







A

COMMENTARY

ON THE

NEW TESTAMENT.

BY

LUCIUS R. PAIGE.

VOLUME IV.

EPISTLE TO THE ROMANS.

Search the Scriptures. — JOHN v. 39.

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P R E F A C E.

THE first volume of this series was published in 1844; the second in 1845; and the third, in 1848. It was my intention that this fourth volume should be ready for publication in 1850. To my personal acquaintances I need not mention the causes which have so long delayed the execution of my purpose. To others, a detail of the labors which I have felt under obligation to perform, and of the trials, anxieties, and bereavements, to which I have been subjected, would be without particular interest. Let it suffice that I have appropriated to this work as much time and labor as appeared to be consistent with the due performance of other imperative duties; and that the completion of the volume has not been unnecessarily postponed.

Very possibly some may think it unnecessary to devote a whole volume to this one Epistle; but I felt unable otherwise to do even tolerable justice to the variety and importance of the subjects embraced in it. Long as the Commentary is, some portions of it are less extended than I desired, inasmuch as I was obliged to omit much which I had written, in order to keep the volume within reasonable compass.

In regard to the manner in which I have executed my task, I only remark, that I make no pretension to brilliancy of style; and if I did, I might reasonably doubt whether a commentary were a proper place for its display. As I said in the preface to the first volume, "I have attempted to express the truth in a plain and distinct manner, so that it may be apprehended by all classes of readers; and if this has been accomplished, my object thus far is fully attained."

The generous commendation accorded to my former labors is both gratifying and encouraging. It may be too much to expect that the present volume will find equal favor. It has been prepared under disadvantages difficult to be described, yet very sensibly realized. With

all its imperfections, however, I indulge the hope that it may not be an utterly useless labor; but that it may contribute somewhat to a more full appreciation of the important truths unfolded in this Epistle. With such hope I commend it to all lovers of truth, and especially to that branch of the Christian Church with which I have been officially and so pleasantly connected during more than a third part of a century.

LUCIUS R. PAIGE.

CAMBRIDGE, *May*, 1857.

INTRODUCTION

TO THE

EPISTLE TO THE ROMANS.

CONCERNING the authorship of this Epistle there is no difference of opinion among Christians. It is universally ascribed to Paul, the great Apostle to the Gentiles. There is a like general agreement that the Epistle was written at Corinth, during Paul's visit of three months at that city, noticed in Acts xx. 3, about A. D. 57, and that it was written in the Greek language. Although the Latin was the mother tongue of the Romans, yet historians assert that the Greek was understood and spoken at Rome when this Epistle was written. Moreover, it was designed for the use of many who were not natives of Rome, and to whom the Greek language was more familiar than the Latin, as it also was to the writer.

The church at Rome, as is manifest from the Epistle itself, was composed of Jews and Gentiles. Both classes had brought into the church some of the peculiar doctrines which they had believed before their conversion to Christianity. Hence arose differences between them, in regard both to faith and duty. And it may be remarked, that most of the errors which at any time have prevailed in the Christian church had their origin either in Gentile philosophy or in Jewish law;—a law which the gospel abrogated, and a philosophy which it branded as foolishness.

To induce his Roman brethren to cast aside these differences, and to unite in the simple faith of the gospel, and in the observance of its precepts, the Apostle unfolds and illustrates the whole Christian system of faith and duty. A brief synopsis of that system, as herein developed, may not improperly precede a more particular examination in detail. After a salutation, ch. i. 1—7, and an expression of his wish to visit Rome, ver. 8—15, the Apostle announces his theme, namely, the necessity and the nature of that salvation which is revealed in the gospel. The sinfulness of mankind is assumed, as an undeniable fact. It is then declared that the Gentiles, guided by the light of nature, had utterly failed to attain deliverance from sin, chap. i. 16—32; and that the Jews had been equally unsuccessful, though aided by a revealed law, chap. ii. 1—iii. 20. Throughout this exposition of human inability to attain full deliverance from sinfulness, the fact is constantly and distinctly kept in sight, that the uniform and certain consequence of sin is misery, both to Jew and Gentile. Hence appears the importance of deliverance, as well as

the necessity of a higher power to accomplish it. That power, he alleges, is divine grace, manifested in Jesus Christ, and made efficacious in its influence on the human heart through the medium of faith, chap. iii. 21—iv. 25. Divine grace is as universal as sin in extent, and more powerful in operation; because it overcomes and utterly destroys both sin and all its painful consequences, chap. v. This display of grace, however, affords no encouragement to a continuance in transgression; because sin always occasions misery while it endures, and because gratitude and obedience are the natural result of a firm faith in divine grace, chap. vi. The utter inefficacy of law, and the indispensable necessity and entire sufficiency of grace, in saving men from sin, are exhibited in chap. vii., viii. In accomplishing the work of salvation, God pursues his own method; unfolding his purpose to such persons, and in such degrees, as is consistent with the due execution of the whole design. He injures none, although, temporarily, some enjoy greater privileges than others; because the ultimate highest good is secured, not only of the moral universe in general, but of each individual in particular, chap. ix., x., xi. Hence, men are exhorted to devote themselves wholly to the service of such a gracious Ruler, and to obey all his precepts, chap. xii., xiii.; and especially are the Jewish and Gentile brethren exhorted to live in peace, as servants of the same Master; remembering that the same Lord Jesus Christ who came for the glory of Israel was also and equally commissioned to bestow light and salvation on the Gentiles. The Jews are therefore exhorted to strive for enlargement of faith; and the Gentiles to look with forbearance on the remaining prejudices and weaknesses of the Jews, chap. xiv., xv. The Epistle closes with salutations, a benediction, and a doxology, chap. xvi.

EPISTLE TO THE ROMANS.

CHAPTER I.

PAUL, a servant of Jesus Christ,

1. *Paul.* Agreeably to an ancient custom, the apostle places his name at the commencement of his epistle, instead of subscribing it at the end. The same form of address frequently occurs in the Old Testament. See Ezra i. 2 ; vii. 12 ; Dan. iv. 1. Even at the present time, it is used in cases of peculiar importance and solemnity ; as in royal charters or proclamations, and in official communications from one branch of the Christian church to another. The original Hebrew name of this apostle was Saul ; which, after his conversion, he exchanged for the Roman name Paulus, or, in its English form, Paul. See note on Acts xiii. 9. As he was in a peculiar manner an apostle to the Gentiles, it was fitting that he should use his Gentile rather than his Hebrew name, in his epistles to them ; and such was his uniform practice. ¶ *A servant.* The word here rendered *servant* indicates a person subject to the authority of another. It implies a master, to whom service is due. Hence it is sometimes used to express the condition of slavery, or servile bondage. It is applied also to royal courtiers, and officers of state, who are proud to be styled servants or slaves of the king. The prophets are styled the servants of God. Deut. xxxiv. 5 ; Jer. xxv. 4 ; Amos iii. 7. In like manner, the apostles are called, in the New Testament, servants of Christ. John xiii. 16 ; xv. 20. Our Lord acknowledged a more holy and tender relationship between himself and his disciples than that which is expressed by the words master and servant. He called them friends. John xv. 15. Yet they almost uniformly speak of themselves as servants ; thus acknowledging the authority of their Master, and their subjection to his holy law.

called *to be* an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God,
2 (Which he had promised afore

The condition indicated by the epithet which the apostle here assumes may be high or low, honorable or dishonorable. To be the servant of an equal is humiliating ; but it is by many accounted honorable to be the servant of a king, or of one in high official station. To be the servant of God, the servant of Christ, the servant of righteousness, is man's most dignified and happy condition ; while it is his deepest degradation, and most miserable estate, to be the servant of sin. ¶ *Of Jesus Christ.* The context indicates the apostle's intention, not only to profess his subjection to the authority of his Lord and Master, but also to assert his special appointment by that Master to a particular office ; namely, the office of an apostle, a chosen messenger, who might speak with authority, in his Master's name. ¶ *Called to be an apostle.* Or, a called apostle. The word here rendered *called* "sometimes has the sense merely of invited, bidden. Matt. xx. 16 ; xxii. 14. But, in the writings of Paul, it is not used in the sense merely of invited, but always in the sense of efficient calling, as we say ; that is, it means not only that the person designated has been invited or selected, but that he has accepted the invitation. I Cor. i. 1, 2, 24," &c. — *Stuart.* Our Lord, while he dwelt in the flesh, disclaimed teaching and acting by his personal independent authority ; he appealed to a greater than himself, whose right both to instruct and to govern could not be disputed. John v. 19, 30 ; vi. 38, 39 ; vii. 16. In like manner, Paul bespeaks attention to his instructions, and asserts his right to speak with authority, by declaring himself to be a called or appointed apostle, divinely commissioned by the great Head of the church.

by his prophets in the holy scriptures,)

Apostle literally signifies *one sent*. See note on Matt. x. 2. But among Christians this appellation is generally given only to the twelve, who were commissioned and sent out by our Lord, during his personal ministry, and to Paul, who was specially called and commissioned by the same Lord, after his resurrection from the dead. Acts ix. 1—6, 15; xxvi. 15—18. ¶ *Separated*. Designated, or set apart from the common mass. This expression was familiar to the Jews, of whom there were many at Rome, who were accustomed to speak of themselves as a peculiar people, separated or set apart from the mass of mankind. Some suppose Paul to refer particularly to the separation mentioned Acts xiii. 2; “the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul,” &c. But that separation appears to have been to a particular part of apostolic duty, rather than to the apostleship itself. More probably the reference is to that original separation or designation to this high office, which is indicated in Gal. i. 15, 16. “The meaning is, that God, who foreknows all things, did set him apart, choose, select him for the work of the gospel, even from the earliest period of his life. Gal. i. 15. So it is said of Jeremiah that he was set apart, selected for the prophetic office even before he was formed in his mother’s womb; by all which expressions is meant, that God knows all persons and events before they exist or take place, and that he has a definite object in view which he intends to accomplish by them.”—*Stuart*. ¶ *Unto the gospel of God*. His particular duty was to proclaim the gospel of God, and to defend the truth against all gainsayers. As his Master came into the world to “bear witness unto the truth,” John xviii. 37, so this chosen apostle was appointed to perform a like service, in his name and behalf. Acts xxvi. 16. “The gospel is said to be God’s, because it is good news from God; than which a greater commendation of the gospel cannot be conceived.”—*Macknight*. Gospel literally signifies good news. See note on Mark i. 1. Its qualifications by the sacred writers serve to enforce its literal meaning, and to signalize it as

a most precious gift from God to men. It is here called “the gospel of God;” and in ver. 16, “the gospel of Christ.” It is also denominated “the gospel of the grace of God,” Acts xx. 24; “the glorious gospel of Christ,” 2 Cor. iv. 4; “the gospel of peace,” Eph. vi. 15; “the gospel of your salvation,” Eph. i. 13.

