquerading as men. But they are dead – dead in trespasses and sins.

The road to life lies in the mortification of the deeds of the body, that is, the flesh. We sometimes use the word mortify as a symbol of embarrassment or shame. We say that a person was mortified by his mistakes. But Paul is not talking about that. The word means to kill, to visit death upon. To mortify is to put to death, and one can kill the deeds of the flesh only through the assistance of the indwelling Spirit. The *New English Version* has “base pursuits” for “deeds of the body.” That seems like a good translation. In any event, we cannot maintain the works of the flesh. The spirit of carnality must die if Christ rules!

SONS OF GOD

“For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God” (Romans 8:14).

The original for led is *ago*, and there are two things that may be said of its usage in the new covenant scriptures. First, it generally applies to persons, and has to do with their motivation to go in a certain direction or to accomplish a certain thing. Second, it implies willingness and cooperation on the part of those who are led. The leading is not by force. It is not against the will.

To be led by the Spirit is to surrender to the influence and guidance of the Spirit, that is, to walk after the Spirit, as previously indicated. This is a proof of divine sonship. Only sons of God will be led by the Spirit, and thus, when one is so led it is indicative of his personal relationship with God. This is quite different than the measuring-rods employed by men.

Jesus placed the term “son of God” on a higher moral plane than a mere tie of relationship with the Father. There are certain characteristics stated as conditions. For example, only peacemakers can be truly regarded as children of God (Matthew 5:9). If one belongs to a religious organization and has a good knowledge of scripture, yet is guilty of sowing discord among brethren, or of refusing to labor for peace, he cannot be called a child of God. True children of God wage peace as actively as others wage war.

Again, Jesus postulates love, even for those who despitely use you and are enemies, as the criterion of sonship. He says, “Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father which is in heaven.” It is our contention that this love is a fruit of the Spirit. It is shed abroad in our hearts by the Spirit. It is at once obvious that sons of God must be led, directed, motivated by, and filled with the Spirit of God.

SLAVES AND CHILDREN

“For you did not receive the spirit of slavery, to relapse into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption, enabling you to cry out, ‘Abba, Father!’ And the Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs, heirs of God, and fellow heirs with Christ, provided that we suffer with him in order that we may be also glorified with him.” (Romans 8:15-17).

It is difficult to understand the spiritual implications of a term if one is not familiar with its natural relationships. In our culture, “the spirit of slavery” may be passed over lightly by a modern reader. We have never experienced the agony of physical slavery and cannot fully appreciate “the spirit of slavery” as applied to sin. On the contrary, we may regard the life of sin as a pleasant time of indulgence, which we are called upon to give up or “sacrifice” for Jesus Christ. Thus, the life in Christ is actually regarded as a bondage to which we surrender ourselves, more or less reluctantly, in order to secure a reward.

This was not the case with the citizens of Rome. One writer of note says, “The epoch which witnessed the early growth of Christianity was an epoch of which the horror and degradation have rarely been equaled, and perhaps never exceeded, in the annals of mankind.” Of the state of things in Rome at this time. Canon Farrar writes, “At the lowest extreme of the social scale were millions of slaves without family, without religion, without possessions, who had no recognized rights, and towards whom none had any recognized duties, passing normally from a childhood of degradation to a manhood of hardship, and an old age of unpitied neglect.”

The French historian Du Page declares that it can be fairly well authenticated that there were sixty million slaves in the Roman Empire when the gospel was first proclaimed. We are indebted to Cornelius Tacitus, the Roman historian who was born the year Paul began his third preaching tour, for the information that the slaves were so numerous that they were divided and registered according to their nationalities. And Seneca, the philosopher, who was the brother of Gallic before whom Paul was brought

(Acts 18:12), writes that every slave was under a constant cloud of suspicion as a potential enemy.

To illustrate the fear, which was associated with slavery, I need mention only one incident recorded by Tacitus. The Roman Senate was debating the murder of Pedanius Secundus by one of his slaves. C. Cassius Longinus arose and gravely argued for enforcement of the Silanian law, which made it mandatory to kill all of the slaves owned by a master who was murdered. One after another of the senators came to the rostrum and cast their votes for this sanguinary law. When it is remembered that such masters often owned hundreds of slaves and that these were in constant jeopardy by the act of one hot-head or brutal criminal, it can be seen how cheaply life was regarded by the patricians or ruling classes.

The citizens of Rome could make an immediate application of Paul's statement to the fear of slavery and degradation of sin. The fact is that his letter to the Romans was written just the year before the meeting of the Senate described by Tacitus. There was nothing glamorous about slavery. Slaves were sustained only by the faint hope of some day being free, or by the certain hope of death. And while we are a long way from the conditions, which then obtained we can still offer a few suggestions about "the spirit of slavery" to sin from which we have been set free by the grace of God. Praise His holy name!

1. Slavery to sin destroys human dignity, reducing one to the animal level and making him a victim of passion and inordinate desire. Peter writes, "But these men, with no more sense than the unreasoning brute beasts which are born to be caught and killed, scoff at things outside their own experience, and will most certainly be destroyed in their own corruption."

2. Slavery to sin demands all of our powers and resources and places every faculty under tribute. When sin reigns in our mortal bodies it exacts obedience to the body's desires. It forces us to put all of our parts at its disposal as instruments for wrongdoing (Romans 6: 12, 13).

3. Slavery to sin reduces us to abject servitude and then pays off with death. "When you were slaves of sin you were free from the control of righteousness; and what was the gain? Nothing but what now makes you ashamed, for the end of that is death" (Romans 6:20, 21).

4. Slavery to sin brings only misery and despair. "We know that the law is spiritual, but I am not; I am unspiritual, the purchased slave of sin...Miserable creature that I am, who is there to rescue me out of this body doomed to death?" (Romans 7:14,24).

5. Slavery to sin forces its captives to breathe the polluted and poisonous atmosphere of fear. They are all of their lifetime subject to bondage through fear of death (Hebrews 2: 15), and fear brings with it the fear of judgment (1 John 4:18).

Against the frightful state conjured up in the mind at mention of "the spirit of slavery" is brought to bear another term "the spirit of adoption." No more significant expression could be used to indicate a complete transformation in the Roman mind. From slavery to adoption would be like a Horatio Alger book "From Rags to Riches." Only if we understand the legal adoptive process can we ever grasp what the apostle is really saying.

Fortunately, there has been preserved in Roman annals and laws a great mass of material related to the adoption process which was a very serious business in Rome. I trust that you will forgive me if I present to you the fruit of my own research and study for which I am indebted to many sources.

Notice my use of the expression “very serious business” with reference to Roman adoptive procedures. It was made especially serious because of the law called *patria potestas*. This was the law which gave a father absolute authority over his offspring so long as they lived. It conferred upon the father the right to punish a son regardless of the age of that son. He could kill his son and no one could lift a finger against him. Gains, a respected interpreter of Roman jurisprudence said, “The right of dominion which we have over our children is peculiar to the citizens of Rome, nor is there any race of men who have a dominion over their children similar to ours.”

In 450 B. C., there was a revolt of the *plebs*, or common people, against the patricians. It was alleged that the latter abused the unwritten law and took advantage of the former, denying them their civil rights. The magistrates, in order to avoid a revolution, were commissioned to draw up a code, which they did, inscribing it upon ten tablets, which were accepted by the popular assembly. Later two more tablets were added to make the great body of laws known as *Lex Duodecim Tabularium*, the law of the twelve tablets. The laws were enshrined in the forum and became the supreme law of the land.

The *patria potestas* stemmed from the second stipulation of the fourth tablet which provided for “the control of the father over his children, the right existing during their whole life to imprison, scourge, keep to rustic labor in chains, to sell or slay, even though they may be in enjoyment of high state offices.” A son could not own a foot of land in his own name while his father lived.

I do not want to bore you with details, but we must try and catch the atmosphere in Rome when Paul wrote to the Romans of slavery and adoption. In order to do this I want to insert a quotation from Dionysius of Halicarnassus. His testimony is especially valuable because he was a Greek historian living in Rome at the very time when Augustus issued his decree for the whole Roman Empire to enroll in the census for taxation purposes. Dionysius wrote *Roman Antiquities*, a history of his adopted city from its inception to the year 264 B. C., in twenty volumes. Nine of these have been preserved in their entirety, and in one of them is this description of the *patria potestas*.

“The law-giver of the Romans gave virtually full power to the father over his son, whether he thought proper to imprison him, to scourge him, to put him in chains, and keep him at work in the fields, or to put him to death; and this even though the son were already engaged in public affairs, though he were numbered among the highest magistrates, and though he were celebrated for his zeal for the commonwealth. Indeed in virtue of this law men of distinction while delivering speeches from the rostra, hostile to the senate and pleasing to the people, and enjoying great popularity on that account, have been dragged down from thence, and carried away by their fathers, to undergo such punishment as these thought fit; and while they were being led away through the forum, none present, neither consul, tribune, nor the very populace which was flattering them, and thought all power inferior to its own, could rescue them.”

Adoption involved the transfer of a person from the absolute control of his whole life by one man to the absolute control of his life by another. There had to be a complete surrender of the power of life and death by one and a complete assumption of that power by another. So drastic was this change that the one who was transferred to another *patria potestas*, was looked upon as a wholly new creature. He was said to be born again, or born anew. A whole new existence for him began on the day that the transfer of allegiance was ratified. Never again would he be subject in any sense to his former relationship. It was as if he had literally died to his past.

THE ADOPTIVE CEREMONY

The ceremony of adoption was very exacting. It was always public and required at least five witnesses. There were two parts to it. The first was called *mancipatio*. From this we get our word emancipate, which means to transfer ownership. It derives from *manus*, hand; and *capere*, to take. In a sale, an article was taken in hand by a new owner. In *mancipatio*, the father, the child, and the prospective father, took their places upon the dais in the forum, with five witnesses. One of these, called the *libripens* (scales bearer) held a pair of balances in one hand and a short brass rod in the other.

The prospective father said, "This day I purchase your son for my own." He then placed a coin in one pan of the balance. The father placed the son's hand in the other pan, but before the sale could be completed he removed the boy's hand, and the other removed his coin. This identical procedure was again enacted. But the third time the father did not remove the hand of the son. The scales were struck with the brass rod as a sign that the sale was completed. The coin was given to the boy as a sign that he would inherit from the new father. It was a seal of his relationship. Even to this day we say, "The third time is the charm."

There remained one more step called *vindicatio*. In Roman law this meant to affirm and assert one's legal right to a thing. The new father took the adopted son to a magistrate and had his new name properly inscribed in the census tables and the right of *patria potestas*, of life and death, passed into his hands. All of this is most interesting to me, but it is secondary to the purpose of the apostle. His primary desire is to impress upon the Romans the great blessings, which accrue to us in Christ.

Let us point out then the privileges that were bestowed by adoption in Rome. (1) The one adopted was ushered into a whole new family relationship, with a new father and new brothers and sisters, and this was the direct result of the father's choice. He was a chosen one, an elected person. The very word "adoption" means to choose, as our word *option* indicates. (2) The one adopted was given a new name clearly indicative of a new relationship. (3) He was permitted to eat at the father's table, a privilege never accorded slaves. In the Greek world such eating together was an expression of *koinonia*, fellowship, the sharing of the common life of the father and family. (4) He became heir of the estate of the father. If there was an elder brother, he became a joint-heir with him. He shared in both the vicissitudes and rewards, which were the lot of the family, for this was part of "the common life," the fellowship.

(5) When one was adopted by Roman law his past life was literally blotted out. It was removed from the roster of citizenship. All debts were cancelled, all obligations deleted. The adopted person began a new life with the slate wiped clean. Even his education began anew, and Cicero said its aim was to produce “self-control, combined with dutiful affection to parents, and kindness to kindred.”

Paul speaks of the Spirit in connection with the cry “Abba, Father.” There are two passages in which this expression occurs. In Romans 8:15 the Spirit enables us to say these words. In Galatians 4:6 it is the Spirit, which does the crying out. In both cases our divine sonship is under consideration. We are adopted, that is given the place of a son. Adoption is from *huiiothesis*, to place as a son. Because we are inducted into the glorious family we are able to cry “Abba, Father.” That is, we are able, through the Spirit, to recognize our real relationship to Christ.

There is more to it than this. The word *abba* could not have been translated “father.” It is an Aramaic word, and was the first expression of a little child in the East. In our country little children say “Da-da” or “Pa-pa” and we must transliterate with “Daddy” and “Papa” to indicate that these are the simple, unaffected, and spontaneous expressions of love in early life. It would not capture this meaning to translate by supplying the word “father.”

Paul well knew that the Jews had a strict law forbidding a slave to use the word “abba” in addressing a master or the head of a household. So when he wants to show that we are sons, not slaves, he makes it clear that the indwelling Spirit identifies us as children of God and makes it possible for us to speak to the Father in a fashion that slaves were not allowed to use. And so close is the union between the Holy Spirit and my own spirit that it cannot be distinguished from the cry, which one is calling out to the Father.

THE CONFIRMING WITNESS

But the Spirit not only makes it possible for me to cry “Abba,” but also “Father.” The first is the cry of emotion and feeling, the second that of a maturing person. W. E. Vine says about the latter, “It is another mode of address. It is a relationship intelligently realized by the one who utters it, a word of filial confidence, communion, and obedience, answering to, and expressing the enjoyment of the complacent love of God the Father. The two expressions together indicate the love and intelligent trust of the child.”

We are told that “the Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ.” What does this tremendous statement mean? Remember that Paul is contrasting the servile state of slavery with the superb experience of sonship. We described for you the public ceremony of adoption. The sale of a slave had many of the same aspects. It also was in the presence of witnesses and involved a pair of balances and a deposit of money in one of the pans of the balance.

Suppose that the father of an adopted child died and the natural sons hated the one who was adopted and wanted to debar him from his inheritance. They could claim that he was never adopted at all but simply purchased as a slave. The adopted son would have to

bring a witness to corroborate his own testimony. If he could find the *librepens*, the scales-bearer, that one could say, "I know he is a son because I was the one who struck the brass ingot and sealed the transaction."

The Holy Spirit is in me for that very purpose. He is a seal of my redemption. "And if you and we belong to Christ, guaranteed as his and anointed, it is all God's doing; it is God also who hath set his seal upon us, and as a pledge of what is to come has given the Spirit to dwell in our hearts" (2 Cor. 1:22).

The indwelling Spirit is God's guarantee that I am going to inherit every provision of grace. I am not a slave. I am a son. My spirit testifies of this. The Holy Spirit testifies the same. I am even a joint heir with Christ. This establishes the quality of our sonship. Whatever is the lot of Jesus is to be my lot. We are "sharers together" with all that sonship involves. This is the thing to which the Spirit witnesses. I hope that you will forgive me for a lengthy quote, which I am going to insert here. I want to share it with all of you. It is found in *The Local Colour of the Bible*, by Charles W. Budden and Edward Hastings (Vol. 3, pages 275-277).

"St. Paul is the only one of the New Testament writers to use the term 'adoption.' This is not surprising, because adoption was not a custom among the Jews, and, in a legal sense, was absolutely unknown. On the other hand, the custom was a common one among the Greeks and Romans, and as a Roman citizen Paul was familiar with it and with the legal ceremonies which belonged to it.

Under Roman law an entire stranger by blood might be adopted into a family and become a member of that family, holding the same position in it as a son born in marriage. According to Dr. Ball, he even became a member of the family in a higher sense than some who had the family blood in their veins, than emancipated sons or descendants through females. He assumed the family name, and took part in its mystic sacrificial rites. He could not any more marry in the family of his adoption within the prohibited degrees than those related by blood. He severed his connections completely with his former family, and in the eyes of the law he became so entirely a new personality that even his debts were cancelled.

Let us look at the process. In the presence of five witnesses and the *libripens* (one who held the balances, as if to weight out money, at nominal sales), the son about to be adopted was sold three times by his father. According to the law of the Twelve Tables, if a father sold his son thrice he lost his paternal rights over him (*patria potestas*). A fictitious lawsuit then followed, by which the person to be adopted was surrendered to the adopter, and the act was ratified in a set form of words.

As the form of adoption and that of sale into slavery were very similar, the presence of witnesses was essential to testify to the real nature of the ceremony. That is why the Apostle says, "Ye received not the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, 'Abba, Father.' Suppose that the adopter has died and that the adopted son lays claim to the inheritance. His claim is refused; his status as a son is denied; it is declared that he was sold as a

slave and that he has no legal right to the inheritance. So the son seeks the aid of the law-court. 'No,' he pleads, 'the ceremony was that of adoption, the deceased claimed me by the name of son. He took me to his home. I called him father and he allowed it...I sat at his table where the slaves never sat. He told me the inheritance was mine.' But the law requires corroborative evidence. One of the witnesses is called. 'I was present,' he says, 'at the ceremony. It was I who held the scales and struck them with the ingot of brass. The transaction was not a sale into slavery. It was an adoption. I heard the words of vindication, and I say this person was claimed by the deceased not as a slave, but as a son.'

And who is the witness to that spiritual adoption which makes us sons of God? It is the Third Person of the Trinity. 'the Spirit himself beareth witness (along) with our spirit, that we are children of God.' (End of quotation).

CONDITION OF GLORIFICATION

I have just finished reading again the story of the persecution and death of Rawlins White, as described in detail by his friend, John Dane, who was almost constantly with him until he died at the stake, at Cardiff, Wales, in March of 1555. Dane actually held the hand of the dying martyr "till the flame of the fire rose and forced them to sunder" as he puts it.

Rawlins White was a fisherman at Cardiff for twenty years. During the reign of Henry the Eighth he was an ardent partaker of the superstition and idolatry of Catholicism, but when the accession of Edward the Sixth made possible the proclamation of the gospel again, he "began partly to dislike that which before he had embraced, and to have good opinion of that which before, by the iniquity of the time, had been concealed from him." Dane writes, "He began to be a diligent hearer, and a great searcher-out of the truth."

However, White was ignorant and unlearned. He had to have help, so he took his little son and started him to school to learn to read English. "Now after the little boy could read indifferently well, his father every night after supper, summer and winter, would have the boy read a piece of the holy Scripture, and now and then, of some other good book; in which kind of virtuous exercise the old man had such a delight and pleasure." Dane further says, "Within a few years, through the help of his little son, and through much conference besides, he profited and went forward in such sort, that he was able not only to resolve himself touching his own former blindness and ignorance, but was also able to admonish and instruct others, and therefore, when occasion served, he would go from one place to another, visiting such as he had best hope in."

I like this statement, which follows. "And to this his great industry and endeavor in the Holy Scripture, God did also add to him a singular gift of memory, so that by the benefit thereof he would and could do that, in vouching and rehearsing of the text, which men of riper and more profound knowledge, by their notes and other helps of memory, could very hardly accomplish; insomuch that he, upon alleging of Scripture very often would cite the book, the leaf, yea and the very sentence; such was the working of God in this simple and unlearned man."

After traveling five years with his son, White learned that King Edward had died. Mary succeeded to the throne, motivated by a passion to ruthlessly stamp out all opposition to Catholicism. White testified even more diligently of the grace of God and converted many. His friends sought to have him desist, but he refused saying, "I will, by his favourable grace, confess and bear witness of him before men, that I may find in him everlasting life. I must suffer with him here if I would be in his glory."

Finally he was arrested and charged with heresy before the bishop of Llandaff. He was committed to the castle of Cardiff for a year, during which John Dane often visited him, taking him money and food prepared by his (Dane's) mother. At the end of the year he was summoned for trial before the bishop, who accused him in a diatribe about his "obstinate and wilful opinions" for several hours. After listening quietly to the end. White replied, "My lord, I thank God I am a Christian man, and I hold no opinions contrary to the word of God: and if I do, I desire to be reformed out of the word of God, as a Christian man ought to be."

Dane quotes, "From thence he was, by the bishop's commandment, carried again to Cardiff, there to be put into the prison of the town, called Cockmare; a very dark, loathsome and most vile prison. Rawlins in the meantime passed away his time in prayer, and chiefly in singing of psalms, which kind of godly exercise he always used, both at Cardiff castle and in all other places." While in prison, his writ of execution on the charge of heresy, was read to him. It was to be "speedily carried out."

On the day before he was to die he sent a messenger to his wife requesting her to send him a long white shirt, which he called his "wedding garment." Attired in it, he was taken from prison the next morning. Dane records, "So he came to a place in his way, where his poor wife and children stood weeping and making great lamentation; the sudden sight of whom so pierced his heart that the very tears trickled down his face." When he saw the stake and the wood piled near, he fell down upon his knees, and kissed the ground, saying, "Earth unto earth, and dust unto dust: thou art my mother, and unto thee I shall return."

Arising, he went boldly to the stake, and a blacksmith fastened a huge chain of iron about his body. As the officers began to lay the wood mixed with straw and reeds about him, he reached out as far as he could and gathered the straw and reeds and tucked them in closer about his body. He was forced to listen to a harangue on the authority of Rome given by a priest. He gave such good attention that all were astonished at his composure. When the fire was kindled he held his hands in the intense flame and watched the sinews shrink and the fat drop away. He continued to cry out, "O Lord, receive my spirit!" until his mouth would no longer open.

The recorder ends his account with these words, "Thus died this godly man for the testimony of God's truth, being now rewarded, no doubt, with the crown of everlasting life." Fifty-six years later the version of the scriptures authorized by King James was first printed and given to the world. Really, this is not quite all. I want to add that I expect to meet Rawlins White. I would like to tell this simple man what an influence his life and death have had on me.

The apostle writes that we are joint-heirs with Christ “if so be that we suffer with him that we may be glorified together.” He personally rejoiced in his sufferings for the saints and longed to fill up that which was behind in the afflictions of Christ in his own flesh. I do not expect ever to be called upon to suffer as did Rawlins White, who was just my age when he met Jesus in the burning bush of his own body. But whatever it is my lot to share with Jesus, I want to be strong enough to “go forth unto him without the gate, bearing his reproach.”

I want that power of the Spirit, which will flood my soul with such unquenchable love for my enemies that I can pray for them in spite of taunts and false accusations. When reviled I want to bless and not revile again. I want that fierce courage, which can make me smile and thank God when I am accused and branded as a heretic or an apostate by those who cannot read my heart but would play God with my life.

May the blessed Spirit grant to me that same patience which sustained others in dark dungeons and vile prisons and made it possible for their tongues to form the words and sounds of hymns of praise. God help me to overcome the temptation to feel self-pity when it seems that I am deserted and must stumble along lonely in the darkness.

May I have that greater love for Christ, which will impel me on to my destiny with him, though I see my wife, my children and my grandchildren, weeping and lamenting at the crossroads. And although I taste the brine of my own tears, and see dimly through the misty curtain of my own sorrow, let me not turn back from following the Galilean carpenter, to cling even to those who are the very substance of my earthly dreams.

May I be able to walk boldly to whatever my stake may be. There are many kinds of stakes. There are many kinds of fires. Sometimes the literal stake is easier to embrace than the mental. There are chains, which cannot be formed on an anvil by a blacksmith with clang of hammer – fetters of hate and hostility, which bind you while others burn you. I want to be bold enough not to shrink from either heated metal or white-hot words of wrath, which sear the soul.

I want to be forgiven for the time wasted in trivialities, debating those senseless and foolish issues, which cannot matter in eternity. I want to purge my very consciousness of those molehills elevated into mountains by the partisan and factional spirit. I want to scale the far-off peaks and not wallow forever on the low ground where men wade through the miasmatic swamps of their own stagnant minds and fever-ridden hearts. How weak I am! How unworthy to be an heir of God! How unworthy to be a joint-heir with Christ, my redeemer! But what triumphant reassurance I find in the blessed words, “My grace is all you need; power comes to its full strength in weakness.” I want to be able to say, “I shall therefore prefer to find my joy and pride in the very things that are my weakness; and then the power of Christ will come and rest upon me” (2 Corinthians 12:9).

“The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, my brothers. Amen” (Galatians 6:18).

6. A Universe on Tiptoe

“For I reckon that the sufferings we now endure bear no comparison with the splendor, as yet unrevealed, which is in store for us” (Romans 8:18).

One can never explain the tremendous impact made upon the Roman world by the good news concerning Jesus unless he takes into account the condition then existing in the hearts of those who composed the Empire. And no word better describes that condition than *hopelessness*. The historian Freeman writes, “From Mummius to Augustus the Roman city stands as the living mistress of a dead world, and from Augustus to Theodosius the mistress becomes as lifeless as her subjects.”

A black pall of fatalism hung like a lowering cloud over the hearts of slaves, freemen and patricians. As Canon Farrar puts it, “Gluttony, caprice, extravagance, ostentation, impurity, rioted in the heart of a society which knew of no other means by which to break the monotony of its weariness, or alleviate the anguish of its despair.”

It is difficult for the student to determine whether prevailing vice struck a deathblow to religion, or whether loss of faith in the gods produced the heathen cruelty and unfathomable corruption. Sometimes cause and effect are closely interwoven. Of one thing we can be certain, and that is that when the restraints of religion were most needed they were not apparent and undisciplined hearts were left to grope unhindered in the stinking muck of unbridled licentiousness and degradation.

The historian writes, “The upper classes were destitute of faith, yet terrified at skepticism. They had long learnt to treat the current mythology as a mass of worthless fables, scarcely amusing enough for even a schoolboy’s laughter, but they were the ready dupes of every wandering quack...The mass of the populace either accorded to the old beliefs a nominal adherence which saved them of giving any thought to the matter, and reduced their creed and their morals to a survival of national habits, or else they plunged with eager curiosity into the crowd of foreign cults.”

Many of the intellectuals espoused the Stoic philosophy which was derived from that of the Cynics, and was established at Athens by Zeno about 300 B.C. His most famous pupil was Cleanthes of Assos, from whose *Hymn to Zeus*, Paul quotes in Acts 17:28. Among the famous Romans who later adopted this philosophy, our readers will probably recognize the names of Cato the Younger, Seneca, Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius. Now read this historical quotation.

“But the Stoicism on which they leaned for support amid the terrors and temptations of that awful epoch utterly failed to provide a remedy against the universal degradation. It aimed at cherishing an insensibility which gave no real comfort, and for which it offered no adequate motive. It aimed at repressing the passions by a violence so unnatural that with them it also crushed some of the gentlest and most elevating emotions...It made a vice of compassion which Christianity inculcated as a virtue; it cherished a haughtiness which Christianity discouraged as a sin...Its marked characteristic was a despairing sadness, which became specially prominent in its most sincere adherents. Its favorite

theme was the glorification of suicide, which wiser moralists had severely reprobated, but which many Stoics belauded as the one sure refuge against oppression and outrage. It was a philosophy which was indeed able to lacerate the heart with a righteous indignation against the crimes and follies of mankind, but which vainly strove to resist, and which scarcely even hoped to stem, the ever-swelling tide of vice and misery. For wretchedness it had no pity; on vice it looked with impotent disdain.”

Both Zeno and Cleanthes committed suicide, and one historian informs us that by the time of Trajan, who became emperor shortly after the death of John, the apostle, suicide had become a “national usage.” One of the remarkable things noted in the Roman writings of that day is the great variety of Latin phrases for suicide, indicative of the frequency of the crime. The way of life had become the way of death in Rome. Men mused by day and night on how to “end it all.”

It was to those living in such an atmosphere of crushing sorrow and complete despair that Paul wrote this one great chapter. In doing so he met the problem of human suffering and gave the answer to it. God had invaded the earth in the person of a Son to share our lot. He suffered in all areas of life as we suffer. By his identification with us he made it possible for us to also be partaker of his “all things,” as he partook of our “all things.” And this includes his eternal splendor. All that goes with the life of God is mine. I am an heir of glory!

In the flesh I cannot grasp all that is involved in everlasting splendor. I am caught up in the human predicament. I am inhibited while in the body by a time-space sequence. In such a state the glory cannot be revealed. But I can be sure of one thing. Temporal suffering (sharing with the Son on earth), is not to be compared with the splendor (sharing with the Son in the glorified body). There is something else, something outside, something beyond. The drawn curtains will not open on oblivion, but upon splendor. I shall come into my own.

No wonder this concept swept the tired, weary, jaded and despairing hearts of the Roman Empire. It will also revive the “unlaughing generation” of our own time. Never in recent centuries have the eyes of the young been so listless and staring, never have their countenances been so blank, as of late. This is the effect of a neo-pagan culture, of a meaningless treadmill existence, of a worship of false gods, which have again proven to be vanities. Once again it is either the Spirit or suicide. Either the Light must come in or men will go out like lights. Ancient Rome has been re-incarnated in our western world. Once more the Letter to the Romans is as fresh as the morning newspaper. It is God’s Life and Time issued in one cover.

“For the created universe waits with eager expectations for God’s sons to be revealed” (Romans 8:19).

This is a concept so vast and profound that it completely overshadows the sufferings of this present life. Not only will the sons of God march in the great triumphal procession of the redeemed, but the entire universe is involved and is eagerly awaiting this tremendous event. It will signal the culmination of God's magnificent plan of the ages.

The original term for “eager expectation” is one, which literally means to stretch out the neck in an attempt to see. J. B. Phillips translates it to read that creation is “standing on tiptoe,” looking down the road and waiting for the appearance of the glorified host.

I never read this without remembering the coming to town of the circus when I was a little lad. In those days the performers always staged a parade to the big top. Everyone for miles around gathered along the route. The air was vibrant with expectancy. I would stand on tiptoe, craning my neck and looking for the appearance of the first unit, the resplendent bandwagon. Finally, in the distance could be heard the strains of marching music. A great cry went up, “Here they come,” and we stood in awe as one colorful contingent after another went by.

The Romans knew what was meant by a triumphal procession. They had witnessed the return of famous generals, heading great armies, which took hours to pass a given point. They had listened to the accolades accorded in the forum, and seen the honors heaped upon the victors who had overcome the hardships of the battle.

Now the apostle portrays Jesus coming as a conquering hero, the super-star of all time, leading the long line of saints. He rides a white horse. His eyes flame like fire. On his head are many diadems. On his robe and on his leg are written the name, “King of kings and Lord of lords.” Stretching far off to mingle with the blue haze crowning the mountains of infinity are the armies of heaven, following on white horses, clothed in fine linen, clean and shining. They come from every nation, language, tongue and people.

Suddenly every created thing in the universe – in heaven, on earth, and under the earth, all that is in them – bursts into a great cry, “Praise and honor, glory and might, to him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb for ever and ever” (Revelations 5:13). I am going to be there. I am going to join in the shout. And when the sons of God come into their own, the entire universe will share in their ultimate and glorious destiny. What a scene! What a triumph!

“It was made the victim of frustration, not by its own choice, but because of him who made it so; yet always there was hope, because the universe itself is to be freed from the shackles of mortality and enter upon the liberty and splendor of the children of God”
(Romans 8:20, 21).