2. *Which he had promised afore, &c.* The gospel or good news concerning our Lord Jesus Christ had been proclaimed by the prophets, long before he appeared on earth in a visible form. The apostle here refers to that fact, parenthetically, to convince his Jewish brethren at Rome that he did not renounce their sacred books; that the doctrine taught by him was not inconsistent with previous revelations: but that he taught the same truths in a more distinct manner; that what had formerly been revealed in a shadowy form, by types and figures, was now made manifest, in the life, instructions, miracles, death, and resurrection, of the promised Messiah. The Jews all believed that the prophets foretold the advent of the Messiah. The apostle would convince them that Jesus was that personage. To the same effect, he asserted, in presence of Agrippa, that he was accused and brought to trial, on account of the hope cherished by the fathers; and that he taught “none other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come.” Acts xxvi. 7, 22. The predictions concerning the Messiah, and the blessings of his reign, are found from the earliest period; even in connection with the first recorded human transgression, Gen. iii. 15. They became more and more distinct through the long line of prophets. To one of these the apostle refers with much emphasis, Gal. iii. 8, and points out the manner of its fulfilment; and that these predictions were good news to the Gentiles as well as to the Jews, he quotes prophetic testimony, ch. xv. 8—13. ¶ *By his prophets*. From the earliest ages, God had communicated his will to mankind by his prophets, “holy men of God, who spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.” 2 Pet. i. 21; Heb. i. 1. The predictions thus uttered had been

3 Concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the

seed of David according to the flesh ;

reordered, and were held in reverence by the Jews. ¶ *In the holy scriptures.* The books, or writings, of the Old Testament, in which the divine predictions were recorded. These were styled Holy Scriptures, because they were believed to have been written under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and therefore worthy of reverence. This phrase is now applied to the New Testament, as well as to the Old : but when the apostle wrote, the New Testament, as a book, or a collection of sacred writings, did not exist ; the reference therefore is here exclusively to the Old Testament. “The apostle here declares that he was not about to advance anything new. His doctrines were in accordance with the acknowledged oracles of God. Though they might appear to be new, yet he regarded the gospel as entirely consistent with all that had been declared in the Jewish dispensation ; and not only consistent, but as actually promised there. We may see here the reverence which Paul showed for the Old Testament. He never undervalued it. He never regarded it as obsolete, or useless. He manifestly studied it ; and never fell into the impious opinion that the Old Testament is of little value.”—*Barnes*. Even when contrasting the two dispensations, and exhibiting the superior glory and value of the second, on account of its greater definiteness and distinctness, its exhibition of the spirit and actual substance of the truth, he nevertheless admits that the old dispensation was glorious, and that the books containing its revelation were sacred. 2 Cor. iii. 6—18. See also Gal. iii. 19—25.

3. *Concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord.* The preceding verse is parenthetical, and this is to be taken in immediate connection with ver. 1. Paul was “separated unto the gospel of God, concerning his Son Jesus Christ.” The great theme of the gospel is Jesus Christ, his character, his instructions, his resurrection and ascension, and the blessings he was commissioned by the Father to bestow on mankind. As all spiritual blessings are to be communicated through him, Acts iv. 12, the good news of peace on earth, good will

toward men, life from the dead, and universal and endless holiness, may well be styled the gospel concerning our Lord Jesus Christ. Hence Paul declared that he was determined to know or preach nothing among his brethren, “save Jesus Christ and him crucified.” 1 Cor. ii. 2. See Col. i. 19. ¶ *Which was made of the seed of David.* That is, who by birth was one of the posterity of David. See note on Matt. i. 1. The ancient predictions concerning the Messiah uniformly pointed to the house of David, as that from which he should be selected ; and hence the apostles were careful, in their addresses to Jews, to enforce the fact that this portion of prophecy had its exact fulfilment in Christ. Moreover, it was well understood, by the enlightened heathen, that such was the character of the Jewish expectations, and such their understanding of the ancient predictions. It was one step gained, towards their conversion, therefore, that they should perceive the fulfilment of those predictions. ¶ *According to the flesh.* That is, in regard to his human nature, or, in regard to the body prepared for him. Heb. ii. 16 ; x. 5. The word here rendered *flesh* is used in the Scriptures with various shades of signification. It sometimes denotes literally the flesh, as distinguished from the bones and other parts of the human frame ; sometimes, the whole body, or the material part of the human frame, as distinguished from the mental and moral faculties ; sometimes, the whole man, existing in a mortal state, as distinguished from his condition in the future life. In this latter sense it seems to be used here. However highly exalted in the scale of being our Lord may have been, it is the clear testimony of the Scriptures, that, during his personal ministry on the earth, he dwelt in a human body, subject to the pains and the mortality incident to humanity. In this respect, namely, in respect to his body, he descended from David, agreeably to the concurrent predictions of the ancient prophets. This was truly an honorable descent, of which almost any Jew might well be proud. Yet neither our Lord nor

4 And declared *to be* the Son of God with power, according to the

his apostles ever alluded to this fact as in itself demanding any peculiar regard, but only as the fulfilment of prophecy. This phraseology denotes, very evidently, that, in some other respect, our Lord was not made or born of the seed of David, or was not to be regarded merely as one of his posterity. In regard to no other person is it declared in the Scriptures that he was born of any particular family *according to the flesh*. The same phrase is elsewhere used to denote other relationships or conditions; as ch. ix. 3; Eph. vi. 5; Col. iii. 22; but never to denote lineal descent. Its use here, of itself, is sufficient evidence that the apostle did not regard Jesus as a descendant of David, in regard to his entire personality. But he does not leave us to infer his meaning. He states it distinctly in the succeeding verse.

4. *Declared.* The word used here literally denotes *constituted* or *ordained*. But, as it conveys the sense of marking out, designating, or fixing by limits, most commentators unite in opinion that it is properly translated in this place. It is understood to mean exhibited, or demonstrated. ¶ *The Son of God.* Paul believed that Jesus Christ was a man, as is evident from the preceding verse; see also 1 Tim. ii. 5; but he also believed that he was more than man. He believed him to be more exalted in the scale of being than any other, the great Source of all existence only excepted. And this he expresses by the phrase Son of God. In all his epistles, Paul is uniform in attributing to Jesus a character and a nature far superior to mere humanity. He describes him as "the image of the invisible God, the first-born of every creature," Col. i. 15; as one whom all created beings should acknowledge to be "Lord, to the glory of God the Father," Phil. ii. 9—11; as exalted "above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come," Eph. i. 21; and in that sublime description of the result of Christ's ministry, the utter destruction of all obstacles to universal holiness and hap-

Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead:

piness, and the cordial and cheerful subjection of all souls to Him, even as he also is subject to the Father, the apostle uses such strong language in depicting the exalted nature and station of our Lord, that he thinks it proper to remind us that there is one Being superior to him. 1 Cor. xv. 27. Had he supposed there were any other exceptions, we might expect an intimation of it; but we find none. The natural inference is that, while Paul believed that Jesus "took on him the seed of Abraham," and in this respect was "made like unto his brethren," Heb. ii. 16, 17, and thus "was made of the seed of David, according to the flesh," verse 3, yet he believed also that he was, in other respects, so far superior to man, that he owed subjection only to the supreme God. ¶ *With power.* This phrase may indicate the divine power displayed in our Lord's resurrection from the dead; but it is generally, and perhaps more accurately, understood adverbially, as equivalent to the single word *powerfully*. He was powerfully declared, or irrefragably demonstrated, to be the Son of God. ¶ *According to the spirit of holiness.* The same Jesus who "was made of the seed of David according to the flesh," was demonstrated "to be the Son of God, according to the spirit of holiness." His relationship to the Father, by the spirit, was, at the least, as intimate as his relation to David, by the flesh. The purity and holiness of his life, his devotion and filial submission to the divine will, as plainly indicated his relationship to God, as his hunger, thirst, and other bodily infirmities, proved his relationship to man. "The design is, doubtless, to speak of him as a man, and as something more than a man: he was one thing as a man; he was another thing in his other nature. In the one, he was of David; was put to death, &c. In the other, he was of God; he was manifested to be such; he was restored to the elevation which he had sustained before his incarnation and death. John xvii. 1—5; Phil. ii. 2—11. The expression, according to the spirit of holiness, does not indeed of itself imply divinity. It denotes that

5 By whom we have received grace and apostleship for obedi-

holy and more exalted nature which he possessed, as distinguished from the human. What that is, is to be learned from other declarations. This expression implies simply that it was such as to make proper the appellation, the Son of God."—*Barnes*. ¶ *By the resurrection from the dead.* This was the crowning evidence that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of God. Various testimonies had previously been given. The circumstances attending his birth, Luke ii. 1—20; the heavenly attestation at his baptism, Matt. iii. 13—17; his immaculate purity of heart, as manifested in his conduct; his surpassing wisdom, constraining even unbelievers to acknowledge that "never man spake like this man," John vii. 46; the miraculous power, by which he controlled the elements, gave sight to the blind, and hearing to the deaf, healed the sick, and even raised the dead, Matt. viii. 23—27; Mark x. 46—52; vii. 32—37; Luke viii. 41—56; vii. 11—16; John xi. 11—47;—all these and other testimonies clearly indicated his heavenly origin and divine mission. To these he appealed while on earth, as of such convincing character, that unbelief was inexcusable. John x. 34—38; xv. 22—24. Superadded to all these testimonies to his Sonship, was his resurrection from the dead. And by this display of divine power it pleased the Father to demonstrate to man, beyond all reasonable doubt or cavil, that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of God. To this proof the apostles uniformly and constantly appealed, as conclusive. Acts ii. 22—36; iii. 13—16; iv. 10; I Cor. xv. 1—28. True, it is sometimes alleged that sundry persons were raised from the dead by the ancient prophets, by Jesus himself, and by his apostles; and, therefore, that such a resurrection cannot prove the Messiahship of the person raised. To this allegation there are two replies, either of which is sufficient. (1.) There is no evidence that any of the persons referred to, except Jesus, were raised to immortality; they were mortal, after their bodies were reanimated, and again went down to the grave. But Jesus returned no more to the place of corruption; see note

ence to the faith among all nations for his name :

on Acts xiii. 34; he ascended to the glory which he had with the Father before the world was, John xvii. 5; Acts i. 9—11; and thus did he bring life and immortality to light, being in this important sense "the first fruits of them that slept." I Cor. xv. 20—23. (2.) When others were raised to temporary life, the miracle was apparently performed, not on account of anything peculiar in the character of its subjects, but rather as an evidence of the divine power acting through the agent, and as an act of benevolence to the bereaved and afflicted. But, in regard to our Lord's resurrection, the circumstances were widely different. He had repeatedly and distinctly declared himself to be the Son of God, specially commissioned to perform a work of the highest importance: namely, to seek and to save the lost. He uniformly claimed to speak in the name of his Father, and to act by His authority and power. He claimed, indeed, to be the Father's representative on the earth, John v. 36; vii. 16; viii. 28; x. 36; and in other places, too numerous to specify. He also distinctly foretold his own resurrection from the dead. Is it for one moment to be supposed that God would set his seal to a gross imposture? That he would raise from the dead a person who had made such high pretensions,—blasphemous, if false,—unless he designed thereby to give assurance to the world that those pretensions were well founded, and that the person was truly his beloved Son? Whoever admits the fact that Jesus was raised from the dead, must necessarily acknowledge his divine mission and authority, and recognize him as the Son of God.