Every phrase in this quotation is a thrill to my heart. The created universe is the victim of frustration. The root word is the Latin *frustra*, in vain. That is why the King James Version renders it “subject to vanity.” Man was made to be the ruler of the material universe. When he sinned, the dominion over which he held sway became the victim of his dereliction. Its original purpose was thwarted and defeated.

Man fell by his own choice. As a rational being he made a decision, and his guilt demanded just punishment. But the realm of nature had no choice. The ground was cursed *for man’s sake*. Thorns and thistles were borne profusely in contravention to the original design of producing useful herbs and fruits.

The creator found it necessary to deflect the universe from its pristine purity out of love for man. Instead of a relationship of joy in a synchronized system, it was said that

man should eat the produce of the earth in sorrow all the days of his life. No longer would the earth sustain man upon it. Now it would open up its jaws to swallow him from sight. The decomposition of his frame would feed the crawling skin worms. His dust would mingle with the elements of the earth. Far from being a realm of beauty the earth would become a vast charnel house, polluted with the vapors and stench from decaying matter.

The decision to thus subject the earth to a perverted purpose so that sinful man might live upon it until the ravages of death claimed him was made by God. But it was for a limited time. When man was redeemed from corruption the earth would be also. When man was given a new body there would be a new earth. And there would be no more curse. Neither could sin or anything that defiles ever enter.

Always there has been hope. The curse of the created world was co-extensive with the curse upon man. The hope of the universe is identified with the hope of man. Man will be freed from the shackles of mortality by the resurrection from the dead, the great revival; or by the Magnificent Change, the Triumphant Transfiguration. But just as sinful man could not live in a sinless state, so sinless man cannot reside in a sinful and accursed domain. Creation will share in the liberty and splendor of the children of God. We will be raised in glory although sown in humiliation, and there will be a new heaven and a new earth in which to dwell in righteousness.

“Up to the present, we know, the whole created universe groans in all its parts as if in the pangs of childbirth” (Romans 8:22).

The created universe is not a conglomeration of unrelated units or circumstances. It is so closely integrated that it can be personified and considered as a body. The sin of man could affect the whole structure and frustrate it “in all its parts.” The interrelationship of all the parts so that the universe is said to groan as one body is an argument for origin by intelligent design rather than by sheer chance.

So long as the physical body of man suffers and is tormented by pain, so long will the universe be subjected to corruption, crying out, moaning and groaning because of its ignominious state. But the pains are like those of childbirth. They betoken the advent of new life. There is a spirit of hope despite the agony. God’s purpose will be realized. Suffering is not the normal way of existence for the universe. Some day the purpose of it will be seen, exactly as in the case of childbirth.

“And not only so, but even we, who have received the Spirit as the first-fruits of God's promised inheritance, are inwardly groaning while awaiting the culmination of our adoption through the redemption of our bodies” (8:23).

Suffering is the lot of all who are in the flesh. All of creation is forced to agonize because of sin. Not only is this true of the universe as a whole, but even the children of God, while in the flesh, are not exempt. It is true that these have received the Spirit as a pledge from God that glory awaits, but the indwelling Spirit is no guarantee that they will

not suffer from maladies in the flesh. The outward man of the Christian will perish the same as that of the skeptic or unbeliever.

For this reason we cannot assume that because one suffers, he is out of harmony with God. Saints endure pain the same as other sinners. The difference lies in the fact that the latter suffer hopelessly. Their hope resides in death and not in what lies beyond. The Spirit does not prevent aging nor offset its natural twinges and discomforts, although a knowledge of the Spirit will strengthen one to endure and provide him a happier outlook on life here and hereafter.

The indwelling Spirit is a divine deposit given to us as a constant reminder that God does not forget. He will not “scrub out the mission” upon which we are dispatched from the day of our birth from above until we enter into slumber and the spirit returns to its source. There will be frustrations and distresses along the way. These link us to the created universe. But there will be an undying hope that none of this is useless. It acts to produce for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.

Our adoption is not yet completed. It involves the whole man, and the physical part has not yet been redeemed. By his death on the cross Jesus ransomed the spirit, the inner man. He purchased the body, but did not redeem it because it is mortal and therefore still subject to degeneration, decay and death. We were bought with a price. We belong to God in body and spirit. But so long as we are in the flesh we cannot inherit or possess the kingdom of God. The perishable cannot possess immortality.

Our bodies will be redeemed by the resurrection. Then we will not be in flesh and blood. God will give us a body according to his own design or choice. It will be adapted to life in an immortal and incorruptible state. Our present bodies, in which we groan, are designed for functioning in a material realm, an elemental environment. We are now awaiting our transformation. It will be a glorious release from pain and irksome toil.

The faithful child of God is destined to dwell in three states, or kingdoms. These are the kingdoms of nature, grace and eternity. Each is entered by birth, but the birth can only adapt one for the state into which it inducts him. To enter the first he is born of his mother's womb. To enter the second he must be born of the water and of the Spirit. To enter the third he must be born of the grave. All three, being a birth, involve a coming forth, but the coming forth is limited to the realm into which one is deposited.

The first birth results from generation, the second from regeneration, and the third from resurrection. In each case there is a freeing of one from the previous condition, which held him captive, a victory over that which enshrouded him. The first results in victory over the womb, the second in victory over sin, and the third in victory over mortality. When one gains the victory over sin through the blood of Christ, his adoption papers are filed. When he gains the victory over mortality they are completed. Then the saying of scripture will come true. “Death is swallowed up, victory is won.” And “as we have worn the likeness of the man made of dust, so we shall wear the likeness of the heavenly man” (1 Corinthians 15:49). Praise the Lord for such a glorious hope!

7. The Power of Hope

One of the great differences between being in Christ Jesus and being on the outside is hope. It isn't that those on the outside do not have hope for all men do. The difference lies in the varying degree of intensity. Those who know the Lord find their hope increasing as they grow older, those who do not know him find their hope waning, and frequently being supplanted by those two malign evils to personality – dread and despair.

Every rational person realizes that he is not going to get out of the human predicament alive. All of his plans for postponing the inevitable are doomed. His string is going to run out. The thread is going to be snapped. The Christian, “sustained by an unfaltering trust,” is able to “wrap the drapery of his couch about him and lie down to pleasant dreams.” Not so the one who sins away his day of grace and suddenly faces the blackness of darkness. Without hope we are of all men most miserable.

Then, what is hope? The simplest definition is that it is “a joyous anticipation of the future.” Although it is related to expectation they are not the same. One may expect bad as well as good, storm as well as sunshine. It is only when expectation is accompanied by desire that it is an ingredient of hope. We desire some things we do not expect, and expect some things we do not desire, but when we have desire and expectation in equal proportion we possess hope.

Hope is not a retreat for the cowardly or inadequate. Instead, it is a resilient and powerful quality of the soul, lingering on even when the rationalization argues that it is futile. Long after others have given up the search for one who is lost, a mother keeps the light burning in her heart, reacting inwardly to every step on the porch, and every knock on the door. Like Abraham we hope “when hope seems hopeless” (Romans 4:18).

My faith and my hope are grounded on the same foundation as the faith and hope of Abraham. It is a firm conviction of the validity of every promise of God, because “God makes the dead to live and summons things that are not yet in existence as if they already were.” The first is the ultimate in power, the second the ultimate in knowledge. God raised Jesus from the dead. So God can raise men from the dead. And he has promised me I will share in eternal life on a more magnificent scale than I can ever imagine now.

The fact is that Jesus made sense out of death by making sense out of life. By showing me how to live he taught me how to die. And the last gasp of oxygen into my collapsing lungs is of no real consequence. It is not lifting the latch that is important but what lies beyond the door. I am convinced that ineffable joy awaits in the other room. Jesus has begotten me to a living hope. “And the God of all grace, who called you into his eternal glory in Christ, will himself, after your brief suffering, restore, establish, and strengthen you on a firm foundation. He holds dominion forever and ever. Amen” (1 Peter 5:10).

Beginning with Romans 8:18, the apostle places suffering and splendor in proper perspective. Suffering is for awhile, splendor is after awhile. It is the splendor, which really counts. The whole created universe, now writhing in agony, is standing on tiptoe, looking down the long road, waiting for the spectacle of triumph when the sons of God come into their own. It is the people of God who give meaning to the whole creation.

Man was at the peak of God's creation. His fall subjected his whole domain to despair. His final victory will bring rejoicing to all. Hope is written in shining letters across the face of the whole order.

“For we have been saved; though only in hope. Now to see is no longer to hope: why should a man endure and wait for what he already sees?” (Romans 8:24).

This does not mean that hope is an agent or cause of our salvation. We are not saved by hope as an operating principle. The point at issue here is that we have been saved, but there is more to come. In our flesh and blood we are not adapted for existence in a celestial realm. We have not yet shared in all to which our salvation makes us heirs. There is something for which the universe is expectant – joyfully and triumphantly expectant.

When hope becomes reality it ceases to function as hope. The sight of the goal renders hope unnecessary. The endurance test is over. The waiting period is ended. Expectancy gives way to experience, anticipation becomes enjoyment. This is the essence of the Christian life. Tears and trials today, smiles and splendor tomorrow.

“But if we hope for something we do not yet see, then, in waiting for it, we show our endurance” (Romans 8:25).

This is a confirmation of the statement in Romans 5:3-5, which says, “Let us even exult in our present sufferings, because we know that suffering trains us to endure, and endurance brings proof that we have stood the test, and this proof is the ground of hope. Such a hope is no mockery, because God's love has flooded our inmost heart through the Holy Spirit he has given us.”

Hope is validated by God's love. The heart flooded with love is the heart that can be filled with hope. It is useless to expect hope to provide its bounty when there is no love, for love is the soil in which hope grows and blossoms. The heart is merely a vase and hope is a cut flower where there is no love in which the roots may be put down.

“In the same way the Spirit comes to the aid of our weakness. We do not even know how we ought to pray, but through our inarticulate groans the Spirit himself is pleading for us, and God who searches our inmost being knows what the Spirit means, because he pleads for God's own people in God's own way” (Romans 8:26, 27).

Hope comes to our aid in counteracting despair and makes it possible for us to endure and hold on in spite of suffering. But we have another helper, for the Spirit comes to the aid of our weakness. He does so in many departments of life, one of which is mentioned, that of prayer.

We are all ignorant of many things with regard to prayer. It is far easier to theorize about prayer than it is to practice it. Often we develop stereotyped words and phrases, which we repeat monotonously and with little consciousness or real concern. Sometimes

we cannot express the real concern. Sometimes we cannot express the real burdens nor find words in which to couch our deepest longings. All of us have found occasions when we wanted to pray and could not really do so.

For just such emergencies God has given us the indwelling Spirit as an intercessor. We have only one mediator, one bridge-builder, the man Christ Jesus. But we can have many intercessors. Indeed we are all to make intercession for one another (1 Timothy 2:1). And we have two divine intercessors, one dwelling in us and the other in heaven. The Holy Spirit intercedes from within (Romans 8:26), and Jesus intercedes at God's right hand (Romans 8:34).

The Spirit translates our inward inexpressible desires into prayer, taking the intangible and inarticulate groanings of the inner man and putting them in the words of heavenly language. Thus we can be sure that we are on a direct line to the throne room in glory if we are in Christ Jesus. Let me illustrate what I mean.

I know a precious mother who could neither read nor write. She was placed at fieldwork by her immigrant father when she was a mere girl. She was denied any formal education. Later she married and bore six children whom she dearly loved. She and her husband were found by the Shepherd and entered the fold. They sought eagerly to rear their children to God's glory. With her little brood by her side she never missed a meeting of the saints, listening intently to words she could not read.

One day a message was received that her husband had been killed in an accident at work. Stunned by the tragic news she locked the door of her room and knelt down by the bedside. Later she told me that with breaking heart and gushing tears she had tried to pray but no words would come. For a long period she knelt in the glowing dusk, dumb in her anguish. Then it seemed to her that she could feel strong arms about her shaking shoulders. There stole over her an indescribable sense of inner peace. She arose from her knees ready to face life with new courage. Although she had been unable to utter a sound except her choking sobs she had the distinct feeling that she had prayed and that God had heard. Of course she was correct!

Then there was an elderly brother, confined to a nursing home where he had but little privacy. Once an elder in a rural congregation, he had faithfully served God's heritage entrusted to his care. He had prayed by the beds of the gravely ill and by the gravesides of the dead. His life had been a veritable life of prayer, daily offered to the God whom he loved. Now his mind often wandered and he lost the thread of thought completely.

When I visited him he confided to me how at night when the patients were tucked into bed, he talked to God for comfort. But he said that frequently he had a lapse of memory and could not recall what he had said. He would even fall asleep not knowing if his prayer was finished. He felt relieved when I told him that the Spirit carried his inmost secrets to the ear of God, and God understood.

I have often found relief in prayer, especially when I was in deep need of forgiveness and divine understanding. And the greatest consolation comes when I realize that all does not depend upon human vocabulary. The Spirit decodes my impulses and desires and transmits them in rational language. And God hears and grace takes over. I do not so much need to learn how to pray, as I need to learn how to trust.

God searches and penetrates the recesses of my being. He knows my every thought and intent. He also knows the mind of the Spirit. The communion between God and the Spirit is absolute. It is perfect. And the Spirit makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God. He pleads for God's own people in God's own way. If nothing else prompted me to be one of the people of God this alone would be sufficient motivation. I must be one of the saints because I desperately need the Spirit as an intercessor.

Let others fill their journals with argument and debate about how the Spirit works, or if he works. I prefer to fill this little paper with the grace of God and my own gratitude that my Lord did not leave us as orphans. I am happy that he came to us in the Spirit and the Spirit moved in to live with me in my frail tent. I am overjoyed because of the warmth, the understanding, and the power, which he furnishes day by day. In short, I am thrilled beyond my poor ability to express that God has adopted me and that I am a member of His majestic family.

8. God Works for Good

I hold that Jesus is Lord over life. I mean the whole life – all of it. I do not go for the kind of fragmented personality, which “saves Sunday out” to serve God. One does not turn the grace of God on and off like a faucet in the kitchen sink. God is interested in everything that I do. He wants me to mow the lawn, trim the shrubs, and roast wieners in his name and to his glory. Certainly he wants me to sit down with the saints at the Lord’s Table, but when Nell and I bow our heads and thank him for our food, the kitchen table also becomes the Lord’s Table.

God does not just smile when everything is going along happily for me, and turn his head when it isn’t. He sees me when I bruise my arm falling off the bicycle I’m learning to ride. He also knows when I carelessly take my eyes off the road and hit the bridge railing. He even knows to what hospital I am taken, and the number of my room. He knows my temperature before the nurse reads the thermometer. It is destructive of his role as a father to think that he is only interested in the “big things” that I do. Often character is revealed more by some of the little things which are done thoughtlessly than by those which demand a good deal of study and rationalization.

And the greatest thing about his being Lord of all is that the Spirit can so order and arrange everything that it will work out for ultimate good. Even my foolish mistakes and asinine blunders can be fitted into a pattern of life. Sorrow and suffering can be woven into the warp and woof until they actually enhance instead of wrecking the design. This does not mean we ought to deliberately do a lot of silly things so there will be more depth and shadow in the picture called life. As humans caught up in the earthly predicament we will furnish enough hazy background without daubing more in on purpose.

My God is Lord of suffering! He knows how to place my physical agony and mental travail into proper perspective. Since I believe this with all of my heart I do not have to worry or fret about the future. I do not have to be anxious about tomorrow. He is the God of tomorrow as well as of today. I can glorify him by the way I endure hardship as well as by clapping my hands and singing when I feel exuberant over what we call “good fortune.” There is no such thing! It is not fortune, but faith!