5. *By whom.* That is, by Jesus Christ. What intervenes between the first clause of verse 1 and this place may be regarded as a parenthesis. Having mentioned the name of Jesus, the apostle gives a brief but graphic description of his character, before proceeding with his main subject. This method of writing is of frequent occurrence in Paul's epistles. A remarkable instance is found in Eph. iii. 2, where a parenthesis commences which extends through the whole chapter, the subject

6 Among whom are ye also the called of Jesus Christ :

being resumed at the commencement of the next. The principal difficulty in understanding the writings of this apostle, 2 Pet. iii. 16, arises from this peculiarity in his style. Much care is necessary to distinguish accurately between his main theme and that which is inserted by way of parenthesis, having a close relation, indeed, to the theme, but not, strictly speaking, a part of it. He professes here to have received grace from the same Lord who had called him to the apostleship, and whose servant he was. The manner of his calling is described in his noble address to King Agrippa, Acts xxvi. 12—18. He "was not disobedient to the heavenly vision;" but, without conferring with flesh and blood, or asking instruction or permission from men, he proceeded immediately to proclaim the glorious gospel to the Gentiles. Gal. i. 11—19. ¶ *Grace and apostleship.* "That is, the grace or favor of apostleship. See Gal. ii. 9; Eph. iii. 2, where the apostolic office is styled grace. Or, if *grace* and *apostleship* are taken separately, apostleship may signify the office, and grace the supernatural endowments bestowed on Paul, to fit him for that office." — *Macknight.* ¶ *For obedience to the faith.* Obedience according to faith, or resulting from faith. The great object of his mission was to convert men from sin to holiness; to inspire in them a lively faith in God, resulting in a cheerful obedience to his laws. No faith is truly profitable, unless it work by love and purify the heart. Acts xv. 9; Gal. v. 6; James ii. 19, 20. In other words, faith should embrace the character of God in such a lovely and benignant aspect as to excite the most fervent gratitude and trust of the soul. The natural fruit of such faith is a renunciation of the service of sin, and a cheerful obedience to the divine commandments. This was the effect produced in Paul; he humbly and earnestly inquired, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" Acts ix. 6. And this effect he desired to produce in others by making them partakers of the same faith. ¶ *Among all nations.* His apostleship was not limited to the Jews, nor to any select portion of mankind. He was made "a debtor both to the Greeks

and to the barbarians; both to the wise and to the unwise." Verse 14. Our Lord, before his ascension, commanded his apostles to go and teach all nations; to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. Matt. xxviii. 19; Mark xvi. 15. This command seems at first to have been very imperfectly understood. The apostles confined their ministry to Judea; and when Peter, instructed by a miraculous vision, ventured to preach the gospel among the Gentiles, his brethren called him to a strict account: nor were they satisfied until they were convinced that God had actually bestowed on the Gentiles the same spiritual gift as on themselves. Acts xi. 1—18. But in the case of Paul there was no misunderstanding nor hesitation. He understood his commission to be unlimited in extent. Indeed, he regarded the Gentiles as his special charge. The Jews already had the ministry of the other apostles, and were not in great need of his services. But the Gentiles were as sheep without a shepherd; and to their service he devoted his life and all his powers. The fact that his commission extended to Gentiles as well as to Jews is distinctly and very properly announced at the commencement of this epistle to a distant church, composed in part of Gentiles, few of whom he had ever seen. ¶ *For his name.* Or, on account of his name; that is, the name, or the person, or the character, of Jesus Christ. It was the object of Paul's ministry to convince men that Jesus was truly the Son of God, so that through faith in his gospel they might love and obey the Father. The meaning of this whole verse seems to be substantially embraced in the paraphrase by *Macknight*: "From whom, since his resurrection, I have received miraculous powers and apostleship, in order that through my preaching him as the Son of God, the obedience of faith may be given to him, among all the Gentiles, on account of his being the Son of God."

6. *Among whom.* That is, among those who were embraced in the apostolic commission. He had a right, and it was his duty, to address them, because they were among the number to whom he was commanded to testify con-

7 To all that be in Rome, beloved of God, called *to be* saints : Grace

cerning the Son of God. Not only were they included in his commission, but they had been made obedient through faith in the Son of God ; for it is manifest that this epistle was particularly addressed to a church of Christian believers. Hence, some are inclined to interpret the words in this more limited sense. Either construction is consistent with the general scope of the address. ¶ *The called of Jesus Christ.* That is, Christians. See note on ver. 1. The brethren at Rome had heard the gospel, and believed. They acknowledged Jesus to be the Son of God, and were therefore Christians. Doubtless they were far from being perfect. They were still under the influence of many errors, both in faith and in practice ; for the apostle labors to correct both, in this epistle. Nevertheless, he acknowledges them as Christians, and styles them *the called of Jesus Christ.*

7. *To all that be at Rome.* The address is not confined to Romans, or the permanent inhabitants of Rome ; but it includes also all Christians who might be present at its reception. Rome, as a nation, was then the mistress of the world ; and Rome, as a city, was the centre of attraction, where were gathered the representatives of all nations. Hence it was at once an important station for a church, whose influence might be felt to the remotest borders of the civilized world, through those visitors who there became acquainted with the gospel of Christ, and also the central point where representatives of the most distant churches were accustomed to congregate. To all, therefore, whom his message might reach, whether Gentile or Jew, whether Greek or barbarian, bond or free, the apostle extends his Christian salutation. ¶ *Beloved of God.* All men, without exception, are beloved of God ; for he is the Father of the spirits of all flesh, and loves his children with a more pure and fervent affection than was ever cherished by an earthly parent. Yet there is a peculiar sense in which Christians are beloved of God. They more fully realize his love ; they enjoy an assurance of his approbation ; they strive to mould their spirits into the fashion of his spirit, by obedience to his commandments, and

thus experience a degree of peace and joy to which the ungodly is a stranger. In this peculiar sense, the phrase, beloved of God, should be here understood. Nevertheless, it should never be forgotten that the love of God towards his children precedes their love towards him ; that the mission of Christ was the fruit of divine love ; that the only sufficient reason why we should love God is, that he first loved us, 1 John iv. 10, 19 ; that the only sufficient reason why we should trust in him, and surrender ourselves wholly to his disposal, in choice as well as in fact, is, that he is good unto all, and his tender mercies are over all his works. So that, in order to a true conversion, or in order to become true Christians, and thus to experience that peculiar sense of the divine love which is here indicated, we must first believe in that universal, unbounded love of the Father, which extends to all the children of his creation, even while they remain ignorant of him, or enemies to him, and which consults and secures their permanent good. Convince a man of that love, and the first step is taken to his conversion. Without this, all his obedience is that of a slave, dreading the lash ; not of an affectionate child, rejoicing and trusting in his Father's love. In short, we must confide in God's universal love before we can realize what may not very improperly be styled his special love. This point is stated and fully illustrated in chapter v. of this epistle. ¶ *Grace to you and peace.* A phrase here importing generally all the blessings of the gospel. "In the apostolic benedictions, *grace* signifies the influences and fruits of the spirit, the favor and protection of God, the pardon of sin, the enjoyment of eternal life. All which are called *grace*, because they are gratuitously bestowed by God." — *Macknight.* Peace is opposed to war and contention ; it is also opposed to agitation and disquiet of whatever kind. In this sense, the sacred writers declare that there is no peace to the wicked ; but that great peace is the portion of such as love the divine law and obey it. The apostle also speaks of "the peace of God, which passeth all understanding," Phil. iv. 7, referring, doubtless, to that state of quiet

to you, and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.

trust and childlike confidence in the divine care and affection, which he elsewhere expresses in the declaration that "being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ." Ch. v. 1. This kind of peace is wholly inconsistent with a slavish fear of God. He must not be regarded as a stern and vindictive being, ready to inflict torment; but he must be recognized as the Father and unchangeable friend of his children, the giver of all blessings, if the believer would enjoy peace. "Fear hath torment," 1 John iv. 18; and such torment is destructive of peace. To the same effect, our Lord addressed his disciples: "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you; not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." John xiv. 27. Such is the apostolic benediction which, with slight variations of phraseology, is found in all the epistles of Paul. And therein he adhered strictly to the spirit of the command given by Jesus to his apostles, when he sent them forth to preach the gospel of peace. See note on Luke x. 5. He did not attempt to terrify them by representing God as a sovereign from whose wrath they must fly to some other being for shelter; but his message was declaratory of the divine love, and productive of peace precisely in proportion to the strength of the believer's faith in it. To this characteristic of the gospel he refers, ch. xv. 13: "Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost." Would that all professed ambassadors for Christ might equally conform to their Master's instruction, and exhibit his spirit! ¶ *From God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.* God is the source of all blessings; and from him descendeth "every good gift and every perfect gift." Jas. i. 17. And as Jesus, the Son of God, is the chosen medium through whom these blessings are communicated, especially the blessings of the gospel, which are here particularly intended, there is a manifest propriety in joining his name with that of the Father. The messenger is here joined with him who commissioned him, in like

manner as the message itself is so joined, by the same apostle. Acts xx. 32: "And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified." What God does by his gospel, or the word of his grace, is represented as done by that gospel. And the blessings which he bestows through his Son are, in like manner, represented as bestowed by the Son. Some have attempted to extort from this language proof of the doctrine of the Trinity; but *Clarke*, himself a Trinitarian, is much more judicious, and expresses what is certainly the most obvious and probable meaning, thus: "The apostle wishes them all the blessings which can flow from God, as the fountain of grace; producing in them all the happiness which a heart filled with the peace of God can possess; all of which are to be communicated to them through the Lord Jesus Christ."

Thus ends the apostolic salutation. It is strikingly characteristic of the apostle Paul. It gives distinct intimation of what may be expected, as we proceed; not only as to the subject of discourse, but as to the manner of treating it. The great theme is the gospel of grace, revealed through the Son of God, whose testimony was fully authenticated by his resurrection from the dead. But, in the development of this most important subject, we are not to expect to find Paul plodding along in a uniform and monotonous style; proceeding step by step to unfold each successive feature by the rules of the schoolmen. On the contrary, we shall find him often apparently so excited by his theme, that, bursting away from the trammels of logic, he kindles into a perfect blaze of glory, and pours forth the emotions of his soul without restraint. Having thus given vent to his rapturous gratitude, he returns to his subject, and pursues his illustration of it, steadily or otherwise, as the case may be, until he has exhibited all its features in a clear light. It is, perhaps, because this peculiarity has been to some extent overlooked, that some have denied that Paul was a good logician, and

8 First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your

faith is spoken of throughout the whole world.

have been disposed to represent his writings as highly rhetorical. It would be well to refrain from disparaging the logical powers of Paul, until the objector can himself frame a more conclusive argument than some which occur in this epistle, and in others of the same writer. Whoso will follow the apostle carefully through his argument, rightly distinguishing between what is strictly the argument and what is interposed, parenthetically, for illustration, or as an outburst of feeling, will find that the conclusion fairly and inevitably results from the premises.

8. *First.* That is, in the order of time, not in importance. It was a conciliatory declaration, that they were so far advanced in knowledge and grace as to have acquired a widespread commendation, before proceeding to point out what was yet lacking in their faith and practice. The language of the apostle was such as must have convinced his brethren that he desired their highest good, and rejoiced in it; and to this end the introduction seems designed. ¶ *I thank my God.* Regarding God as the original author of all blessings, firmly believing that the gospel was designed to promote the true happiness of all believers, and cherishing a lively sympathy with the whole human family, the apostle gives thanks to God for the blessing bestowed upon his brethren at Rome; that he had permitted them to hear the gospel and to believe it. ¶ *Through Jesus Christ.* As Jesus was the medium through whom the divine blessing was conferred, it was fit also that he should be the medium through whom thanks were returned. While we should always be careful to distinguish between the God and Father of all, who is the original source of good, and the Son of God, who is the chosen messenger of divine grace, we shall do well also to avoid that squeamishness, which hesitates to recognize the Son, in our addresses to the Father. Our thanksgivings will be none the less acceptable to the Father, because offered in the name, or through the medium, of his well-beloved Son. Our prayers will be none the less acceptable at the

throne of grace, because we recognize him who died for us while we were yet sinners, "that he might bring us to God," ch. v. 8; 1 Pet. iii. 18, as the proper channel of our communications with the Most High. However willing God may be, and doubtless is, to bestow blessings on all his children, voluntarily and without solicitation, yet we are encouraged to ask for needed blessings, and to thank him for their bestowment. In like manner, it is well to remember, that while he is ready to hear the humblest voice, yet our Saviour has encouraged us to address the Father in his name. John xvi. 23. See also note on John xvi. 26. And the language of the apostles is not without a like encouragement. "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." 1 John ii. 1. "Wherefore he is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them." Heb. vii. 25. I trust that I believe firmly and undoubtingly in the spontaneous and universal love of God to the souls whom he has made, and in the duty of men to offer to him the tribute of grateful and obedient hearts; yet I confess I have no sympathy with that spiritual pride, which disdains to acknowledge Jesus as the "mediator between God and men," 1 Tim. ii. 5, and which will not so much as thank the Father through the Son. ¶ *Your faith.* That is, in the gospel. Something more than mere Christian belief seems, however, to be intended. The fruits of faith, purity of life, and the deportment worthy of their vocation, Eph. iv. 1, are included. Faith, without its natural and proper accompaniments, is not especially commendable or profitable. Jas. ii. 19. But, as it is the first step towards a Christian life, it is frequently used to signify religion, or a Christian character, and such is probably its import here. ¶ *Is spoken of.* Known and commended, at least by all of "like precious faith." ¶ *Throughout the whole world.* "As we say, everywhere; or throughout the Roman empire. The term *world* is often thus limited in the Scriptures;

9 For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son, that without ceasing I

and here it denotes those parts of the Roman empire where the Christian church was established. All the churches would hear of the work of God in the capital, and would rejoice in it. Comp. Col. i. 6, 23; John xii. 19. It is not improper to commend Christians, and to remind them of their influence; and especially to call to their mind the great power which they may have on other churches and people. Nor is it improper that great displays of divine mercy should be celebrated everywhere, and excite in the churches praise to God." — *Barnes*. Thus Paul stimulated the Macedonians to be generous in "ministering to the saints," by even *boasting* of the generosity of their brethren at Achaia, 2 Cor. ix. 1, 2; and the zealous example, thus commended to them, was productive of good, by inducing them also to be generous and liberal in providing for the necessities of the poor. And, in like manner, he stimulated the generosity of the Corinthians, by making known to them the remarkable liberality of the Macedonians. 2 Cor. viii. 1—4. That kind of praise which only tends to the growth of pride should be religiously avoided; but it is certainly allowable to commend the example of the good to the imitation of all men.

9. *For God is my witness.* Paul was not accustomed to take the name of the Lord in vain, nor to invoke God irreverently. But he desired to give the strongest assurance, to his brethren at Rome, of his interest in their welfare. He appeals, therefore, to the Searcher of hearts, that he constantly remembered them in his prayers, and that he had long desired to visit them. ¶ *Whom I serve with my spirit.* Not a mere outward conformity to any ritual, but a spiritual service. Paul did not intend to assert that his service was perfect in all points; but he did intend, that it was his honest and constant endeavor to render such service. See ch. vii. 18—25. ¶ *In the gospel of his Son.* Either in the ministry of that gospel, for the promulgation of which he had been ordained a preacher and

make mention of you always in my prayers,

10 Making request (if by any

an apostle; or the reference may be to his efforts to maintain such a godly life and conversation as was consistent with the spirit and power of that gospel. ¶ *Without ceasing, &c.* Constantly, habitually. Of course, the literal meaning of the language is not to be pressed, as if the apostle did nothing else but pray on behalf of the Romans; but it was his uniform practice, when engaged in devotional exercises, to remember them, and to express his desire to visit them. ¶ *I make mention of you.* The true Christian is not content with a selfish devotion. It is not enough for him, to ask for personal blessings, and to thank God only for blessings enjoyed by himself. But he also embraces, in his supplications and thanksgivings, his brethren, whom he is bound to love, as the children of the same Father, objects of the same love, and joint-heirs to the same inheritance, with himself. In so doing, he imitates his Lord and Master, who, in that prayer, which is more fully recorded than any other, John xvii., prayed for himself, and for his chosen disciples; nor for these alone, but for the whole human family. The apostle enforces the duty of praying for all classes of men. 1 Tim. ii. 1—8. And our Saviour gave special commandment, that even our friends should not monopolize our love and prayers; but that we should also love our enemies, and pray for them who endeavor to injure us. Matt. v. 44. His own prayer for his murderers, as he hung on the cross, Luke xxiii. 34, was dictated by the same spirit which he exhorts and commands his disciples to cherish. As it is right and proper, therefore, to pray for enemies, it cannot be wrong to make mention of friends, or of Christian brethren, in our prayers. This Paul did. It is well, if we do likewise. ¶ *Always.* This word more properly belongs in the next verse. As it stands here, it appears superfluous. A slight change in the phraseology, which the original easily admits, will more perspicuously exhibit the apostle's meaning: "Without ceasing I make

means now at length I might have a prosperous journey by the

mention of you in my prayers, always making request," &c.

10. *Making request.* His desire for their welfare was general; yet, in particular, he had desired to visit them, for reasons which he presently assigns; and this particular desire was specifically expressed in his prayers. ¶ *If by any means.* Or, that by some means. He earnestly besought that some way might be opened for the accomplishment of his long-cherished desire. ¶ *Now at length.* After so long delay. He had long cherished this desire, and often endeavored to gratify it, as he says more definitely in ver. 13. The prospect of visiting them seems to have appeared more promising, at about this time. ¶ *Prosperous journey.* Dr. Clarke understands the word used here to mean rather a *prosperous meeting*. But, in either case, the petition was allowable and proper. "A man's heart deviseth his way; but the Lord directeth his steps." Prov. xvi. 9. We are constantly dependent on the divine protection. It is as proper to ask guidance and preservation from harm, on a long and dangerous journey, as it is to ask for any other temporal blessing. ¶ *By the will of God.* This is a qualification which should be expressed, or at the least distinctly felt and implied, in all our prayers. A sense of absolute dependence on God, and of entire subjection to his will, should be constantly cherished. Accordingly the apostle admonishes us not to speak too confidently of what we shall do, at any future time. "Ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapor, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away. For that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that." James iv. 13—15. And we are quite as dependent on God for wisdom to discern what is right and productive of good, as for strength to accomplish our purposes. So that, in all our prayers, we should ask for what we regard as blessings only so far as their bestowment may be consistent with the divine will. Our Saviour has given us an example of trust and submission, which we should carefully imitate. In the

will of God) to come unto you.
11 For I long to see you, that

hour of his utmost extremity, when, in the language of the apostle, he "offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears," Heb. v. 7, he exclaimed, "nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt." Matt. xxvi. 39. Thus, also, Paul had respect to the will of God, in his prayers for permission to visit Rome. His prayer was answered, in due time; but in a manner far different from what he had desired and anticipated. He visited Rome; but he was carried thither as a prisoner, and suffered shipwreck during his passage. See Acts, ch. xxvii., xxviii. Yet, under all his trials, and in the midst of imminent peril, he manifested the utmost confidence in God: not a murmur escaped his lips against the allotments of divine Providence. Although his journey might have been regarded as disastrous, rather than as prosperous, yet doubtless his visit was profitable to his brethren and gratifying to himself; for during the "two whole years" of his residence at Rome, "in his own hired house," he preached the gospel faithfully. See notes on Acts xxviii. 30, 31.

11. *For I long to see you.* The apostle repeats the declaration of his strong desire to visit his brethren, and, in the words following, assigns the reason; namely, that spiritual advantages might result both to him and to them. He was not prompted by an idle curiosity to see the wonders and grandeur of Rome, nor did he regard his contemplated journey as an excursion for pleasure. He had far higher incitements. He desired to confer with his brethren on subjects belonging to their peace, wherewith one might edify another. ¶ *That I may impart unto you some spiritual gift.* Some have understood Paul to refer to the miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit, which had been previously bestowed on him. They have supposed he hoped to advance the cause of his Master by enabling the brethren at Rome to work miracles. But this explanation is not consistent with the following verse, where different language is used to express and explain the same idea. The spiritual gifts which he contemplated were addi-

I may impart unto you some spiritual gift, to the end ye may be established ;

tional clearness and strength of faith in the gospel, and a more exact conformity to its precepts. He trusted the interview might enable them mutually to "grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." 2 Pet. iii. 18. ¶ *To the end.* For the purpose. ¶ *Ye may be established.* That is, in the faith and practice of the gospel. There are various grades of faith among those who may be regarded as Christians. With some, it is feeble, not resting on any well-defined views or accurate knowledge of divine truth ; but the result, rather, of a willingness to conform to the opinions of others. With others, it is more strong, being fortified by a partial knowledge of the truth, as revealed, but, at the same time, clogged and encumbered by many traditions and fables of an entirely different character. Such have need to be established in the faith. And such, doubtless, were many of the brethren at Rome. Their opportunities for becoming acquainted with the gospel had been limited. Moreover, the Gentiles among them had not entirely freed their minds from the fables of heathenism ; nor had the Jews effectually renounced Judaism. All needed more full knowledge. All needed to have their remaining errors eradicated. All needed to be established in the faith. Indeed, the most enlightened Christian has need repeatedly and often to review the grounds of his faith, that he may realize precisely where he stands, and why he stands there ; lest, by any means, his faith be shaken by the wiles of the adversary. Hence the apostle says, "I stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance, that ye may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets," &c. 2 Pet. iii. 1, 2. See also ch. xv. 14, 15 ; 2 Pet. i. 12, 13. Thus Paul desired to refresh the minds of his brethren at Rome, that their faith might become established, through a more clear and distinct apprehension of divine truth.