Everything is going to work out to his praise. Everything! If you are one of the sad skeptics who want to go around pricking balloons of faith, don't bother with me. I am not flying a balloon filled with hot air. I'm not blowing bubbles. My faith is substantial. That word means “to stand under.” It is as firm as concrete. You can no more puncture it than a bumblebee can drill a hole in the sidewalk. I brush doubts aside like flies. I am seeking the kingdom of God and his righteousness. When you do this all else will be added. God will take care of the addition. Just keep on seeking and let heaven operate the computer.

“We know that in everything God works for good with those who love him, who are called according to his purpose” (Romans 8:28).

I consider this rendering superior to that of the Authorized Version. The apostle asserts it as a certainty that God works with us for good, and does so in everything. “We know” is positive. It lifts the matter out of the realm of wishful thinking and speculation. And it excludes no area of life from God’s direction or cognizance. I am personally convinced that God is concerned with every thought and action of my life.

Shakespeare wrote, “There’s a divinity that shapes our lives, rough hew them how we will.” Henry Ward Beecher said, “Everything that happens in the world is part of a great plan of God running through all time.” Thomas Carlyle said, “In the huge mass of evil as it rolls and swells, there is ever some good working toward deliverance and triumph.”

Jesus buoys up my spirit by drawing lessons from the whole panoply of nature. He does it so casually that one might think that God had in mind my own reassurance when he made things as they are. “Look at the birds...your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?” “If God clothes the grass of the field...will he not much more clothe you?” “If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?”

My part is to love him. This is the way I show that I am “called according to his purpose.” Love is my response to the divine call. It is God’s purpose in calling us to arouse and engender within us that love which will provide harmony between ourselves and him.

There is a purpose behind this universe, and purpose implies design, intent and determination. Actually it is quite close to the word purpose, and what God purposes in mind he proposes to accomplish in fact. He has called me. I heard that call and I have answered it. And I know that in Him all things will fall into place for my good. That is why I intend to honor him by life or by death. I have no time to stand around and argue about how and when God works in my life or accomplishes his purpose. I shall just do my part and trust Him. He will not fail! My little universe is not as great as the one He made.

It makes a great deal of difference to me when I realize that I do not go it alone. Life is not lived in a spiritual vacuum, devoid of real meaning or purpose. If God is working in everything to produce order and good for those who love him, I can look for his hand in anything that happens. Thus, life takes on new dimensions as I work to achieve his purpose and he works to the same end. And sometimes what appear at first to be perplexing detours turn out to be highways to success and happiness.

“For whom he foreknew, he also predetermined to be of a form like the form of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren” (Romans 8:29).

It seems a little incredible that this verse and the following one have been made the ground for the most bitter theological conflict in the Christian realm. Little did the apostle realize when he wrote this brief section what would occur as the result of it. Moses E. Lard wrote, “It has been the theme of the most voluminous and conflicting criticism. It forms the creed of the Calvinist and the puzzle of the Arminian; and hot and long has

been the battle they have waged over it. It would not be true to say that no good has come of this strife; but I must think that the good has been fearfully disproportionate to the evil.”

Obviously the passage is inserted merely to demonstrate the truth that God’s concern is to “bring many sons unto glory.” The divine design will not be frustrated. God foreknew and predetermined the destiny of the called ones, those who respond to his summons in love.

To foreknow is to know beforehand, and it must relate to some period of time, either real or assumed. Whatever date or time is accepted, foreknowledge precedes it. The Bible locates the time as the beginning of the world as we know it, the inception of the universe of mankind. Before the foundation of the world the infinite mind conceived the idea that men would respond to a divine call, and by their own choice be motivated to share in a fellowship with him, a *koinonia* of eternal life, the life of God.

Accordingly, God not only foreknew this, but destined in advance that such persons would become like the image of his Son. This did not obligate any individual to obey God. In the matter of obedience all were left free. It is not that I share in God’s grace because it was destined that I obey, but because I obey it was destined that I share in His grace. And sharing in his grace makes it possible for me to be made after the likeness of his Son!

The reference is to the resurrection. God ordained that Jesus be made in the image of man to share our suffering before his resurrection, and he determined that we be made in the image of Christ, to share his glory after our resurrection. The resurrection completes our adoption. The redemption of the body removes the last obstacle to becoming like Jesus. “He will transform the body belonging to our humble state, and give it a form like that of his own resplendent body, by the very power which enables him to make all things subject to himself” (Phil. 3:21).

I do not know what I shall be like, because I am not sure what form he now has. “Here and now, dear friends, we are God’s children; what we shall be has not yet been disclosed, but we know when it is discovered we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is” (1 John 3:2). I am convinced that it will be a glorious experience, a tremendous spiritual adventure. Jesus is the firstborn from the dead to die no more. He must have the pre-eminence in all things. But he does not share his glorified state in isolation. He is the firstborn among many brethren. We shall be like him. We will receive the form of his glorious body. As Moses E. Lard wrote, “His body is the type, and all the bodies of the redeemed will take shape after it.”

“And whom he predetermined, them he also called; and whom he called, them he also justified, and whom he justified, them he also glorified” (Romans 8:30).

William Barclay writes, “This is a passage which has been very seriously misused. If we are ever to understand this passage we must grasp the basic fact that Paul never meant it to be an expression of theology or philosophy; he meant it to be the almost lyrical expression of Christian experience. If we take this as a philosophy and theology and if we

apply standards of cold logic to it, it must mean that God chose some and did not choose others, that there is a strange and terrible selectiveness in the love of God. But that is not what the passage means.”

When Dr. Barclay penned those words he did so as a Presbyterian scholar and a professor in the aged and respected Glasgow University. His words show how remarkably the creed of Calvinism is being rejected in our times. They also demonstrate how the concept of a loving God permeates our consciousness and gives us a thrilling hope.

As an “expression of Christian experience” the foreknowledge, predestination, calling, justification and glorification of the saints is a wonderful thing. It meets the needs of my soul-hunger and confirms my own inner feeling. I am ever conscious of my own inability to devise a means of my own salvation, and of the futility of trying to attain to glory by my own power. I must be lifted out of myself by one from outside. I cannot lift myself because I have nothing upon which to stand while I pull and tug to free myself. Indeed, my real struggle is to be free of *myself*, for “in my flesh dwelleth no good thing.”

What Paul writes, therefore, is not a cold exposition of theology, but a warm reassurance of a divine purpose, which includes me. And it is not something devised or dreamed up as an emergency measure to rescue me at the last moment. It has always been a part of God’s plan, from before the foundation of the universe, and it is now available to me through the Spirit. All I need to do is to plug in. The power is there. It has always been there since the Spirit came.

1. This fact provides me with strength when I realize that God knows no failures. He launches no ships, which are lost at sea, no capsules, which disappear into untrackable space. Even before we were made he saw us safely in the eternal harbor, floodlighted by the beams of eternal love. I can trust the purpose of God. I need no life-preserver of my own construction, no boat drill to abandon ship in mid-ocean.

2. This fact provides me with a sense of confidence, because I know I am involved in a purpose, which has unvaryingly kept its course despite all the vagaries of human history and the plots of demonic invention. “In him is no variableness, not even a shadow cast as by turning or veering.” As the song puts it, “In Jesus I’m safe evermore!”

3. This fact provides me with incentive to meet the trials and temptations of each day. I can ride out the storm because I know that tomorrow the winds will have subsided. Although tempests rage and roar “there will be peace in the valley for me.”

I have been called of God. All of the divine mercy, kindness and grace, which makes up God has been involved in that call. And I have heard it, responded to it and embraced it. Now all I am and all I have is in his hands. As Frances E. Gardner says in *God is Fabulous*, “And it’s a peculiar thing, it doesn’t really make any difference what he shows me now that I’m waiting on him, because since I asked Christ to live his life through me, what I do is inconsequential, but I am really eager to see what he is going to do.”

I have been justified by God. It would be the height of arrogance and boasting to claim that one was justified if it was assumed to be an attainment of his own. But one cannot achieve justification. He must be declared guiltless. This is the work of God whose majesty is offended by every sin. All sin is rooted in the displacement of the will of God

by the will of man. Only God can forgive the thoughtless attitudes, which cause men to seek to usurp divine prerogatives.

I will be glorified. When glory is used to describe our future, beyond this period of existence in time, it refers to that state of blessedness in which we will share all of the majestic life of God. Of course it is unknowable and indescribable here and now. It is the eternal heritage, which awaits at the end of the road, the splendor for which the King has destined his children. So precious is the thought of participating in that dazzling brightness that it overshadows all of the suffering and pain, which our present state entails.

I eagerly urge you not to give up or grow weary. Do not faint under criticism. Do not allow any root of bitterness to spring up and defile you. Do not be beguiled by devious doctrines nor stumble because of the shortcomings of others. Wait for the dawn. The sun will rise when the Son descends!

9. More Than Conquerors

“What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?” (Romans 8:31).

What is included in “these things?” Of one thing we can be certain, and that is it is of such a nature as to provide complete assurance for the believer that God will not fail him in time of need, and no foe will be powerful enough to overcome him who is shielded by divine love. The prophet Isaiah wrote, “No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper, and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and their righteousness is of me, saith the Lord” (54:17).

Paul wrote, “Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ” (2 Cor. 2:14), or as another rendering expresses it, “Wherever I go, thank God he makes my life a constant pageant of triumph in Christ” (Moffatt). “These things” which contribute to our strength and hope are those, which have just been enunciated by the apostle in the three preceding verses. They begin with the tremendous declaration, “We know that to those who love God, everything fits into a pattern for good” (Phillips).

If everything fits into a pattern for good, then nothing that happens can work our ultimate defeat. Victory is a foregone conclusion for those who march to the clear sound of the glorious trumpet. So the conclusion based upon these things must be that if God is for us no one can really stand against us. Adam Clarke makes an appropriate comment at this juncture. “He who is infinitely wise has undertaken to direct us; he who is infinitely powerful has undertaken to protect us; he who is infinitely good has undertaken to save us. What cunning, strength or malice, can prevail against his wisdom, power and goodness?”

Isaiah records the challenge of God to those who would seek to thwart his purpose. “Who would set the briers and thorns against me in battle? I would go through them, I would burn them together” (27:4). In ancient times a hedge of thorns was considered to be an effective wall, and an impenetrable barrier. But God will not be hindered or frustrated by barriers thrown up by his enemies. All I need to do to overcome is to stay behind God and go through with him!

“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?” (Romans 8:32).

The problem of doubt about future victory is settled for the believer from the moment in which he accepts intellectually, emotionally and unreservedly that God actually and purposely delivered up his own Son for us all. The force of the apostolic argument will be lost upon those who deny the pre-existence of the Word who was made flesh, or who have been snared by the subtleties of theological liberalism and whose mental meanderings lead them to explain away the divine Sonship of Jesus. It makes all the

difference in the world whether God simply watched “another man” die on a Roman cross, or saw his own Son agonize and know that he was “smitten for transgressions which were not his own.”

I reject as wholly unworthy of my time or thought the misled and misleading mouthings which seek to explain away the sacrifice of God’s own Son, or to water down the fact that it was the working of the divine will. *Agape* is the love, which knows no bounds. It is affirmed that “there is nothing love cannot face” (1 Cor. 13:7). It is that active and beneficent goodwill which stops at nothing to achieve the good of the beloved object.

And it was this love, which caused God to give his only begotten Son. It is a dynamic so great, a motivation so powerful, that it holds back nothing in the pursuit of its goal. It “endures without limit” (1 Cor. 13:7), and will certainly “bring forth judgment unto victory.” Those who do not grasp the intensity of *agape* can never understand how God could “spare not his own Son.” Those who do grasp it can realize that what happened was inevitable, a corollary to the nature of such love.

He was “delivered up for us all.” The expression “delivered up” involves more than the crucifixion. It conveys the thought that he was handed over to men who would mock and abuse him, and then kill him. Peter said, “Him being delivered in accordance with God’s definite plan and with his previous knowledge, you with the help of heathen men, nailed him to a cross and put him to death.” (Acts 2:23).

This was done for all, regardless of ethnic origin, national identification, social standing or previous condition of servitude. Jesus was the free gift of God to rescue men from the bondage of sin. He is thus a veritable exemplification of divine grace, that undeserved kindness which assumes that all else, which is essential to our wellbeing and ultimate glory will be forthcoming from God. The whole thing is very simple. If God did not forbear to give his own Son, surely he will not hesitate to bestow all else that is required to fulfill the divine purpose as relates to all of us.

“Who would dare to accuse us, whom God has chosen? It is God who acquits us?” (Romans 8:33).

This is legal language, the terminology of the courtroom. With such language the apostle was, by training, thoroughly familiar. If the judge of all the earth has acquitted us and pronounced us guiltless, if the Supreme Justice has actually chosen or adopted us, then who would have the audacity to appear and file an accusation against us?

I need not be at all concerned about what men may say or do. If I am in Christ, wholly trusting in his righteousness, I am impervious to their attack. Even if my motives are assailed, and my name maligned, I will be vindicated. God will have the last word. The divine purpose in my life will be victorious. What a thrill it is to know that only God can justify. For this reason only he can condemn. But he cannot condemn one whom he has justified, for justification is the antithesis of condemnation.

Justification is a judicial act. It takes place in heaven. It is a pronouncement of the divine mind. It cannot be earned, purchased, or procured by works. It is solely the gift of

grace, and having been accorded, it is not subject to reversal by virtue of additional testimony from an outside party. Justification takes into account all of the factors, and the case will not be re-opened. In Christ I am free. I am safe. I am made to be guiltless by divine fiat.

“Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us” (Romans 8:34).

The only one who could possibly pass the sentence of condemnation upon God’s chosen ones is Christ. The Father committed all judgment to the Son, and gave him authority to execute judgment also because he is the Son of man (John 5:27). Because he is the Son of God he is entitled to judge the universe, and because he is the Son of man he is eminently qualified to judge all men. If Christ will not condemn the chosen ones of God, no one else is in position to do so. And there are four reasons why Christ will not condemn us:

(1) He died for us in order that we might believe in and accept him as the atonement for our sins. Thus he has said, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life” (John 5:24).

(2) He is risen again, and the apostle declares in this very letter that the justification granted Abraham on the ground of his trust in God, is “for us also, unto whom it will be reckoned, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead, who was delivered up because of our offences, and was raised to life for our acquittal” (Romans 4:24, 25). The very purpose of the resurrection was for the justification of those who trust in the righteousness of Jesus.

(3) Jesus is at the right hand of God, a position of eminent majesty, power and authority. And he is there as the sovereign head of the whole *ekklesia*, the very body of the called out, the chosen ones. That body of the elect is “the completeness of Him who everywhere fills the universe with himself.” Certainly Jesus will not condemn the very body of which he is the head, and if he does not there is no power in the universe, which can do so. He is above all rule, authority, power and lordship (Eph. 1:21-23).

(4) He also makes intercession for us. In verse 26, we learn that the Holy Spirit makes intercession for us, and in the passage we are considering it is affirmed that Jesus does also. The Spirit makes intercession from within us, while Jesus does so in heaven. Instead of condemning us, Jesus pleads our case, and assists us, presenting our interests and interceding in our behalf. “He is able to save absolutely all who approach unto God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them always” (Hebrews 7:25).

“Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?” (8:35).