12. *That is, that I may be comforted together with you, &c.* He would not have them suppose that he considered

12 That is, that I may be comforted together with you, by the mutual faith both of you and me.

himself altogether perfect in knowledge or happiness. It is sometimes said that Paul used this language to conciliate his brethren, by taking off the sharp edge of his previous language. Doubtless it was conciliatory, to intimate that he hoped to receive as well as to impart comfort and spiritual advantage in his visit to them. Yet Paul was not one who would state an untruth, to conciliate friend or foe. He actually hoped to derive advantage to himself ; and he frankly and very judiciously acknowledged it. He desired to be a helper, and, at the same time, to be helped in the matter of Christian faith. "He anticipated, by a journey to Rome, his own growth in grace and goodness, as well as the confirmation of their faith. Such is the nature of Christianity in every age ; a system of giving and of receiving, of blessing and of being blessed, of action and of reaction of good : this is the sphere of vital relations and influences into which we are introduced by the benevolent Saviour."—*Livermore.* ¶ *By the mutual faith both of you and me.* Individual faith is, unquestionably, confirmed and established, to a very considerable extent, by a corresponding faith in others. It is well known that men often cling to old and long-established errors, for no better reason than because their associates cherish them. They imagine that the general belief of men whom they respect and esteem is a sufficient justification of their own belief. If this be true in regard to belief in errors, it is no less true in regard to faith in the truth. Mutual faith encourages believers to stand fast in their profession, and also to seek for further light and more perfect knowledge. So far as Paul himself was concerned, he had already the most substantial reason for the faith that was in him, by a revelation of the gospel through the personal ministry of the Lord Jesus. Yet it encouraged him, and comforted him, to witness the same faith in others, whose means of acquiring knowledge had been less direct than his. And, moreover, it served even to increase his faith, to witness the blessed fruit of a like faith

13 Now I would not have you ignorant, brethren, that oftentimes I purposed to come unto you, (but was let hitherto.) that I might

in others. If his faith might thus be established by communion with his brethren at Rome, how much more theirs!

13. *Oftentimes I purposed, &c.* The strong desire of Paul to visit Rome was not a new sensation. It had long existed, and he had repeatedly sought to gratify it. How often, we have no means to determine. Although his former efforts had been unsuccessful, he appears now to have had a more encouraging prospect; and he had even arranged the course of his journey, first to Jerusalem, then to Rome, and thence to Spain. See ch. xv. 23—29; and compare Acts xix. 21. This arrangement was in part accomplished, and in part defeated. He went voluntarily to Jerusalem, and was carried as a prisoner to Rome. Yet, even this was not altogether involuntary on his part: he appealed from the Jewish rulers unto Cæsar, knowing that the appeal must be tried, if at all, at Rome. ¶ *But was let hitherto.* Hindered, or prevented. The word *let* is now almost uniformly used in the sense of permit, or allow. Formerly, it was often used in a precisely contrary sense, and signified to oppose, obstruct, or hinder. This use of the word is now obsolete; but it occurs occasionally in the Scriptures. Isa. xliii. 13; 2 Thess. ii. 7. It was in common use when the present translation of the Bible was made. ¶ *Some fruit.* This may refer partly to the mutual advantage of communion, mentioned in ver. 11, 12; but it probably means more than this. Paul desired not only to impart a spiritual gift to his brethren, by establishing them more firmly in the faith, and encouraging them to the more diligent performance of every Christian duty, but he desired also to benefit those who were yet unbelievers, by convincing them that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and inducing them to embrace his gospel. He was specially commissioned to labor among the Gentiles. His ministry had been abundantly blessed. Wherever he preached, converts were multiplied, as the fruit of his ministry. He desired

have some fruit among you also, even as among other Gentiles.

14 I am debtor both to the Grecks, and to the Barbarians,

to reap similar fruit at Rome. Hence he was anxious to preach the gospel in that city also, ver. 15, as it was the power of God unto the salvation of all believers, ver. 16. Thus doing, he hoped to promote the glory of his Master, and to advance the highest happiness of men. That such fruit might grow from the seed planted by him, was his ardent desire; and he confidently looked unto God, who alone was able to grant the increase, 1 Cor. iii. 5—8, that the fruit might abound. See notes on John xv. 16.

14. *I am a debtor.* His indebtedness did not arise from any favors received by him from those to whom he refers, but from the fact that God had converted him, and commissioned him as an instrument for the conversion of others. His feet had been arrested, and turned away from the path of iniquity, through the power of the gospel. His heart had been filled with a spirit of love, by a discovery of the divine goodness. He felt that his brethren had a righteous claim on him, that he should do all in his power to make them partakers of the same blessings. Moreover, he had received a positive command to be diligent in this work. When, on his way to Damascus, for a far different purpose, he had fallen prostrate before the exceeding glory of the Lord Jesus, he received this commission: "Rise and stand upon thy feet: for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness, both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee: delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom I now send thee, to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me." Acts xxvi. 16—18. This command he felt bound to obey. While a single man among the Gentiles, or, indeed, among his Jewish brethren, remained ignorant of the gospel, and unconverted

both to the wise, and to the unwise.

15 So, as much as in me is, I

by its power, he felt himself a debtor to that man, bound to impart unto him, so far as he was able, the message of grace and salvation. He regarded it as his duty thus to preach. Doubtless, he enjoyed great satisfaction in the performance of this duty. It filled his heart with joy to witness the spiritual advantage wrought in the hearts of believers. And, though persecuted by unbelievers, and even scourged and imprisoned, he nevertheless rejoiced, like those who were earlier called to the apostleship, that he was "counted worthy to suffer shame" for the name of Jesus. Acts v. 41. But, besides the satisfaction of preaching, and the joy of success, he was constantly stimulated by a sense of duty. A treasure had been committed to him, for the benefit of others, and he owed to them the service of imparting it. He claimed no applause for his labors, as though he merited a reward; but he represented his best exertions in the promulgation of the gospel as merely the performance of his duty. "For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of; for necessity is laid upon me: yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel. For if I do this thing willingly, I have a reward; but if against my will, a dispensation of the gospel is committed unto me." I Cor. ix. 16, 17. ¶ *Both to the Greeks, and to the Barbarians, &c.* The design of this phraseology manifestly is to include all men, of whatever nation or character. The Greeks had been accustomed to call all other nations barbarians. As the Romans became polished by the cultivation of the arts and sciences, derived from Greece, they claimed to be regarded as Greeks, in respect to civilization, and accounted all others as barbarians. The apostle intended to be understood, that he recognized it as his duty to preach the gospel to all nations, both the civilized and uncivilized, both the wise and the ignorant. Indeed, it would seem that those who accounted themselves wise, or were wise in their own conceit, had even more need than the common people of a thorough course of teaching. Ver. 22, &c

am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also.

16 For I am not ashamed of the

15. *So, as much as in me is.* As far as I am able. As far as opportunity shall be given. ¶ *I am ready.* There was no hesitation on his part. He was even desirous to engage in the work, as appears by his preceding declarations. ¶ *To preach the gospel.* This was his great work. This was the burden of all his communications. He counted all things else of minor importance. At the close of this epistle, he repeats his purpose to visit Rome, and declares, "I am sure that when I come unto you, I shall come in the fulness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ." Ch. xv. 29. ¶ *To you that are at Rome.* Not alone to native-born Romans; but to all, of whatever nation, who might be in the imperial city, whether Greek or Barbarian, whether wise or unwise, whether Jew or Gentile. "In regard that Paul, after acknowledging he was bound to preach the gospel both to the Greeks and to the Barbarians, adds, 'I am ready to preach the gospel even to you who are in Rome,' the idolatrous inhabitants of Rome certainly were included in the expression, 'You who are in Rome.' This verse, therefore, as well as the following, is a proof that the epistle to the Romans was intended, not for the Roman brethren alone, but for unbelievers also, to whom copies of it might be shown." — *Macknight.*

Here ends what is usually regarded as the introduction to this epistle; though some include the next two verses. Having distinctly stated his desire to see his brethren at Rome, and the cause of it; having, moreover, in a very happy and conciliatory manner, expressed his conviction that the interview would be mutually pleasant and profitable; and having reminded them that he was constrained by a sense of duty to God and to man to promulgate the gospel of Jesus Christ, he proceeds from this point to exhibit the nature and effects of that gospel, and to enforce its doctrines and its precepts.

16. *I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ.* However wise, and cultivated, and refined, those at Rome might be, — however learned in philosophy, — Paul was not ashamed to proclaim and defend

gospel of Christ: for it is the

the gospel in their presence. Some suppose he alluded to certain heathen mysteries, which were kept secret from the multitude, as if the priests were ashamed to exhibit them openly. There was nothing in the gospel which required concealment; nothing of which its advocates need be ashamed. It was honorable to God, and full of blessings for men. "The Jews, says the apostle, cast me out of their synagogues; the Gentiles persecute me: all desire that I should die ignominiously. But I despise the shame and the contumely, even as my Lord did. Heb. xii. 2. Yea, I esteem these things honorable to me. I teach all things openly. Contumely neither terrifies me nor makes me silent."—*Rosenmuller*. Notwithstanding all the reproaches cast by unbelievers upon the gospel and its advocates, Paul was not ashamed of it; for he felt its renewing power, rejoiced in the blessed hopes which it inspires, and gloried in it as a manifestation of divine love. "Men should be ashamed of crime and folly. They are ashamed of their own offences, and of the follies of their conduct, when they come to reflect on it. But they are not ashamed of that which they feel to be right, and of that which they know will contribute to their welfare, and to the benefit of their fellow-men. Such were the views of Paul about the gospel; and it is one of his favorite doctrines, that they who believe on Christ shall not be ashamed."—*Barnes*. ¶ *Of Christ*. These words are omitted by Griesbach, as not found in many ancient manuscripts. But the sense of the passage is the same, whether they be omitted or inserted, whether spurious or genuine. Paul has hitherto spoken of the gospel of Christ, and of none other. In another place he pronounces an anathema against any one, even though it were an angel from heaven, who should preach any other gospel. Gal. i. 8, 9. We may be sure, therefore, that it was the gospel of Christ of which he was not ashamed. ¶ *Power of God*. According to a Hebrew idiom, this may be interpreted *very powerful*. Thus the "Mountain of God" signifies a great mountain; the "River of God," a great river. In this sense the apostle may be under-

stood to affirm that the gospel is very powerful, or exerts a mighty power, in accomplishing the salvation of men.

"The word of God is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword; piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow: and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." Heb. iv. 12. But I prefer the more plain and literal sense of the words. The gospel is the power of God unto salvation, being the instrument of his power, as well as a manifestation or revelation of his power, by which alone salvation can be wrought. All other methods have proved ineffectual, as the apostle proceeds to show. Human wisdom and human efforts had already been exerted in vain. The gospel of Christ reveals a more excellent, and the only effectual, method of salvation. It exhibits the power of God as the efficient cause of salvation. What is impossible to man, is easy to God. What man has uniformly failed to accomplish, God will secure effectually. "The expression means, that it is the way in which God exerts his power in the salvation of men. It is the efficacious or mighty plan by which power goes forth to save, and by which all the obstacles of man's redemption are taken away."—*Barnes*. "The *power of God* means that by it God exercises his power; it is powerful through the energy which he imparts, and so it is called his power."—*Stuart*. "A dispensation of religion in which God most effectually exerts his power for saving every one who believeth."—*Macknight*. "It is that wherein God exerts himself, and shows his power for the salvation of those who believe."—*Locke*. "The almighty power of God accompanies this preaching to the souls of them that believe, and the consequence is they are saved; and what but the power of God can save a fallen, sinful soul?"—*Clarke*. "It is a great relief to human weariness and distrust, while engaged in promoting the influence of Christianity, to fall back on this proposition, and remember that it is 'the power of God,' and therefore instinct with all the energies and means of a final victory over sin and

every one that believeth ; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.