The first question can be taken in either of two ways. It may relate to our love for Christ, or to his love for us. I gather from the context that the former is the correct

interpretation, and that the question deals with the power of the love we have for Jesus who has cleansed and justified us. My reason for believing this is that the things, which are enumerated are those, which might cause us to grow weary of serving the Lord, but I do not see how tribulation or persecution would cause Jesus to cease from loving us.

Albert Barnes says, "The argument, therefore, is drawn from the strong love of a Christian to his Saviour; and from the assurance that nothing would be able to separate him from that love." Adam Clarke writes, "The question is not, Who shall separate the love of Christ from us? or prevent Christ from loving us? but, Who shall separate *us* from the love of Christ? Who or what shall be able to remove our affection from him?"

We must never forget that this letter was written to followers of Christ in Rome and that Rome, driven to desperation by the spread of the faith, used every kind of persecution and duress to separate Christians from Christ. Indeed, there was a real test between the pagan love for power and the Christian power of love. Rome was struggling to survive while the saints were surviving to struggle, and it was a real question as to who would win the battle.

Tribulation is from *thlipsis*, the root of which means to compress or oppress. The English word is from the Latin *tribulum*, a threshing instrument. Suffering and trials tend to separate the grain from the chaff. The argument of the apostle is that such tribulation cannot break the bond we sustain with Jesus.

Distress is from *stenochoria*, which signifies a strait or narrow confine. It is from *stenos*, strait, and *choros*, a place. It was sometimes used for a mountain passage so restricted that one had to literally worm his way between the rocks. Both tribulation and distress indicate pressure, but the first has to do with pressure from without, the second from pressure within. The import of the original for distress is to be hemmed in on every side. We use the expression, "Everywhere I turned I ran into a wall!" This is the mental state of distress.

Persecution is from *diogmos*, to pursue or chase, with a view of destroying the object of hostility. Famine is from *limos*, to fail. It refers to the failure of crops or food supply and the consequent hunger, which results. Nakedness is from *gumnotes*, the word whose root gives us our own modern terms gymnasium and gymnastics. The Greek athletes engaged in physical exercises wholly in the nude. In Paul's use of the term he refers to one who has no clothing, having been divested of every stitch of clothing, stripped by his persecutors.

Peril is derived from *kindunos*, the danger which continually surrounds or hovers over one, affecting the mental state with alarm and constant fear of calamity. There is about it the idea of impending disaster, so that one is left in a constant condition of foreboding and genuine unrest. Sword is from *machaira*, and stands for the taking of life, especially by beheading, at the order of the civil magistrate.

As one reads the gloomy catalog of suffering, degradation and jeopardy, he becomes aware of what a tremendous force is found in that love which these things cannot crack or shake loose. No wonder Paul says of that love, "It gives us power to endure anything" (1 Cor. 13:7). Armed with such love the Christian is impervious to all attack by the world, the flesh and the devil.

“As it is written. For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter” (Romans 8:36).

This quotation from Psalm 44:22 is introduced to show that faithful followers of the Messiah would be harassed and persecuted by a wicked and unbelieving world. The forces of a dissolute and pagan society will make those who are loyal to the true and living God their daily sacrifices. It is worth asking if the lack of persecution today results from the improvement of the men of the world or from the spirit of compromise on the part of the church, which has become the very symbol of the *status quo*, the image of respectability and the guardian of the caste system. It is questionable whether the institutional church is a garrison of troops eager for the encounter and fervent for the fray, or if it is an expensive stable for sheltering the sacred cows, which must be fed, curried, pampered and protected.

Lewis Mumford in *Faith for Living*, says, “The divine discontent has been replaced by a complacent pedestrianism.” Pierre Berton in *The Comfortable Pew* writes, “The church to its opponents has become a straw man, scarcely worth a bullet.” Nothing should frighten us quite so much as being accepted by the pagan culture. When those in the church are bored to death and those outside are wholly indifferent, we are no longer an effective movement, but an attractive monument. And monuments are made to visit and cause momentary reflection upon past accomplishments and glory. Soldiers under fire have little time to reflect upon history. They are too busy making it!

We are not in a great deal of danger now for we are no longer plowing the seas with banners flying and guns trained on the enemy. We have sailed into harbor and tied up at the wharf as if the war was over. Our activities are mostly on shipboard and consist of entertainment for the apathetic and indolent troops who have never smelled the smoke of battle and have only engaged in games with wooden guns. We are no longer killed all the daylong. We are not accounted as sheep for the slaughter. We are sheep, but we will die in the pasture, from fat, which makes it difficult for us to waddle to the feeding trough.

“Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us” (Romans 8:37).

This is a powerful statement in which Paul once again draws from an arsenal of terms in a military vocabulary to write to persons in a city, which had developed the mightiest military machine in the world. Tribulation, persecution, distress, peril, the sword—these are the shock-troops thrown at the forces of faith. And those forces are not only able to overcome the onslaught, but actually to use the opposition to help produce a glorious victory.

The story is told of the captain of an invading force who was asked what he would do if a superior army of defenders came out to block his attempt to storm a city wall. “Climb over them,” was his reply. It is a very homely saying that, “It is not the size of the dog in the fight, but the size of the fight in the dog which counts.” Men are not overcome by externals, who do not first surrender inside themselves.

To be a conqueror is honor enough, to be more than a conqueror is to be invincible, or unconquerable. This is our lot and destiny through him who loved us! “Thanks be unto God which always causeth us to triumph in Christ” (2 Cor. 2:14). “Our sufficiency is of God” (2 Cor. 3:5). “Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ’s sake: for when I am weak, then I am strong” (2 Cor. 12:10). The man who trusts in his own strength and power is a fool. He is like a bushman with a crude homemade bow and arrow attempting to overpower an enemy equipped with sophisticated long-range rifles. There is a difference between humanistic bravado and the humble bravery, which results from complete trust in Jesus.

The apostle now enumerates a list of things of powerful and frightening aspect, which acted as real enemies in the minds of the superstitious Romans and Greeks of his day. These were things, which were commonly regarded as in conspiracy to thwart the will of the gods, or which forced the pantheon of deities to engage in devious methods to circumvent them. Thomas Bulfinch referred to them as “gorgons, hydras and chimeras dire.”

But Paul confidently affirms that none of these can overthrow the purpose of the living God. The love of God is not dependent upon the Three Fates – Clotho, Lachesis, and Atropos, whose task was to spin the thread of human destiny, and to cut it off with their shears when they pleased. The filament of each man’s life is not spun on the wheel of chance. The more I study the last two verses in Romans 8, the more absorbed in their message do I become. I think they constitute at once the most beautiful and comforting sentence in human language, which I have ever read.

“For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creation, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 8:28, 29).

1. We generally speak of life and death, in that order, but Paul mentions death first. I cannot be sure of his reason, but I suspect that he gives priority to the inevitable and inescapable, for the simple reason that many of the Roman philosophic cults in his day regarded death as the gateway to oblivion. It wrote “finis” to the dreams and hopes of all human beings as they thought of it.

A good example is found in the writings of the Latin poet Catullus. He died about fifty years before Jesus was born, but his death only served to increase the interest in his works. At the time when Paul wrote to the Romans, Catullus was making the best-seller list in the Imperial City, with his posthumously copied works. Like most of the Roman writers of the time, Catullus produced some fairly pornographic material, specializing in sexual intrigue and purple passion.

One of the famous poems of all ages is that which Catullus addressed to Lesbia, the beautiful wife of one of his friends. In it he says, “Let us live, my Lesbia, and let us love, and let us value at a single denarius the advice of stern old men who would inhibit us. Suns can set and then come up again, but for us, when once our brief light goes out, there is but one perpetual night through which we must sleep.”

The Greeks knew no relationship which death could not sever. They had no way to penetrate the black pall or look behind the curtain. They preferred the worst kind of life to death. Euripides expressed this in these words, "Yet mortals, burdened with countless ills, still love life. They long for each coming day, glad to bear the thing they know, rather than face death the unknown." It must have come with dynamic power when Paul affirmed that death cannot sever us from the love of God. This struck a blow at the futility of life and the finality of death.

2. *Life* cannot separate us from God's love either. Sometimes it is easier to die for a cause than to live for it. It is not the sudden risk or danger of death which is the true test of the soldier. Rather, it is the daily slogging through mud and slush, the living in mildewed trenches, the eating of monotonous canned rations, which proves the mettle. We must fight the erosion of faith by the sheer fact of endurance. But the matter is settled for the one who knows the adventure of being in Christ, and sharing in the power-packed life.

3. *Angels, Principalities, Powers*. The casual reader may wonder why angels should be included in a list of things which attempt to create separation from God, but this results from a lack of knowledge about the matter as understood in the day when Paul wrote. The Jews had developed a complex "angelology," and had engaged in a great deal of acrimonious controversy about it. As is usual, such debate caused two extreme positions to develop, and these were defended by rival schools.

The followers of Sadoc denied the existence of angels. They were Materialists. It was the Pharisees who had worked out an elaborate set of traditions about angels, and Paul was a Pharisee. The Pharisees believed that every living thing, including trees and flowers, had a special angel. They held that the angels were created before this material universe was made and that they were opposed to bringing man into existence. They thought that the angels resented someone made in the image of God and were jealous for fear that God would give more attention unto man than unto themselves.

They also became hostile because, being created before mankind, they did not want to be servants of God to those who possessed an elemental body and were limited by time and space. The Jews believed there was a recognized hierarchy of angels, divided into principalities, powers, mights, dominions, archangels and angels. Each of these orders occupied a liaison position between God and some realm in the universe.

They taught that there had been a revolt against the authority of God, before the creation of the earth, and after a celestial struggle the rebels had been thrown out, and that their leader thereupon pre-empted the sphere called Atmos, thus becoming the prince of the power of the air. The dispossessed angels retained their lines of distinction in their fallen state and plotted to recapture the universe. The death and subsequent resurrection of Jesus effectively foiled their expectations, as Paul points out in Colossians 2:15, but we must still battle their infamous designs with reference to ourselves (Ephesians 6:12).

It was not the purpose of Paul to carefully distinguish between tradition and truth when they conflicted. Neither is it my purpose to do so. His thesis was that whatever was factual about angels; they were powerless to tear us loose from the love of God. I accept this without quibble. I trust in it implicitly.

4. *Things present and things to come.* Once again, the fertile Jewish mind divided time into the world that now is, and the world to come. But the word which we translate by world is often *aion*, age. So the Jewish mind contemplated this present age, and the age to come. This present age was temporary, transient and characterized by evil. God would eventually break through and end it. Then a new age would commence. It would be the Golden Age. In it, only righteousness and peace would exist. It would be directly under the rule of God. He would be supreme in every heart.

Now Paul is saying that regardless of the nature of things presently existing and regardless of the nature of what lies in the future, one thing is certain. No power will be able to break the bond of love, which welds and links us to our Creator. We are sheltered in God's affection regardless of what transpires!

5. *Height and depth.* This does not mean that things of measurable elevation will not affect our relationship to God, although that is true. But these were technical terms dealing with the ascendancy of the stars or planets. Ignorant pagans, taking a leaf from the Persian astrologers, thought that human destiny was determined by astral calculations, or by a horoscope. If the stars were favorable they would conduct their affairs on the presumption that the gods would prosper them. If the horoscope was unfavorable they would postpone any planned activity.

Height is from *hupsoma*, the word used to designate the meridian of the sun, or the zenith of a star or planet. This was the time when the maximum of one's "lucky star" would be exerted, or when his chances for success were said to be the "brightest." Depth is from *bathos*, the time when the star was lowest and the influence was least likely to affect one for good. But there is only one star, which can produce our relationship to God – the Bright and Morning Star. And there is only one sun, which can affect us spiritually – the Sun of Righteousness who has risen with healing in his wings.

6. *Any other creation.* There is nothing in all creation, now existing, which can separate us from the love of God. When this present order passes away there will be nothing brought into existence, which will change things. The love of God is certain. It is constant and consistent. It is safe and sure. This is the hope of the weary, the strength of the weak, and the refreshment for the way-worn. I rest my faith fully, completely and unreservedly in the love of God and in the God of love.

10. The Reasonable Worship

In January of this year we began an ascent of the highest peak in the Roman letter, chapter eight. We worked our way slowly up the steep slope and explored for several months the view at the summit. Now we must return from the mountain-top and resume life on the practical plane. Here we will test the reality of our transcendent experience and see how the life of the Spirit fits into our day-by-day existence.

The great argument of Paul ends at Romans 11:36 with a magnificent tribute to God. “For from him everything comes, through him everything exists, and in him everything ends.” That is Goodspeed’s translation. Knox has it, “All things find in him their origin, their impulse, the center of their being.” It is conditioned upon this tremendous truth that the apostle predicates his conclusion concerning our obligation to the Father of lights. We will consider that obligation as portrayed in chapter 12.

“I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service” (12:1).

It is noteworthy that the apostle, who has probed the very heavens, does not make an authoritarian demand or a dogmatic request. He places his approach to life in a framework of pleading, appeal, or entreaty. He wrote to the Corinthians, “I do not mean that we are to dictate to you with regard to your faith; on the contrary, we work with you for your true happiness.” Even his appeal is based upon the compassion, which God has shown. Our obligation stems from the overflowing mercy in which we have shared so freely.

We are to *present* our bodies. The word “present” is employed in Luke 2:22 where Joseph and Mary took the child Jesus to Jerusalem “to present him to the Lord.” It is used in 2 Corinthians 11:2, where Paul says of the community of believers, “I feel a divine jealousy on your behalf, because I betrothed you to one only husband, even to Christ, that I might present you unto him in virgin purity.” It is used in Ephesians 5:27 where Jesus is desirous of presenting the church to himself as a glorious church, unspotted and unwrinkled.

In all of these cases that which is being presented or dedicated to God and Christ, already belongs to them. The firstborn male belonged to God under the Mosaic covenant, so Jesus, who opened the womb, was presented unto God. The bride belongs to the husband so Paul wanted to present to Jesus the congregation in virgin purity, which was betrothed unto him. And our bodies belong to God. We are not our own. We have been bought with a price. We can only give to God that which is his. We are to offer our bodies as *living* sacrifices. This is in contrast to the holocausts required of the Jews, and the offerings of the Gentiles to their false gods. One statement occurs over and over in the law of offerings as transmitted by Moses. “He shall lay his hand upon its head, and kill it.” The law required the bodies of dead animals, flayed, cut into pieces and laid in order upon the wood that was upon the fire of the altar. Nothing impresses me more with the contrast between grace and law than the fact that one approaches God through living men and the other through animal corpses.

There is more than this involved in a living sacrifice. It is continual and constant. An animal could only be offered once, but life is an unceasing and an unremitting offering. Just as Jesus offered himself for us once, but ever lives to make intercession for us, so we must freely give ourselves to him, but live to make intercession unto God.

Our sacrifice must be *holy*. This is a translation of *hagios*, which we also sometimes translate by the word “sanctified.” Literally, this means set apart to God, or consecrated to his service. When a man set aside a tenth of his grain, or olive oil, or vintage, to present it unto the Lord, it was separated from all of the rest. It looked exactly like the remainder, and you could not tell them apart, but there was a difference, and that difference lay in the fact that one was peculiarly God’s.

So there are certain things, which must be said about the person who is holy. First, he is separated from the unregenerate world and does not share a common life (or fellowship) with the unbelieving mass of mankind. This does not mean that he does not work, or go to school, or ride on a plane with the immoral of this world, “since then you would need to go out of the world” (1 Cor. 5:10). But he is separated because he has heard the call of God and responded to it. “Come out from them, and be separate from them, says the Lord, and touch nothing unclean, then I will welcome you” (2 Cor. 6:17).