wretchedness." — *Livermore*. The great idea which underlies the declaration that the gospel of Christ is the power of God unto salvation is, that salvation is to be accomplished by the divine power, and cannot be accomplished otherwise ; and that this fact is brought to light in the gospel, which is also an instrument through which that power is exerted. ¶ *Unto salvation*. Scarcely any word in the Scriptures has been more grossly misunderstood than *salvation*. It has been interpreted to mean remission of just punishment ; exemption from the retributions of justice ; preservation from endless misery in hell ; in short, as a shelter from the divine wrath and all the torments which infinite vengeance could inflict, and a restoration to divine favor and all the blessings which flow from infinite love. The gospel proclaims no salvation of this kind. It never represents the Father as the enemy of his children, or disposed to harm them. On the contrary, it reveals him as the unchanging friend and benefactor of the souls whom he has made ; as the Giver of all present blessings, and the only Being who can and will accomplish their entire salvation. The gospel proclaims no salvation from just punishment, or from the natural and just consequences of transgression. On the contrary, it asserts, unequivocally, that God will render to every transgression and disobedience a just recompense of reward. Heb. ii. 2. See also chap. ii. 6—11. The salvation proclaimed in the gospel is a deliverance from sin, or from sinfulness ; a remission of sins ; redemption from iniquity ; purification from moral corruption ; in a word, a change from sinfulness to holiness ; including, as a necessary consequence, a change from misery to happiness. See notes on Matt. i. 21 ; John i. 29 ; Acts iii. 26. Such is the salvation figuratively described in Paul's commission, when he was sent by Jesus to the Gentiles, "to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God." Acts xxvi. 18. Such is the salvation uniformly proclaimed in the gospel. And such is the only salvation which can be of any material service to men. This salva-

tion may be enjoyed, to some extent, even while we dwell in the flesh. But its perfect work can only be realized when this mortal shall put on immortality, and this corruptible, incorruption. Then shall the last enemy of man's peace be destroyed, and holiness reign triumphant. ¶ *To every one that believeth*. The apostle declares that God "is the Saviour of all men, especially of those that believe." 1 Tim. iv. 10. He is the Saviour of all men, because he has purposed their salvation, and his power will accomplish it in due time. He is the special Saviour of them who believe, because believers, through faith, enter upon the present enjoyment of the blessing. "We, which have believed, do enter into rest." Heb. iv. 3. See note on John v. 24. As medicines will not heal the maladies of the body unless they are received into the system, so neither will the gospel correct and remove the moral diseases of men unless they embrace it by faith. "The word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it." Heb. iv. 2. The gospel is good news, "good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people." See note on Luke ii. 10. But none are cheered by good news, unless they believe it to be true. None can feel the power of the gospel, unless they exercise faith in it as a revelation of the truth. They must receive it, and act upon it, as undoubtedly true. If they find it written that God will cause sin to be accompanied by pain, they must so believe it as to be deterred from disobedience. If they find it written that the chastisement of transgressors is designed for their own good, Heb. xii. 10, they must submit humbly and patiently to all which they endure, in full faith that the benefit will be reaped in due season. If they find it written that "God is love," and that he is kind and gracious to all men, they must so believe the testimony as to trust unreservedly in him for all things, and to be grateful to him as the Giver of all good. If they find it written that "the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world," they must believe undoubtingly that the work will be accomplished. Thus believing, they will enter into the pres-

17 For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to

ent enjoyment of that peace of mind, and will experience that love to God and that purification of heart, which is denominated a special salvation, or a foretaste of that perfect salvation which will be enjoyed in the future life. ¶ *To the Jew first.* That is, in the order of time, and not otherwise. When our Lord first sent out his apostles to preach, "he commanded them, saying, Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not. But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." Matt. x. 5, 6. His final commission to them, however, was much more extensive: "Go ye therefore and teach all nations," Matt. xxviii. 19; or, according to another record, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." Mark xvi. 15. The apostles uniformly preached first to the Jews, whenever they had opportunity. Even Paul, commissioned as he was to be an apostle to the Gentiles, first addressed the Jews in the places which he visited, if they would give him audience. Thus, at Antioch, he entered the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and addressed a long discourse to the "Men of Israel." After the Jews departed, "the Gentiles besought that these words might be preached to them the next Sabbath." On the next Sabbath, "when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with envy, and spake against those things which were spoken by Paul, contradicting and blaspheming. Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said, it was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you; but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles." See the whole account, Acts xiii. 14—52. The Jews had no priority in regard to the gospel, except in the order of time. ¶ *And also to the Greek.* By Greek may be understood all Gentiles, all who were not Jews. Jews and Greeks, as used in the Scriptures, often designate the whole human race. The gospel is impartial and universal in its nature. Its instructions, and precepts, and promises, are addressed to all men, Gentiles as well as Jews, the unwise as well as

the wise. All are recognized by it, as children of the same Father, and as joint-heirs of the same inheritance, which he has promised to bestow; upon the present enjoyment of which inheritance, or salvation, secured by the purpose and the power of God, men of whatever nation or kindred may enter at once, if they will believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and in his gospel. Well, then, might Paul say, "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ."

17. *For therein.* That is, in the gospel of Christ. In what follows, the apostle proceeds to a discussion of the most momentous question in theology: namely, the necessity and the nature of salvation from sin. This is the pervading theme of the gospel. To accomplish this work, was the special object of our Lord's mission from the Father. The character and results of that mission are described in the gospel. ¶ *Righteousness of God.* Some have understood, by this phrase, the attribute of God which is ordinarily called justice or righteousness, as where it is said that he is just, while he justifies the believer, ch. iii. 26. *Rossmuller* and others understand it to mean the benignity or kindness of God, displayed in the gospel. But most commentators concur in the opinion that it means a righteousness of God's appointment; a righteousness produced in the human soul through the influence of his grace, in contradistinction to the results of mere human effort. "He meaneth not God's own justice in himself, but that justice wherewith God endueth man when he justifieth him." — *Augustine de Sp. et lit.* cap. 9, quoted in *Rhemish Test.* "A righteousness which consists not in external works, but which is wrought by God; and as a divine work is pleasing to God." — *Grotius.* "I prefer the interpretation, that this is the righteousness which God imparts, by his grace." — *Calmet.* "Called the righteousness of God, because it is of his providing, and of his approving and accepting." — *Poole.* "For that economy of God, that gracious method of accepting and rewarding all those that shall receive the faith and obedience of Christ, whether Jews or Gentiles, is in or by the gospel revealed and promul-

faith : as it is written, The just shall live by faith.

gated." — *Hammond*. "The righteousness of God is that which he bestows gratuitously on the believer, and which the apostle tacitly contrasts with justification by works." — *Beausobre and Lenfant*. "The righteousness of God by faith, that is, the method which God had contrived and proposed for our becoming righteous, Isa. lvi. 1, by believing his testimony, and casting ourselves on his mercy." — *Doddridge*. "The righteousness of God, called so because it is a righteousness of his own contrivance, and his bestowing. It is God that justifieth, ch. iii. 21—24, 26, 30 ; viii. 33." — *Locke*. "God's method of saying sinners by faith in Jesus Christ." — *Clarke*. "It may signify the method which God has contrived or proposed for our becoming righteous ; for the righteousness which arises from a scheme which God has by his infinite wisdom planned, and through his goodness revealed to man, may properly be called the righteousness of God ; and it may further be called so, as being that righteousness which he requires, or which is most acceptable to him, as being most agreeable to his nature." — *Gouldby*, quoted by *Livermore*. "The righteousness of God is the justification which God bestows, or the justification of which God is the author. This is made altogether clear, by comparing ch. iii. 21—24 ; and indeed the whole tenor of the discussion in the epistle to the Romans seems imperiously to demand this sense." — *Stuart*. "The phrase righteousness of God is equivalent to God's plan of justifying men. It is called God's righteousness, because it is God's plan, in distinction from all the plans set up by men. It was originated by him : it differs from all others, and it claims him as its author, and tends to his glory. This same plan was foretold in various places, where the word righteousness is nearly synonymous with salvation. 'My righteousness is near ; my salvation is gone forth. My salvation shall be forever, and my righteousness shall not be abolished.' Isa. li. 5, 6. 'My salvation is near to come, and my righteousness to be revealed.' Isa. lvi. 1. 'To make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness.'

Dan. ix. 24." — *Barnes*. "The righteousness of God : not an attribute of God, but the righteousness which God considers such ; and which must therefore be the perfection of man's moral nature." — *Conybeare*. All these, and other commentators, too numerous to be quoted, concur in interpreting the righteousness of God to mean a condition into which men are brought, by a method of God's appointment, rather than an attribute or quality of God himself. In the details there are differences of opinion. By the majority the righteousness here mentioned is supposed to consist in a justification from past offences, and the treating of men as if they had not sinned. Some, however, seem to have more clearly apprehended the true import of the term, and to have understood that the scheme of God provided not only for treating men as if they were righteous, but for making them actually righteous ; in other words, for saving them from sin. God regards men precisely as they are. While they are sinners, he regards them as sinners ; and when they become righteous, and not before, he regards them as righteous. "By the righteousness of God, the apostle does not mean here God's method of treating the sinner as just, but his method of making the sinner just, of doing the work ; for the difficulty which the gospel meets is not how God should treat men, and how remit their offences, but how men should *become* what they ought to be, just, righteous, in heart and life. The word *justification*, some may be surprised to learn, occurs but three times in the whole Bible : and those are in this Epistle, ch. iv. 25 ; v. 16, 18 ; and in every instance the better rendering is *righteousness*. The great need of a sinful world is not justification, but righteousness ; the righteousness of God ; his method of helping men to become righteous, true, pure, good. Doubtless, there is a secondary idea involved ; and that is, the pardon of those who have failed of doing their whole duty — the remission of sins. But this secondary idea has by most theologians of the old schools been raised into the place of the primary one, and the primary one has fallen

Into a lower rank. That the question opened by the apostle is not one of justification so much as one of righteousness, is demonstrated by what follows, in which he describes the abominable unrighteousness of the Gentiles, and also the wickedness of the Jews, under the law, and therefore the need of the gospel method of making both Jews and Gentiles soundly righteous, and so, of course, acceptable to God; namely, by faith, by the great spiritual principle of Christianity, in contradistinction to the mere light of reason and nature among the Gentiles, and the legal system of the Jews. Paul's doctrine is, then, (1) a doctrine of righteousness: (2) By consequence, a doctrine of justification: not the reverse, as too often interpreted. Ch. iii. 22; x. 3-10." — *Livermore*. Whatever may be thought of some of the details, I apprehend the general idea running through the foregoing note is correct; namely, that the great need of mankind is deliverance from sinfulness, or salvation from sin; in other words, to become righteous. The method by which this need is to be supplied, and this deliverance wrought, by which men are to become righteous, is revealed in the gospel. As it is prompted by the love of God, devised by his wisdom, and executed by his power, it is properly called God's righteousness. It differs from all other methods chiefly in this: all others, in some form, recognize works, or the efforts of men, as the procuring cause of righteousness and salvation; this recognizes divine grace alone as the cause — righteousness as the effect, and good works as the natural fruit of righteousness. That the salvation of men from sin, and their attainment of righteousness, is represented in the gospel as the effect of God's grace, is admitted by all Christians. Even those who most firmly believe that such salvation is absolutely suspended on certain conditions, to be performed by man alone, admit this fact in general terms. None are hardy enough to pretend that the gospel reveals a salvation to be demanded and obtained as a matter of reward. None pretend, on authority of the gospel, that man, unassisted by divine grace, can attain perfect righteousness. As, therefore, by common consent, it is

agreed that the degree of righteousness attainable in the present life, as well as the more perfect righteousness which may be realized in the future life, is so dependent on divine grace as, in a proper and very important sense, to be regarded as a gift from God, it should surprise no one to hear it denominated by the apostle the *righteousness of God*. It is a righteousness of his appointment; a righteousness in a certain sense and to a certain extent, at least, of his bestowment. It is just so far different from the righteousness which unassisted humanity might attain. It is, in truth, God's righteousness, and not man's. It is this righteousness which is revealed in the gospel. ¶ *From faith to faith*. Various interpretations have been given of this passage, which, as it stands in the common translation, is confessedly obscure. Some have supposed the meaning to be that the gospel presents its great truths, and especially that which is the immediate subject here mentioned by the apostle, to be received by men from one degree of faith to another. That is, that believers should strive, by increasing their knowledge of the divine character and purposes, to increase the power of their faith in the gospel. But I prefer the different and more general interpretation, which is well expressed in the translation by *Macknight*. "For the righteousness of God by faith is revealed in it, in order to faith." He adds this note: "This translation, which results from construing the words properly, affords a clear sense of a passage which, in the common translation, is absolutely unintelligible. Besides, it is shown to be the right translation by other passages of scripture in which the expression *righteousness by faith* is found. Rom. iii. 22; ix. 30; x. 6; Phil. iii. 9. *Righteousness by faith* is called the *righteousness of God*, (1) Because God hath enjoined faith as the righteousness which he will count to sinners, and hath declared that he will accept and reward it as righteousness. (2) Because it stands in opposition to the *righteousness of men*, which consists in a sinless obedience to the law of God. For if men gave that obedience, it would be *their own righteousness*, and they might claim reward as a debt." In what precise manner faith is accounted as righteousness, or involves righteousness,