Second, this separation makes a difference. But the difference lies in the fact that one belongs to God. To be holy is not to be equated with being an oddball, a screwball, or an eccentric. There is nothing anemic or washed-out about a follower of the Lamb. He is not a dud or a blank cartridge. This is borne out by 1 Peter 2:9, where the King James Version uses the term “a peculiar people.” In their ignorance of the original many have interpreted this to mean that we were to appear in unconventional garb or attract attention by quaint speech.

Actually, the expression means that which belongs to one person by right of purchase or choice. The New English Version is correct in rendering it “a people claimed by God for his own.” It often happens that ownership gives value to a thing. I once visited Monticello, which was built by Thomas Jefferson. I saw his notebooks, spectacles and writing quills. I had seen a thousand others more prepossessing in appearance, but these fascinated me because of the one to whom they belonged.

Once Nell and I went to the home of James A. Garfield. Those of you who have been there know that his Bible still lies open on his desk, at the place where he was reading shortly before he was assassinated. I have a good many Bibles that are worth more money, and are more adapted to use, but the simple volume upon the desk drew my attention because of whose it was. So we can be quite ordinary people, with no outstanding ability, and yet if we belong to the Lord, we are different. We have transcendent value. And that is what being holy is all about.

This seems important to me because I once had holiness confused with an attitude toward things, rather than with a relationship to God. One is not especially holy because he does not watch television, play croquet, or wear wide neckties. Indeed, some of the worst hoodlums that ever lived, dressed pretty conservatively. One who is holy is different because he marches to the sound of another trumpet. He is God’s man.

REASONABLE SERVICE

Now I have come to the phrase I am really interested in exploring. Paul says that presenting our bodies as a living sacrifice is our reasonable service. I'd like to make a little confession here and now. I once thought that this referred to that which was just, equitable and fair. I remember detailing all that God had done for us, and then pointing out that, in view of this what he demanded of us was not an unreasonable requirement. I probably got that from my seventy-five cent book of sermon outlines upon which I relied pretty heavily in those days. But I was wrong about it, as I was about a lot of other things.

W. E. Vine says about the term, "The word *logikos* indicates that which appertains to the mind, the reasoning faculty. The sacrifice is therefore to be intelligent, and the idea suggested is by way of contrast to the sacrifices offered under the law by ritual and compulsion. The presentation is to be made in accordance with the spiritual intelligence of those who are new creatures in Christ."

C. H. Dodd says, "The ritual of sacrifice was in Judaism, as in all ancient religions, the central act of worship, by which the holiness of God was acknowledged, and in some sense conveyed to the worshipers. For Christians, Paul says, the real worship of God is their self-dedication to him for ethical ends.... Without that thought, taken with full ethical seriousness, any ritual of sacrifice in Christianity would be a relapse into superstition." Please go back, read that again, and pause to meditate upon it for a little while!

The Revised Standard Version translates the words by "spiritual worship." The New English Version has "the worship offered by mind and heart." The Twentieth Century New Testament has "reasonable worship." The word rendered worship is *latreia*, and it is an interesting one indeed. In its root form it referred to work done for wages, but voluntarily so. It was not applied to a slave, but to one who personally secured a position and filled it with a sense of responsibility.

Then the word advanced another step and was used to denote a dedication of life to a cause which engrossed one's attention or appealed to him as being worthy, and finally it was the word used to describe service dedicated to the gods, the giving over of one's life to serving in the temple of a deity. In its usage in the new covenant scriptures it applies exclusively to the worship of God. That is why the lexicographers define *latreuo*, "to perform sacred services, to offer gifts, to worship God in the observance of the rites instituted for his worship."

This is of supreme importance because it points out that spiritual worship, that which Jesus calls "worship in spirit and in reality," actually consists of the surrender of self to God. It is giving my eyes, ears, mouth, tongue, hands and feet to God, and doing so voluntarily as an act of commitment. It entails also the devoting of my bodily desires, feelings, passions and sensations to God, holding nothing back. Thus, everything I do in the body, with an eye singled to the glory of God, is worship. For the Christian there are no "acts of worship," for the simple reason that there are no acts, which are not worship.

A little later Paul will say that one who attaches special significance to a day “observes it in honor to the Lord.” He will also point out that one who eats meat eats in honor of the Lord. We honor the Lord by living, and we honor the Lord by dying. Everything that we do is worship, so “whether we live, or whether we die, we are the Lord’s” (Romans 14:8). So long as we think of worship as limited to certain “holy places,” and “holy days,” we are acting as if Jesus did not come and die. We are living B. C. lives in an A. D. world.

In Christ there are no holy places, no holy days, and no holy things. There are only holy people. We cannot dedicate buildings to God. We can only dedicate lives. We give our bodies, that is, ourselves. And we are the temple of God. We are God’s building. We are God’s garden. William Barclay says it far better than I can:

“The true worship, the really spiritual worship, is the offering of one’s body, and all that one does every day with it, to God. Real worship is not the offering of elaborate prayers to God; it is not the offering to God of a liturgy, however noble, and ritual, however magnificent. Real worship is the offering of everyday life to God. Real worship is not something which is transacted in a church; real worship is something which sees the whole world as the temple of the living God, and every common deed an act of worship.”

“And be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God” (Romans 12:2).

It is apparent from this statement that “this world” is set in opposition to “the will of God.” One cannot conform to both at the same time. It is important; therefore, that we have a clear understanding of what is meant by “the world.” Certainly there is a lot of fuzzy thinking on this subject in the present age. Let me provide for you some helpful comments. C. H. Dodd says that “the world” is, “Human society insofar as it is organized on wrong principles, and characterized by base desires, false values and egoism.” William Barclay defines the world as, “Pagan society with its false values, its false standards and its false gods.” Please take note that both of these great expositors use the term “false values.” Value is the worth or importance you attach to a thing. It may have little to do with the actual worth of it. It may be almost wholly divorced from reality. But your sense of values will always affect everything else by comparison. If you elevate a thing in your heart to a place of prime importance, you will measure everything else by its relationship to that thing. It becomes your god. Barclay is very perceptive when he speaks of “false values, false standards and false gods.” The three are inevitably and inextricably linked together.

One of the greatest minds of which I have ever heard, in the field of scriptural research, was that of Richard Chenevix Trench. To him we are indebted for that very helpful volume called *Synonyms of the New Testament*. And in it he defines the world as “that floating mass of thoughts, opinions, maxims, speculations, hopes, impulses, aims, aspirations, at any time current in the world, which it may be impossible to seize and accurately define, but which constitute a most real and effective power, being the moral

atmosphere which at every moment of our lives we inhale, again inevitably to exhale.”

The world is the realm in which we move by choice, breathing its atmosphere, thinking its thoughts, sharing its dreams, and bowing to its gods. It is the territory pre-empted by base desires and ruled over by Satan, who is designated “the god of this world.” His is the sphere of Atmos, that in which we live and breathe.

Paul uses two words, which we have translated as “conformed” and “transformed.” The word “form” is at the heart of both. But they are not at all the same in the original. The word for “form” in conformed is *schema*. It has to do with the external. It literally means to fashion or shape in accordance with a model. It signifies that which is changeable, variable, and subject to alteration.

In 1 Corinthians 7:31, we read, “For the whole frame of this world is passing away.” Frame is the translation of *schema*. In Philippians 2:8 we learn that Christ came “Bearing the human likeness, revealed in human shape.” Shape is the translation of *schema*. There is one other place in the new covenant scriptures where the identical form of the original used in Romans 12:2, is to be found. It is in 1 Peter 1:14, “As obedient children do not let your characters be shaped any longer by the desires you cherished in the days of your ignorance.”

When the Greeks created a figure or model for display of specially woven cloth, they used a form of this word. When the sculptors took plastic clay and shaped it before the eyes of their students they employed a form of this word. But there is nothing truly permanent about fashions or fashion models. And clay can be re-shaped in many ways and to make many images. So J. B. Phillips has really caught the true gist of what Paul is saying when he translates the passage, “Don’t let the world around you squeeze you into its own mold, but let God remold your minds from within.”

Most of my readers have never seen a butter mould, but when we were youngsters on the farm one of our tasks was to help churn the milk to produce butter. The churn dasher was plunged up and down in the liquid until the butter “came.” The butter was then rescued from the milk and placed in a large crock. After this it was formed into attractive pats by squeezing it into a mould. Our favorite mould was a round one, which produced a pound of butter in a circular shape with the figure of a pineapple on top. Other families had different shaped moulds with other designs. But the butter always took on the form of the mould into which it was pressed.

We had a homely saying about a man who did not resist temptation and the pressures of sin. We said, “He is as soft as butter.” We meant that he took on the form of the world around him. Sometimes we said of a man, “He will trot under the wagon of anyone who will hunt with him.” A faithful dog would not follow everyone who came along. He was loyal to his master. One of the early “graphophone” companies used as its symbol a terrier cocking his head to listen to the sound coming from the horn shaped like a huge morning-glory. The symbol included the words, “His master’s voice.”

Paul is pleading with the Romans not to be formed or shaped by the impulses, aims, aspirations, or maxims of the world. These are changeable. They are inconstant and inconsistent. They produce no loyalty to God. They distort and obscure the Master’s voice.

We are to be transformed, and here the word for form is *morphe*. This word relates to the character or nature of a thing. It is not that which is affected by outward fashion. It is internal and relates to essence rather than to mere appearance. It is the word translated by “transfigured” in Matthew 17:2, and Peter says of Jesus upon that occasion, “He was invested with glory and honor” (2 Peter 1:17).

It is the same word rendered “changed” in 2 Corinthians 3:18, where the *New English Version* has the reading, ‘And because for us there is no veil over the face, we all reflect as in a mirror the splendor of the Lord, thus we are transfigured into his likeness, from splendor to splendor, such is the influence of the Lord who is spirit.’ The Greeks used the term for transfigured to describe the alteration, which took place when a butterfly developed from a caterpillar, and the ugly looking worm became a gorgeous and beautiful insect.

In the case before us Paul is saying that to engage in true worship, which is the complete sacrifice of life, one must not make an outward change in conformity with the standards of fashions of this passing age. The entire person must be transformed. There must be a radical alteration of our very nature. As Peter states it, “Through this might and splendor he has given us his promises, great beyond all price, and through them you may escape the corruption with which lust has infected the world, and come to share in the very being of God.”

This tremendous change must be made by renewing the mind. This is very significant *The New English Version* reads, “Let your minds be remade and your whole nature thus transformed.” We have already learned from the previous verse that the worship we are to render is rational, that is, it conforms to the highest function of reason. But in order to achieve this height of rational power our minds must be remade. They have reflected the color of the surrounding world. They have been polluted by the atmosphere, which we breathe, which is corrupt and tainted.

The word for renewal is *anakainosis*. This is important because the Greeks had two words for new – *neos* and *kainos*. It is not my purpose to elaborate upon these. The intensive student can investigate them in such works as “Synonyms of the New Testament,” by Archbishop Trench. It is enough for our purpose to know the basic difference between them.

Neos means new in time, or of recent origin. *Kainos* means new in quality, that is, different in character from the old with which it is contrasted. The renewal of the mind, which results in transformation, is not simply the old way of thinking updated. It is not merely the addition of late information, or recent concepts, which bring about the renewal. Instead, Christ comes into one’s life, and the whole nature of existence changes. The mind is no longer set on earthly things. One has heaven in his mind and glory in his heart.

“Prove” is from *dokimazo*, and it conveys the idea of testing or trying a thing with a view to approving it. The Good Housekeeping Institute tries out products submitted to it with a view to bestowing the seal of approval when they are deemed worthy. The Consumer Research Laboratory puts various items to a rigid test with the intent of testifying for those that are approved.

The new mind is the proper arena in which to demonstrate the effectiveness of the will of God, that is, to show it is all that it claims to be. It is good, because of its effect upon those who follow it; it is acceptable because it meets all of the requirements of heaven; it is perfect, because it is thoroughly and completely capable and adapted to fulfill the role for which it was intended.

It is my intention, God being my helper, to allow his will to prevail in my life. I want his love to be my love, his purpose to be my purpose, and his word my word. I eagerly solicit the fervent prayers of all that I may overcome my weaknesses by his power, and live the transformed life.

11. The Differing Gifts

I often think as I read the letters of Paul, what a difference it would make if one could go behind the scene in his mind and know the emotions and feelings which prompted certain words and sentences. It is all well and good to say that we have his statements before us and we can all know what he was saying if we want to do so. But it is true that nothing we write or say is in a vacuum. It is for that reason I do not care to be dogmatic about my conclusions. They represent my best approach at the time and they appear to be definitive, but I am never sure with my finite mind that there is not some point I have overlooked which may add a new dimension to my understanding.

Legalistic positivists speak disparagingly of one who so writes. Their tendency is to ridicule one who does not think that his explanations are infallible. They ask how any person can follow one who is not sure what he believes. In reality they are the ones who deserve pity. First of all, they have missed the very essence of the Way, and confuse belief in things with faith in Christ Jesus. It is faith in the Lord Jesus Christ which makes for peace with God, and one can be strong in the faith which is in Christ Jesus and freely admit, "I have not yet reached perfection, but I press on, hoping to take hold of that for which Christ once took hold of me." Indeed, there is some indication that the stronger one's faith is in Jesus, the less he trusts in himself.

Too, such critics are always inconsistent. Even while insisting that men can understand the sacred writings if they want to, they must admit that their own understanding may be faulty in some things. Is this because they do not wish to know? It is a little ludicrous to read after a couple of brethren with imperfect understanding assailing one another because each thinks the other is imperfect. Of course they are both right in their assessment. The very nature of their argument is a clear demonstration of ignorance combined with arrogance.

This little introduction will serve to tell you that, in submitting my comments on the subject at hand, I have no desire or intention to bind them upon our readers. They simply represent my current views, and I will share them, not impose them. You have the same right to read God's word, as do I. You also have the same right to reach conclusions as to its meaning. Nothing else is quite so important as to restore among us that pillar of the Reformation, "the right of private interpretation of the sacred scriptures."

One who contends for this principle pleads for the God-given freedom of all the saints. One who denies it, and seeks to invest the right of interpretation in preachers, prelates, priests, or presbyters, takes the first step toward popery and the enslavement of men's minds. He negates the priesthood of all believers and establishes the cunning priestcraft of the few. There is no official interpretation of the scriptures, and there are no official interpreters. There is only a difference in degree between postulating that a group of elders can do the thinking for a congregation, and that a pope can do it for the church universal.

I am resolved that no man or group of men shall drink for me at the fountain of life, or digest for me the bread of life. If I must answer for my thinking in the world to come I

propose to do it in the world at hand. If I make mistakes, and I will, they will be my own, and I will accept the responsibility for them. But there are two sins for which I have resolved I will not have to account. One is that of abdication of my right to think for myself, and the other the imposition of my thinking upon others to the derogation of their own rights.

“For by the grace given to me I bid everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith which God has assigned him” (Romans 12:3).

Paul had the “grace of apostleship,” that is, he had been made an ambassador as an act of divine favor. In this capacity he could help regulate the lives of those who were citizens of the divine economy. In this instance he is concerned about the evaluation which brethren place upon themselves. This is important because he is introducing the subject of the body, and the functions of the members with the gifts, which God has bestowed.

There seems to be always present a tendency for those who are specially gifted to exalt their importance. Paul wrote to the saints at Corinth: “Who made you, my friend, so important? What do you possess that was not given you? If then you really received it all as a gift, why take the credit to yourself?”