18 For the wrath of God is re-vealed from heaven against all un-

we may not fully understand; nor is this the proper place for a discussion of that point. But the fact is abundantly asserted in the Scriptures. A knowledge of God, faith in his Son, faith in the gospel, is repeatedly represented as inseparably connected with justification from sin, with righteousness, with eternal life. Thus our Lord says, "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." — "And this is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." John v. 24; xvii. 3. And the apostle asserts that "being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ," ch. v. 1; see also ch. iv. 3—5, where it is repeatedly declared that *faith is counted for righteousness*. Such is the plan of God, revealed in the gospel of his Son, and presented to men as an object of faith. ¶ *As it is written*. Namely, in the Old Testament. Such is the reference, whenever this phrase occurs in the New Testament. There are those who think lightly of the older scriptures, and disregard their authority. Not so our Lord and his apostles. They often referred to them as a divine record of truth, and quoted them as good authority, so far as their testimony extended. The particular reference here is to Hab. ii. 4. ¶ *The just shall live by faith*. Rather, the just by faith shall live. "This did not refer primarily to the doctrine of justification by faith, nor did the apostle so quote it; but it expressed a *general principle* that those who had confidence in God should be happy, and be preserved and blessed. This would express the doctrine which Paul was defending. It was not by relying on his own *merit* that the Israelite would be delivered; but it was by confidence in God, by his strength and mercy. On the same principle would men be saved under the gospel. It was not by reliance on their own works or merit; it was by *confidence* in God, by *faith*, that they were to live." — *Barnes*. To *live*, as the word is here used, signifies to be happy. Thus eternal life often signifies the degree of happiness men enjoy in this world through faith in the

gospel, as well as that more perfect happiness, consequent upon perfect holiness, in the state of existence to which they shall be introduced by the resurrection from the dead. Of this use of the phrase many instances occur in this epistle, which will be noticed in their proper places.

18. An argument commences here, which extends to the end of chap. iii. Having announced his theme, namely, the necessity and nature of salvation, or that righteousness of God's appointment which is revealed in the gospel, the apostle proceeds to show that this is the only righteousness which men can hope to attain; and that, therefore, they should lay hold on this, by faith, if they would have peace with God, and enter into rest. His argument was thus: He shows, first, in the remainder of this chapter, that the Gentile world, guided by the light of nature, and aided by the instructions of their wisest philosophers, had utterly failed to become righteous; on the contrary, they were guilty of the most debasing and scandalous sins, and gloried in their own shame. In the next two chapters, he shows that the Jews, with the additional guidance of the Old Testament, had equally failed to become righteous. He appeals to facts, which none could contradict, in proof of his allegations, and fortifies them by the authority of the Jewish scriptures. The result is manifest. If men had endeavored, for the space of four thousand years, to attain perfect righteousness by their own works, or as the effect of perfect obedience to the divine law, and had not succeeded in a single instance, either some different plan must be made known, or no reasonable hope of success could be entertained. This different plan God had graciously revealed in the gospel. To this plan the apostle directed attention, as the only effectual means of salvation. It was utterly useless to strive for perfect righteousness by works. Men had been thus striving from the beginning, and yet all had sinned, and thus come short of the glory of God, Ch. iii. 23. Their only rational hope was in God, who had given assurance that his grace would secure the blessing which they had failed to attain. And

If they would lay hold on the promise, by a firm and living faith, they should at once be delivered from the power of sin, and should thenceforth be filled with joy and peace in believing, ch. xv. 13, until they should enter upon the full enjoyment of perfect holiness and happiness in the future life. Such is the general train of argument in these three chapters.

¶ *The wrath of God.* See note on John iii. 36. This expression is highly figurative, like those in which God is said to repent, and to be grieved, and the like. Under the divine government, iniquity is always attended by misery, or punishment. The infliction of such punishment may seem, to shortsighted mortals, to indicate anger or wrath in the supreme Governor. Yet we have assurance that all the dispensations of divine providence, whether their immediate effect be joyous or grievous, are designed for good, and are evidences of love, not of wrath. Heb. xii. 9—11. By making the way of transgression painful, and hedging it up with difficulties, God is constantly admonishing men to turn from it, and to pursue the path of wisdom, which is peace. Prov. iii. 17. By the sharpness of stripes, men are made subject to the Father of their spirits, and receive permanent benefit. Nevertheless, while the punishment continues, its aspect is so different from the pleasures resulting from obedience, that a different epithet is properly used to describe it. The epithet chosen by the apostle is *wrath*. But we should grossly err, if we understood him to attribute to God a passion which is denounced as utterly sinful in man. We can only understand him to refer to that principle of the divine government by which misery is inseparably connected with transgression. This interpretation is substantially given by commentators whose opinions widely differ from each other as to the ultimate consequences of sin. "The righteous displeasure of God at the sins of his rational creatures is not, of course, like the anger or wrath which we speak of in reference to human passions. The expression is, as all agree, *anthropathic*, or speaking of God after the manner of men." — *Livermore*. "The word rendered *wrath* properly denotes that earnest appetite,

or desire, by which we seek anything, or an intense effort to obtain it. And it is particularly applied to the desire which a man has to take vengeance who is injured, and who is enraged. It is thus synonymous with revenge. Eph. iv. 31. 'Let all bitterness and wrath,' &c. Col. iii. 8. 'Anger, wrath, malice,' &c. 1 Tim. ii. 8; James i. 19. But it is also often applied to God; and it is clear that when we think of the word as applicable to him, it must be divested of everything like human passion, and especially of the passion of revenge. As he cannot be *injured* by the sins of men (Job xxxv. 6—8), he has no motive for vengeance, properly so called; and it is one of the most obvious rules of interpretation, that we are not to apply to God passions and feelings which, among us, have their origin in evil. In making a revelation, it was indispensable to use words which men used; but it does not follow that when applied to *God* they mean *precisely* what they do when applied to *man*. When the Saviour is said, Mark iii. 5, to have looked on his disciples with *anger* (Greek, *wrath*, the same word is here), it is not to be supposed that he had the feelings of an implacable *man*, seeking vengeance. The nature of the feeling is to be judged of by the character of the person. So, in this place, the word denotes the divine displeasure or indignation against sin; the divine purpose to inflict punishment." — *Barnes*. This opposition of the divine character against sinfulness, or, in other words, the opposition of holiness against sin, furnishes one of the many reasons why the utter end of sinfulness may be anticipated. If perpetual sinfulness were as pleasing and acceptable to God as perpetual holiness, no good reason can be perceived why he should desire or attempt to turn men away from their iniquities. Acts iii. 26. The fact that he does desire to save men from their sins is manifest both from the goodness and the severity of his administration of justice, ch. xi. 22, as well as from his revealed word. As he is greater than all, and none can pluck us out of his hand, John x. 29, he will surely accomplish his purpose in his own time. As a means to greater good, he permits the existence of sin for a

godliness, and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in un-

season. But its perpetual existence is inconsistent with his holiness, and incompatible with the accomplishment of his purposes. He has, therefore, determined "to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness." Dan. ix. 24. While sin continues, however, it will produce its appropriate fruits. The sinner must endure misery. And, in this sense, the *wrath* of God, or his determination to inflict punishment, as the meet reward of every transgression and disobedience, is revealed in the gospel. ¶ *Revealed from heaven.* Or, from above. It is revealed distinctly in the Jewish Scriptures. And, in that older revelation, written on the face of nature and in the hearts of men, the fact is sufficiently plain. A consequence invariably resulting from a given cause must be regarded as the operation of a fixed law. Misery always accompanies transgression; and, without a special revelation, men had good reason to believe that the sovereign Ruler had ordained such punishment. The same fact is unmistakably announced in the gospel. ¶ *Ungodliness and unrighteousness.* That is, impiety towards God, and injustice towards men. Under these two general heads are comprehended all the sins of which men are guilty. The apostle mentions some of the particular sins, in the subsequent verses, which he here groups together in two classes. He illustrates the ungodliness or impiety of men, by their neglect to glorify God, and by their worship of idols; and their unrighteousness, by various scandalous sins of which they were guilty towards each other. ¶ *Hold the truth in unrighteousness.* Some commentators understand the apostle to refer to those who have attained some knowledge of the truth, and who yet fail to obey its precepts: men "who are not wholly without the truth, but yet do not follow what they have of it, but live contrary to that truth they do know, or neglect to know what they might. This is evident from the next words, and for the same reason of God's wrath, given ch. ii. 8, in these words, 'who do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteous-

ness.'" — *Locke.* Others, perhaps more properly, understand the phrase to be equivalent to "hinder the truth by unrighteousness." The word *hold*, as well as the Greek word which occurs here, is used in either sense, to *retain*, or to *impede* or hinder. The following remarks on this passage are replete with sound sense and valuable suggestions: "This is a strong figurative word, which it is not easy to translate into our language. But its meaning is, that the knowledge of the one true God, the Maker and Governor of the universe, which the persons here spoken of had attained, by contemplating the works of creation, they did not discover to the rest of mankind; but confined it in their own breast, as in a prison, by the most flagrant unrighteousness. For they presented, as objects of worship, beings which are not by their nature God; nay, beings of the most immoral characters; and, by so doing, as well as by the most infamous rites with which they appointed these false gods to be worshipped, they led mankind into the grossest errors concerning the nature and attributes of the objects of their worship. This corrupt form of religion, though extremely acceptable to the common people, was not contrived and established by them. In all countries they were grossly ignorant of God, and of the worship which he required. They therefore could not be charged with the crime of concealing the truth concerning God. The persons guilty of that crime were the legislators who first formed mankind into cities and states, and who, as the apostle observes, ver. 21, though they knew God, did not glorify him as God, by making him the object of the people's worship, but unrighteously established polytheism and idolatry as the public religion. Of the same crime the magistrates and philosophers were likewise guilty, who, in after times, upheld the established religion. Of this number were Pythagoras, Socrates, and Plato, whom, therefore, we may suppose, the apostle had here in his eye. For, although these men had attained the knowledge of the true God, none of them worshipped him publicly, neither did they declare him to the people, that they might worship