Sober judgment is that which weighs all the facts and gives proper credit to each of them. It does not engage in pride or foolishness, neither does it demean one’s ability or talent. It considers life in such a manner that one can act with wisdom and prudence. A humble and modest estimate of self is requisite to a proper relationship with God and one another.

The criterion for sober judgment as it affects our service in the body is the measure of faith. God has granted this. About this statement there has been much controversy. I do not propose to become involved in it, but I will simply express my honest opinion. It should be regarded as that, and nothing more. In view of the subsequent context I consider faith in this instance as synonymous with the functions, gifts and abilities, which enable us to serve God with reverence and acceptability. Our life is a life of faith; our work is a work of faith, yet no two of us have the same responsibility, or the same aptitude to serve. God has proportioned or measured these out to us according to his will. “In fact, God appointed each limb or organ to its own place in the body, as he chose” (1 Cor. 12:18).

We are under divine assignment, or subject to divine appointment, and to a greater extent than most of us realize, we are what we are by grace. We may think that we arrived at our present ability by dint of discipline and work. These are important, but they are like a grindstone. They can put an edge on an axe or tool but cannot create one. Practice can sharpen our aptitudes, but they are a part of us.

MANY MEMBERS

“For as in one body we have many members, and all the members do not have the same function, so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another” (Romans 12:4, 5).

It is important to bear in mind that the word “member” is never used except in conjunction with the word “body.” One never reads of a “member of the church,” or of anything else, except the body. The reason is quite simple. The Greeks had no word for belonging to an organization. The word “member” was used only to designate an integral part of an organism, and never employed to describe one who had joined some kind of institution, fraternity or combine.

In an organization the adherents are admitted by enlistment, enrollment, or under compulsion, as in the case of the military draft. In an organism the members are a component part of a vital or living entity. Thus, one does not join the body of Christ, but he is embodied by an act of God. “God sets the members in the body, as it pleases him.” “By one Spirit you were all baptized into one body.” I am incorporate with Christ. This word is from corpus, body, and means that I am in the body with Christ. I am in the body by a divine act.

This is a favorite metaphor of the apostle Paul. The body of Christ in his personal mission on earth was the result of incarnation. The body of Christ through which he perpetuates his work upon earth results from incorporation. In his physical body Jesus had all of the organs essential to bodily functions in the flesh. In his spiritual body he invests us with all of the abilities necessary to continue his work. We take the place, as individuals that was taken by his ears, eyes, mouth, arms and feet, and he now becomes the head of all, having been exalted to the right hand of God for this very purpose.

Paul is preparing to deal with our varied gifts and he is pointing out that in order for the body to fulfill its role, various functions must be carried out. This requires not only a variation of administrations, but a variety of gifts. The body is able to function, not because all of the members are alike, but precisely because they are not. Our physical bodies are examples of unity in diversity. So also is the body of Christ.

We are not only related to the body as a unit, but to each other as individual members. But the relationship to each other stems from the relationship to Jesus. In the physical body, some members are joined to the head only by being joined to other members, but in the body of Christ we are joined to other members only by being joined to the head. There is no other person between ourselves and Jesus. The wonderful unity we enjoy is the unity of the Spirit who indwells each member and the body as a whole.

Actually, I cannot hurt my brother without hurting myself. If I speak evil of him it reflects against the organism of which we are integral parts. If I trample upon him I step on my own toes. In spite of our various functions we are all bound together in one body, and all of us have a responsibility in that body as well as to it and through it. The term “of one another” is a term of mutual sharing and what we share is the life of the body.

VARIOUS FUNCTIONS

“Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith; Or ministry, let us wait on our ministering: or he that teacheth on teaching; Or he that exhorteth, on exhortation; he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that showeth mercy, with cheerfulness” (Romans 12:6-8).

Here we have some of the functions of the body of Christ, and the adaptation of the various members to carry them out. Not all are qualified to fulfill the same task, and should not be expected to do so. Paul affirms that our special abilities to carry out various fields of endeavor in the body of Christ are gifts received by grace. They are not something that we acquired or achieved, but they have been given to us. We may improve upon them and encourage their development by use, but we do not originate them.

It is important for us to think through what Paul is saying because the word he uses for gifts is *charismata*, and this word is greatly abused and misused in our time. This is called “the charismatic age or period” because a lot of very sincere people believe that the Holy Spirit is moving into their lives in a new dimension, and granting them supernatural gifts. Now I am not concerned in this article with whether this is true, or whether they are honestly mistaken. I am in no position, and have no disposition, to question the personal experiences, which others affirm.

My concern here is their misunderstanding of scriptural language, and the false impression, which is thereby created. The word *charisma* embodies the word *charis*, grace. A *charisma* is a gift of grace. It is not something for which one can claim credit, or of which he can boast and be proud. It does not result from his superiority or personal power. It is something to receive by the favor of another.

So one can never understand *charisma* until he understands *charis*, that is, he can never understand what is meant by a gift of grace until he understands grace. And the word for grace was not invented by the Holy Spirit for scriptural usage. It had long been used by the Greeks and had a lengthy history before Jesus of Nazareth died on the cross. The Spirit appropriated it and invested it with new meaning, and glorified it, but did not introduce it.

Certainly there had to be something about the term, which could communicate to mankind the message, which God wanted us to have. And the history of its usage shows its utilitarian value to the Spirit. At first, the word related to beauty and charm, but not simply to external beauty. Charm suggested an inner quality of graciousness, which gave value to the whole personality. It was not put on, but it glowed from within and added sparkle to life.

Eventually the philosophers came to believe that this inner quality was not developed by the person, but was a divine gift, a bestowal of the gods. They thought of it as an infusion of the divine into the *pneuma*, or spirit, manifesting itself in creativity, and enabling one to call forth or summon an inner vision, which could be manifested in a

concrete way, but never for a selfish purpose. It must be always for the public good, always for the benefit of mankind.

A dramatist who could put together a play for the theater, which would make men laugh or weep, was thought of as having a *charisma*. A sculptor who could see a glorious figure in marble, and deliver it from the bondage, which encased it, through clever use of the hammer and chisel, was said to have a *charisma*. The poet who could touch the springs of the emotions was said to have a *charisma*. These were called “gifted people.” And there was one field in which certain men were thought to be especially gifted, that of oratory. The gods enabled them to communicate.

It will be seen that these gifts refer to abilities, which we do not generally think of as “supernatural.” The playwright at his desk, the sculptor in his studio, the actor on the stage, the orator on the platform – these are merely carrying out regular functions in daily life. True, they may have a special *charisma* in their work but there are others less gifted who are actors, sculptors, writers, or speakers. The word *charismata*, then, may embrace both what we call “natural” and “supernatural” gifts. I say “we” because God makes no such distinction. Nothing is supernatural with God.

We are now in a position to understand why the Spirit appropriated from the Greek language a word, which was in common use and dignified it with such transcendence. *Charisma* was a gift. It could not be earned or purchased. It was bestowed by Deity, and it was never given simply for selfish indulgence. It was to enable the one who received it to function in a fellowship, to make possible a combined effort in which all would work for the common good. That which previously had provided solidarity in the Greek commonwealth was now regarded as making possible the functioning of the community of saints.

In the passage under consideration the apostle designates prophesying, service of all kinds, teaching, exhorting, giving, presiding, and extension of mercy or pity, as done by charismatics. To designate any period in the history of the body of Christ as “a charismatic age,” is thus seen to be ridiculous. There is no charismatic period because there is no non-charismatic period. Every era of our existence is one in which gifted men carry forward the cause of our Lord. And all of us can function in some manner.

There is no such thing as a “charismatic movement.” This is a term invented by men to describe a time in which they think one or more gifts are exhibited more profusely. However, no one can speak of a “charismatic movement” in the language of the Spirit. The Spirit makes no arbitrary distinction between the gifts we call natural and others, insofar as their utility and essentiality is concerned. The fact that certain endowments are called spiritual does not mean that the others are unspiritual. If they are *charismatic* they are gifts, and they are gifts of grace.

Paul even calls the gift of continence which enables one to control his sexual impulse and to live in an unmarried state a *charisma* (1 Cor. 7:7). He refers to his providential deliverance from persecution and death, as a result of the prayers of the saints, as a *charisma* (2 Cor. 1:11). The interesting thing about this is the fact that it is written to the Corinthian community, the only one to which the apostle says much about *pneumatics* or *charismatics*.

Correctly understood, this means that the exaltation of any *charisma* as a criterion of usefulness, faithfulness, or of standing with God, is wholly unwarranted. It was never intended that all members have the same function and it would be a little absurd to expect them all to receive the same gift. God places the members in the body as it pleases him, and it would be ridiculous for the ear to pray for a gift to enable it to function like the eye.

Nor does a member of the body require special and continual assurance that he is still in the body and remains attached to the head. His very ability to function and his desire to serve the interests of the believers unselfishly and freely is indicative of the spiritual life. The one who shares an inner sense of peace and well-being in a life of steadfast daily service may have a more wholesome outlook than one who needs a regular shot in the *pneuma*. Only a hypochondriac has to call the physician every day to be sure that he is really alive.

THE BODY AT WORK

In one respect, there is no such thing as a body at work. What we mean by such an expression is that the various members function properly and in relation to one another, so that there is no friction, and thus the organism is enabled to fulfill its role. We come now to notice the work of the different members of the community as mentioned by Paul.

1. *Prophesying*. The prophet is the spokesman for God. He speaks for God to men. In the old covenant scriptures, the prophet was actually called a seer. He was one who could see through the curtain, which obscured the future to others. And because he could see, he could also reveal the will of God for coming days.

Later the term prophet came to be drawn chiefly from another word, which meant to bubble up as a fountain. The Spirit moved in the prophet with an effervescent nature, and created a pressure to speak, or erupt. The word of God was described as “a fire in the bones,” that is, a volcanic force in the spiritual depth, clamoring to be released. So the prophet could say, “I am weary from holding in.”

In the new covenant scriptures the Greek term means, “to speak forth.” It is a mistake to think of a prophet merely as one who forecasts or predicts. The book of Revelation is called prophecy, although it is specifically said to contain an account of things past, present, and future. Thus history, current events, and prognostication are all prophecy in God’s sight, because they are all by inspiration. A prophet is a forth-teller. He is not always a foreteller.

The one who had the gift of prophecy was to exercise it, “according to the proportion of the faith.” Since the word “proportion” is *analogia*, a great many interpreters, in my very humble opinion, have been misled in their conclusions. The Greek word is one, which expresses relationship of a right or proper nature. Cremer says it is “the coincidence or agreement existing or demanded according to the standard of the several relations.”

I do not hold that the prophets were human teletype machines automatically transcribing what was fed by a recording angel to the celestial “wire system” from

beyond space. For this reason they were placed under the obligation to speak that which was in agreement with the revealed faith. They could not go beyond, add to, amend, or subtract from the revelation. The “proportion of faith” was the criterion for transmission to men, in order that our faith should not stand in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.

2. *Ministering*. No word in sacred scripture has become more distorted in popular usage than this one, which is from *diakonia*, service. It has been transliterated to become our word deacon, yet in our lack of concern for the language of the Spirit, few in our day think of the deacons as the ministers of the congregation. I constantly receive communications upon letterheads, which list three groups: Minister, Elders, Deacons. Occasionally there will be included an Associate Minister, that is an associate slave or servant, whatever that might be.

All such usage would have been so much mumbo-jumbo in the primitive community of the faith where every child of God was a priest, everyone was a minister, and they were all associates in serving God and one another. The only special congregational ministers were the deacons, who served to extend the arm of the body to relieve the needs of the suffering saints.

No one can determine the nature of the service to be rendered from the word for “minister.” It is applied to serving food by Martha, and caring for temporal needs by the mother-in-law of Peter. One was ministering when he served tables or filled water pots. There are two ways by which men can obscure meanings and do despite to the language of the Spirit. One is to take a general term and limit it to a specific, the other is to take a specific term and make it general. The first error is committed in this case, and it is compounded by the fact that the specific term seldom even includes the transliterated one.

The gift of “ministry” embraces every form or act of service. It describes feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, visiting the sick, or sharing with those who are in prison. Every deed performed to relieve any need or enter into any suffering is ministry. We are guilty of making sad mistakes when we refer to ministry as related only to proclaiming the word, and stewardship only as related to handling money, for we take two noble terms and squeeze them into a narrow and restricted compass.

TEACHING AND EXHORTING

3. *Teaching*. The term *didaskalia* is a scholastic one. It has to do with providing instruction. This last word is one, which embodies the root *struct*, literally, to pile. To construct is to pile up material, generally according to design. To destruct is to tear down the pile. To obstruct is to pile in the way. So instruction is the piling in of facts, the furnishing of information not previously known.

That there are those who have a natural gift for teaching others is obvious to every school administrator. It involves more than merely having degrees in education. Many who have sophisticated degrees do not possess the power to communicate thought, while others with less formal attainments can inspire students to greater heights. A true teacher,

motivated by appreciation for the subject and love of the students is possessed of *charisma*.

4. *Exhortation*. It is important to remember that one may be a good instructor while not having the gift of exhortation. Teaching and exhorting are not the same at all. The first deals primarily with providing facts not previously known. The second consists of encouragement to do that which one already knows to be right. It is stimulation to act, to get on with the task. Instruction seeks to overcome ignorance, exhortation to overthrow apathy and indifference. One kindles the fire; the other stirs it up. The educator shares facts, the exhorter shares faith. One provides the road map, and the other starts the engine.

The original is *parakaleo*, to call to a person, from *kaleo*, to call. It was used for firefighters who called to a person to jump from a building, which was aflame. It was used for a coach or trainer who called for a runner to exert an extra burst of speed. It was used for a captain who cried out to his men to follow him in storming a fort. It is quite obvious that it is a word, which is intended to galvanize others into action and urge them on to the fulfillment of their duty.

5. *Giving*. That there are those with a *charisma* for giving no one can doubt. Some who give do it with such ill will as to undo the good effect of their sharing. There are those who make the recipients feel inferior and unworthy. There are others who, like the Pharisees, sound the trumpet of publicity and use their giving as a means of enhancing their own image rather to extend actual help.

The Authorized Version says that the gift of giving is to be done with simplicity, and this is a great word. In the Greek it is *haplotes*, and it is one of those terms which seem to catch up some of the finest qualities and noblest characteristic to which mankind can attain. The usage in literature sometimes indicates simplicity and sincerity, and at other times generosity. The reason for this is interesting.

Haplous is the word for single, as *diplous* is for double. That which is single is undivided in its attention or unwavering in affection. It represents a unity, a simplicity, as opposed to duplicity, or deception. You will recall that Jesus said, "Let your eye be single," that is, without hypocrisy or sham.

One who is truly generous concentrates his attention upon the need of another, acting with undivided concern to relieve the situation. He bestows what he has to correct it, regardless of cost. So the word means liberality, or generosity when used in this connection. To be able to do this without reticence or regret is a gift, a *charisma*. When one can come to the aid of another without making him feel unworthy, or in debt, it is truly a blessing.

The word occurs in 2 Corinthians 8:2, where Paul speaks of "the riches of your liberality." The *New English Version* renders it by "lavishly open-handed." It occurs again in 1 Corinthians 9:11, and the King James Version has "enriched in everything to all bountifulness," while the New English Version reads, "rich enough to be generous." So the term certainly excludes narrow, stingy and niggardly attitudes, but it includes more than just giving money freely. It takes into account that kind of sharing which never deprecates the person while ministering to him in his distress.

6. *Ruling*. It is probably unfortunate that *proistemi* was not translated by the word “leadeth” instead of “ruleth.” When we use the word rule we immediately associate it with the idea of authority, or exercise of power or dominion over others. This has led to abuses in every generation, including our own. As an example, we have been taught that elders have been placed in office to rule the congregation, and in some places the word of these men is law. Their opinion becomes the official interpretation of that congregation, and those affiliated with it must subscribe to it, or remain absolutely silent. To utter a contrary opinion, will invoke the wrath and discipline of “the powers that be,” and one may be cast out of the synagogue for exercise of free speech.

Of course, this is absurd and asinine. No such authority has been invested in any man or group of men. In the first place the word “office” is not used as it is in the political realm. In the scripture it does not refer to a position, but to a function. My arm does not hold an elected office in my body, but as an integral member, it has a function. That function is a special one but it is no more special than that of any other member. It stems from ability and qualification to fulfill a task. It would be a silly gesture to try and appoint my nose to do the work of my mouth. It is not qualified to so function.

In the second place, the system we have devised is diametrically opposed to the express teaching of Jesus who said it should not be thus. “You know that in the world, rulers lord it over their subjects, and their great men make them feel the weight of authority: but it shall not be so with you.” We have adopted the way of the world and forgotten the way of Jesus. There is no greater imposition than to try and force a man to conform to a thought pattern, which contravenes his honest personal conviction. To attempt this under threat or coercion is tyranny over the mind and despotism over the heart.

In spite of the fact that Jesus said it should not be so, it is so in a great many places. Elders assume prerogatives bordering upon infallibility. Their judgment must not be questioned nor their authority abridged. Together with the preacher whom they hire, they rule with a tight rein and an iron hand. It is assumed that men who hold high positions in the scholastic or business world are imbecilic when it comes to the Bible, and wholly incapable of directing their spiritual destiny. All decisions must be made for them. Their only responsibility is to acquiesce, remain dumb and give their money to support the system.

Such hierarchical domination has developed as a part of our sectarian stance. It is maintained through fear of what men may do unto us. The word for “ruleth” in our passage is *proistemi*, literally, to stand before, that is, to preside. In 1 Timothy 5:17, the *New English Version* has the interesting rendering, “Elders who do well as leaders should be reckoned worthy of a double stipend, in particular those who labor at preaching and teaching.” The word for diligence signifies zeal and earnestness. Those who have the ability to preside should set an example of diligent concern.

7. *Showing mercy*. The extension of compassion will be greatly enhanced by those who have the gift to demonstrate empathy. I know good brethren who probably ought to be barred from hospital visitation. They will undo in fifteen minutes what a corps of physicians and nurses have worked a week to accomplish. They are awkward in the

presence of the patient, saying and doing all of the wrong things. They stay too long, talk too loud, and sit on the edge of the bed.

It is no particular comfort to a patient to tell him that he looks far worse than you expected to find him, nor does it help to point out that both your uncle and brother-in-law died within the last six months from exactly the same condition. It does not cheer one up to inform him that the surgeon who is going to operate on him the next day is as rough as the bark on a hickory tree and was probably responsible for killing your Aunt Gertrude.

Some well-meaning folks, who love statistics on the dead and dying, give a patient a running account of the progress, or lack of it, of everyone in the congregation. With a countenance as cheerful as if they had just swallowed a tablespoon of vinegar, and a voice as doleful as a losing candidate saying farewell to his campaign workers, they drone on and on, while the patient wishes they would drop dead and he would recover, but doubts that either will happen.

On the other hand, I know some folk whose very presence will brighten a hospital ward. Even the professional groaners, who carry on rhythmically, resolved that if they cannot feel well no one else who is in earshot will either, desist while such folks are there. Sometimes they even forget to start up again for quite awhile after they are gone. They spread happiness where there is heartbreak and sympathy where there is sadness. Their speech and touch are both soft and soothing. They are *charismatic*.

Mercy is from *eleos*. It refers to an open and outward manifestation of pity. W. E. Vine says, "It assumes a need on the part of him who receives it, and resources adequate to meet the need on the part of him who shows it." It is a quality of which we need more manifestation and daily demonstration.

SUMMARY

It is time for me to summarize the things we have discovered in this dissertation, which has grown far too lengthy. I am grateful to those who have patiently read thus far. If you have done so, you will recall that we have learned that the will of God is expressed as follows.

1. Each one of us is to make a sober estimate of his ability, based not upon an exalted opinion of self, but upon an assessment of the gift of God as bestowed by grace.

2. We are not bound together as members of an organization, a concept for which there was no term in the Greek. Rather, we are functioning members of an organism, bound together not by a mere fraternal tie or pledge of allegiance. Our real relationship is to Jesus as the center of life and activity.

3. There are no useless members of the body of Christ, as there are no superfluous organs in the human body. Paul declares that "those members of the body which seem to be more feeble, are necessary" (1 Cor. 12:22).

4. The unity we enjoy is not an achievement of men, but a creation of the Spirit. We are not one simply because of an agreement to work together, but we work together because we are one. We function naturally and normally as organs in a body. Only abnormal, afflicted or diseased members do not function.

5. We are interrelated and made into a cohesive unit by the indwelling Spirit. We do not surrender our individuality or prerogatives to one another, and are not to be conformists to anyone but Jesus. He is great enough to accept us all as we are, and under the umbrella of his love we can find shelter for all of our diversities.

6. Any aptitude or endowment, which enables us to perform any function in the body, is a gift of grace. We distinguish between them as natural or super-natural, but this has to do with the method of their bestowal. There is really no indication that God makes such a differentiation. In any event, they are all *charismata*, so whether the body functions solely through gifts immediately bestowed, or through gifts naturally received, or through a combination of both, it is charismatic.

The body of Christ has always functioned and always will function through gifts of God. Since there is no such thing as a non-charismatic age or era, it follows that, to separate and designate a certain period as a charismatic age, is to make a distinction unwarranted by fact or revelation. Instead of glorifying God by such a procedure, it rather speaks derogatorily of divine concern. It makes it appear that God withdraws all aid from the members until they make a mess of things and then steps in to perform a direct rescue operation.

But if the church can exist and function for any length of time without *charismata*, it can do so interminably, or until Jesus comes. And since God has shown himself to be a divine economist, exerting only enough power to fill a need, and no more, there would be no need of occasional outbursts designated as charismatic.

My conclusion is that all of us as individuals must employ the gifts we possess for the good of the whole body, and the body must provide an opportunity for us to grow and develop within the framework of fellowship. No one can say to another that he has no need of him. Each must receive the others as God received him. If we can conduct ourselves in this manner the world will see that we are truly “members one of another.”

In our next issue we will conclude this series on Romans, and then all of the issues for the year will be gathered and bound in a beautiful volume to be called “One Great Chapter.” You may place your order in advance for this book, at the price of \$2.95 per copy, payable on delivery. The supply will be limited to one thousand volumes, and we urge you to write at once if you are interested.

12. With Brotherly Love

We have arrived at that place in our study of the Holy Spirit where we must close our remarks for the year. I am thankful that we may do so by talking about our feelings toward one another. Unless the indwelling Spirit transforms our hearts until we can truly love one another, all else is in vain. Strange as it may seem after all of the fighting and tending, the debating and division, we will not be judged by our orthodoxy, but by how we treated the least of the brethren.

One may be quite ignorant of the finer points of those doctrinal issues, which we have thrust up as walls to separate God's precious children, but if he loves his brethren he can be saved. On the other hand, though he may be enlightened in all of the arguments and contentions of the warring parties, he abides in darkness and there is no light in him, if he hates the brethren.

It is not knowledge, but love, which covers a multitude of sins. It is not legalistic conformity but love, which keeps no account of wrongs, which bears all things, believes all things, and endures all things. It is love, which validates all things, and if one had such strong convictions that he would go to the martyr's stake rather than relinquish them, without love it would be an empty and profitless gesture.

One is not true to the faith, which is in Christ Jesus because he defends party shibboleths, but because he ignores them all. It is not strengthening factional barriers, or piling arguments upon them to make them higher, which will gain the approval of heaven, but simply going through them as if they were not there. And for the one who does this, they will not be there. The time has come to burst through our paper curtains and to lose all fear of the "paper tigers" who are the party "somewhats."

Of all that has transpired through the agency of the Spirit in my unprofitable life, I am happiest for the fact that he has poured out the love of God in my heart. I can now love all of God's children, and even my enemies. Since I started loving, there are a lot more of the former and a lot fewer of the latter. This makes it infinitely easier. I feel a deep sense of compassion for those who must repeat falsehoods to justify their animosity. But I shall never again be trapped by Satan into hatred for any of them.

I can now go anywhere and share with anyone who loves my God. Our differences are never as great as the welding power of his blood. I will not thwart the work of the cross to have my way. No opinion, no method of work, no interpretation of some subtle point of doctrine is as precious to me as my brother. I will hold my opinions in my mind and my brethren in my heart. I cannot give up my opinions as long as they are mine, but I will not give up my brothers as long as they are his. It is no longer a question with me of withstanding my conscience or withdrawing from my brethren. I just retain them both and cherish them. This is the Lord's doing and it is marvelous in my eyes.

"Let love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil: cleave to that which is good" (Romans 12:9).

Dissimulation refers to pretence or sham. It is hypocrisy, which is a transliteration of *hupokrites*, to speak under, or from behind a mask. The Greek dramatists did not portray emotions with their own features. They had masks, which exhibited all of the various sentiments from hilarity to deep grief. The performers selected a mask, which corresponded with their lines, and held it over their faces while they spoke. Thus, the word hypocrite in the new covenant scriptures means a stage-player, one who puts on an act.

The opposite of hypocrisy is sincerity, a word, which, in its Greek origin means, “to examine in the sunlight.” Ancient bazaars in the marketplace were dark crannies, and the clever purchaser of a fabric would insist upon taking it out in the open sun for closer inspection. That which passed the test was branded “sincere.” Sometimes love is feigned. It will not stand up when subjected to the full glare of close inspection.

Evil is any destructive force, whether affecting the physical, moral, or spiritual realm. Since anything, which disrupted or destroyed the natural course of things was labeled as evil, there was a difference between evil and sin. All sin was evil, but not all evil was sin. A hurricane was an evil, but not a sin. Perhaps the word here refers to that which rends the fabric of fellowship, and if so, it is especially appropriate to the theme under discussion.

Evil is not to be simply discounted or regarded as an aggravating problem. It is to be hated with such intensity that we neither embrace nor condone it. We must turn away from it with such abhorrence that we make no apology for it. To cleave to the good is to cling to it with unrelaxing grasp, never losing our hold and never allowing it to slip from our fingers.

“Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love: in honor preferring one another” (Romans 10:10).

The influence of William Penn and the Friends, or Quakers, is preserved in the United States by the commonwealth of Pennsylvania, a word which means “Penn’s Woods,” and which was bestowed upon this area when it was covered with forest. Philadelphia is the Greek term for brotherly love, as used in our text, and indicates the dream of peace-loving people who sought to found a place where all men could be received as brothers, and dwell together in mutual respect and harmony.

It is my contention that the only true city of brotherly love is the “city of the living God” (Hebrews 12:23). Its citizenry is composed of those who “esteem the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt,” and who have received a kingdom, which cannot be moved. One of the supreme tragedies of the ages is that the hated have become haters, and the persecuted have become the persecutors.

Just as there is no dynamic to compare with brotherly love, so there is no hatred so bitter and intense as that, which is shown when brethren turn against one another. I have personally observed those who met around the same table for years, singing and praying together, helping each other in time of need, and shedding the sympathizing tear, but experiencing a complete change when a root of bitterness sprang up among them.

Sometimes an issue has been introduced by a visiting preacher, who, under the guise of preaching the gospel, creates a faction around his pet opinion, making it appear that the fate of the whole kingdom of heaven throughout all ages, world without end, depends upon “taking a stand” with his partisan cohorts and himself. Preachers who labored faithfully in the past, and have built up the community of saints, are branded and stigmatized as compromisers and liberals because they refuse to shiver the body to splinters over the newest mental aberration. Families are riven apart, brethren no longer speak to one another, the body is split into rival tribes, suits are entered in the civil courts for possession of the property, a new outpost is started on the rock of opinion, and a bombardment is begun over the air and through the partisan journals. Challenges for debate are flung out before the world, and all of this is justified by making it appear that this is what our Lord meant when he said that he came not to send peace on the earth but a sword. Nothing is more absurd and asinine!

And no one is more dangerous to the peace and purity of the kingdom of grace than the self-appointed, egotistic, would-be champions whose goal is to line up a personal following, even if it means the ruthless carving of the body into bloody bits. The one who is manifestly approved when sects and parties arise is the one who ignores the whole mixed-up mess and refuses to give his allegiance to any segment or group. Such a person sees all of the deluded and partisan victims as his brethren, and refuses to become a factional stooge or party hack.

It is ridiculous to confine the term “brotherhood” to a little group of believers whose test of loyalty is some issue ballooned into prominence by the editor of a “faithful” journal. We now have as many “brotherhoods” as we have parties. I belong to none of these. I am a part of the brotherhood of all the saints. Every saved person on this earth is a member of it. Anywhere my Father has a child I have a brother. I am sick of the polarization of men and women around clannish totems. I renounce the whole sordid bit for my life. I have been set free by the grace of God, and I intend to allow no religious politician or “con man” to ever again make me a cat’s paw to pull factional chestnuts out of sectarian flames, which he has fanned.

I want to visit all of my brothers. I want to learn from them, to gain their insights, to share in their thinking. I want to show kindly affection to them, regardless of their past allegiance or present predicament. I have no desire or intent to proselyte them to my thinking. One cannot evangelize saved persons and he ought not proselyte them. You evangelize for the sake of the person; you proselytize for the sake of your party. Evangelizing is the work of the Holy Spirit, proselytizing is the fruit of the party spirit.

Perhaps one of the most difficult things to do is to prefer one another in honor. Most of us like to receive acclaim and recognition. A man who seldom reads a newspaper will purchase a dozen copies if his name appears in the fourth paragraph of column three on page eleven. To step back and allow another to take the applause, which is due ourselves requires more generosity than a lot of us possess. But this verse clearly indicates that we should be willing to “play second fiddle” if the cause will be enhanced. Someone has pointed out that it is amazing how much can be accomplished if one does not care who gets the credit.

With this we bring to a close our series on the work of the Spirit in the book of Romans. Those of you who came in late will be able to read the entire study for the year in the 192 page clothbound volume which will soon be ready under the title "One Great Chapter." It will contain every issue of the paper for 1971, and will be beautifully bound, so that it will make an excellent gift. You may send your order now for as many as you wish at the price of \$2.95 per copy. We will bill you with the books when you receive them.

Note from Internet Publisher: Donald L. Potter

June 30, 2010

I recall vividly each month eagerly awaiting the next installment of Carl Ketcherside's comments on Romans 1 - 8. I was 24 years old at the time and fresh out of Bible College. I had a yearning to serve the Lord and win as many souls to Christ as possible. Brother Ketcherside's comments each month were like a rich feast for my soul. His comments were scholarly and practical. His clear and lively style of writing helped me to understand the meaning of Paul's teaching without getting lost in a forest of exegetical and theological details.

It is my pleasure to share these insights with a new generation.

Paul's solution to the sin problem is timeless. It is fitting that we reconsider Paul's Epistle to the Romans and the work of the Holy Spirit for our day.

I copied text from the following URL. I then pasted it into a Word document, which I reformatted to make it more accessible.

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