righteousness :

him. Concerning Socrates, see ver. 21, note 2 ; and with respect to Plato, he held that the knowledge of the one God was not to be divulged. See Euseb. Præpar. Evang. lib. xi. c. 9. And in his *Timæus*, he says expressly, 'It is neither easy to find the Parent of the universe, nor safe to discover him to the vulgar when found.' The same conduct was observed of Seneca, as Augustine hath proved from his writings." — *Macknight*. The race of those who thus hold the truth in unrighteousness, or who unrighteously hinder the progress of divine truth among men, is not yet wholly extinct. There yet remain not a few who adopt substantially the maxim of Plato, that it is neither easy to ascertain the character and purposes of the Father of spirits, nor safe to communicate the truth to the vulgar when ascertained. Fears are expressed that the common people would be injured, as to their moral character, if they were made acquainted with the purposes of God in regard to their future condition. Hence the truth is withheld from them. One religion is embraced for private use in the closet, or for the edification of a select circle ; and another, for public ministration to the multitude. It were well for such persons to consider whether they are not properly comprehended by the apostle among those against whom the wrath of God is revealed. It were well that they should bring their conduct to the test of our Lord's command : — "What I tell you in darkness, that speak ye in light ; and what ye hear in the ear, that preach ye upon the house-tops." Matt. x. 27. The idea that a knowledge of divine truth would be injurious to mankind is utterly preposterous. Our Saviour declared, "To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth." John xviii. 37. And yet some of his professed followers are apprehensive that the truth would injure men, if it should be clearly perceived and embraced. Not such were the apostles of our Lord. They bore an open testimony to the truth, both to Jew and Gentile, both to Greek and Barbarian, both to the wise and the

19 Because that which may be

unwise. Paul esteemed it his duty to declare the whole truth ; and he considered concealment of it to be a crime. "I take you to record, this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men for I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God." Acts xx. 26, 27. "Necessity is laid upon me ; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel." 1 Cor. ix. 16. Let those who conceal the truth, through fear, and who thus unrighteously hinder its progress, ponder the meaning of the parable concerning the man who concealed his talent in a napkin. Luke xix. 12—27.

19. *Because*. The apostle gives a reason why men were exposed to retribution, for hindering or impeding the progress of truth. Had they been entirely ignorant of the truth, and unable to discover it, they would not have been guilty. But he declares that they had the means of obtaining knowledge, and that they had in fact obtained it. And therefore, or because of this fact, they were unrighteous in concealing it. ¶ *That which may be known of God, &c.* We are not to understand that the perfect character of God is plainly written on the face of nature ; but only that so much is there displayed, that men are inexcusable if they do not recognize and worship him. The existence and wisdom and power of God, and to a sufficient extent his goodness and justice also, are discoverable from his works. His peculiar relationship to men, as their Father, and the blessings he will bestow on his children, however, were reserved to be revealed through his Son. See note on Matt. xi. 27. The extent to which the apostle asserted that knowledge was attainable from nature is particularly specified in the succeeding verses. That men, by the light of nature alone, cannot attain a perfectly accurate knowledge of the divine character, is evident from the fact that the wisest philosophers made so little progress. Yet they manifestly did acquire some just ideas concerning God ; and it was for concealing these from the people that they were guilty and punishable. The common people also shared this guilt, to a certain extent. The apostle, in the next verse,

known of God, is manifest in them ; for God hath shewed *it* unto them.

asserts their capability to know the truth. Had they not regarded the instructions of their leaders and teachers more highly than the testimony of God written on his works, they would not have abandoned themselves to gross idolatry. "Although the Gentiles had no written revelation, yet what may be known of God is everywhere manifest among them, God having made a clear discovery of himself to them. For his being and perfections, invisible to our bodily eyes, have been, ever since the creation of the world, evidently to be seen, if attentively considered, in the visible beauty, order, and operations, observable in the constitution and parts of the universe ; especially his eternal power and universal dominion and providence ; so that they cannot plead ignorance in excuse of their idolatry and wickedness." — *Taylor*. The truths peculiar to the gospel, however, were not thus to be learned, but were properly the subject of a special revelation. ¶ *Is manifest in them*. Rather, is manifest among them, or known by them. ¶ *For God hath showed it unto them*. Or, made it to appear to them ; made it known to them. The means by which this knowledge of God was communicated to the Gentiles are specified in the next verse.

20. The general idea embraced in this verse is, that the existence, power, and providence of God, are so clearly manifested in his works, that there is no excuse for the ignorance of men possessing ordinary powers of mind ; for, by due attention to his works, they might readily perceive the handiwork of divinity. God "left himself not without witness, in that he did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness." Acts xiv. 17. The goodness of God is discoverable in his ordinary providences, so that men are without excuse for their unthankfulness. Ver. 21. ¶ *The invisible things of him*. His existence, namely, and many of his attributes. "No man hath seen God at any time." John i. 18. He "only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto ; whom no man hath seen, nor

20 For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world

can see." 1 Tim. vi. 16. The natural eye cannot discern spiritual objects. But, although God and his perfections are invisible to mortal sight, their existence is legibly written on his works, which may be seen and read of all men. The invisible things specially referred to in this place are named by the apostle in what follows. ¶ *From the creation of the world*. Some interpret this to mean that the creation of the world manifested the power and divinity of God ; that these might be learned from the creation of the world. This seems not very probable ; for no man witnessed the creation of the world ; nor, perhaps, could any one have known, with certainty, that it was created, except by revelation. The apostle seems to refer to evidence which was open to the inspection of all men. Hence it is more probable that another, and, indeed, the general interpretation, is correct ; namely, that from the time when the world was created, or ever since the creation of the world, the invisible things of God had been manifest in his works. ¶ *Being understood by the things that are made*. The evident marks of design, in all the works of nature, clearly indicate an intelligent author. The regular movements of its vast machinery as clearly indicate power. Of course, it is not to be supposed that the ancient heathen had so accurate knowledge of those works, and of that machinery, as modern science has discovered. Yet they had enough to convince them that a superior being existed. Even the most savage tribes acknowledged so much. Their guilt consisted in reading the testimony so negligently as to mistake the character of God, or in concealing or disregarding it, when truly discovered. ¶ *Even his eternal power*. Power is, perhaps, the first lesson learned from the works of creation. And so universally is this lesson learned, that the most benighted races of men have acknowledged their subjection to some unseen power, which might affect them for good or for evil. The ancient philosophers well comprehended the existence of power above man. They had not studied the works of nature entirely in vain. Their guilt con-

are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, *even* his eternal power and Godhead ;

sisted not in their inattention, nor in their lack of success. They *clearly saw* the evidence of divine power. They were guilty, because they mistook the common people to worship idols instead of the true God ; and because they disregarded the requirements of his justice, manifested also in his providences. ¶ *And Godhead.* This word does not occur elsewhere in the Scriptures. It is generally understood to mean the divinity, or deity, of God — his divine nature. “It proves the truth, that the *supremacy*, or supreme divinity, of God was exhibited in the works of creation, or that he was exalted above all creatures and things. It would not be proper, however, to press this word, as implying that all that we know of God by revelation was known to the heathen ; but that so much was known as to show his supremacy, his right to their homage, and, of course, the folly and wickedness of idolatry. This is all that the argument of the apostle demands ; and, of course, on this principle the expression is to be interpreted.” — *Barnes.* It would seem, however, that, besides mere power and supremacy, the apostle included the goodness of God among his invisible things manifested by his works. Else why allege it as a crime, that the people were not thankful ? Ver. 21. The sacred writers often appeal to the works of nature in proof of the divine goodness. Our Lord illustrated that goodness, and its impartiality, in the same manner. He exhorted his disciples to love even their enemies, and to do good, “that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven ; for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.” Matt. v. 45. So that, although God reserved the “fulness of the blessing” of his grace to be revealed through his Son, we may believe that the general characteristics of his goodness are legibly imprinted on his works of creation and providence. ¶ *So that they are without excuse.* They could not plead ignorance of God’s existence, as an excuse for not worshipping and obeying him. His existence, and his

so that they are without excuse :

21 Because that, when they knew God, they glorified *him* not

attributes, were sufficiently manifest. If they failed to acknowledge and worship him, as they did fail, the cause of their delinquency must be sought elsewhere. It is implied here that inability to attain a knowledge of God would have been an excuse for neglecting to worship him. He requires of men according to what they have, or according to their ability. Thus it is not accounted as a crime, that those who have never heard the gospel do not believe in the Lord Jesus Christ ; for “how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard ?” Ch. x. 14. But when the evidence is distinctly made known, then are men without excuse, if they do not acknowledge the truth, and act in conformity to it. If the ancient heathen were thus inexcusable, how much more are those who slight the clearer evidences of the divine existence, revealed in the gospel, and demonstrated by scientific investigations.

21. *Because that, &c.* The crime of idolatry is specially alleged, for which men had no excuse. Having a competent knowledge of God, they were inexcusable for withholding honor from him, and giving his glory to another. ¶ *When they knew God.* Or, knowing God. In the preceding verses, the apostle has alleged that the more cultivated among the heathen, their religious teachers, so to speak, must have acquired knowledge of God from his works ; and that the common people would have shared that knowledge, had they not been unrighteously misled by those who impeded the progress of truth. The guilt charged in this verse, therefore, rested chiefly on the more enlightened. They actually knew God ; yet they failed to perform their duty to him. Those who were ignorant of him, through their own neglect to use the means within their reach for acquiring knowledge, were guilty, but not of the particular crime here alleged ; to wit, of sinning against their own convictions of duty, or of doing the wrong when they knew the right. ¶ *They glorified him not as God.* “To glorify God, is to think highly of him, to speak of him with reverence, and to

as God, neither were thankful, but and their foolish heart was dark
became vain in their imaginations, ened.

worship him publicly as the maker and governor of the universe; of which worship, a principal part is to give him thanks, as the author of all good things mankind enjoy. The apostle having blamed the Greek legislators, ver. 18—20, for concealing from the people the knowledge which they had attained of the true God, he here condemned them, because, although they knew the absurdity of polytheism, they established it by their laws, as the religion most proper for the vulgar, and joined them in all the impious and obscene rites of worship which they practised.”—*Macknight*. They taught men to worship the creature rather than the creator; the instrument or medium of good, rather than its author. The whole system of idolatry is here condemned, which, beginning with the worship of the sun, moon, and other heavenly bodies, gradually degenerated to the worship of the meanest reptiles, of “creeping things,” and of stocks and stones. ¶ *Neither were thankful*. The gratitude due to God for all the blessings of life was withheld, and the blessings were reputed to be derived from other sources. Those who had knowledge of the Fountain of good concealed it; those who had not, neglected to acquire it; and all were insensible, or at least silent, in regard to any obligation of gratitude to God. No public thanksgivings were rendered to him. Hymns of praise were composed in honor of idols, some of which are still extant; but none in honor of the true God. When men cease to be thankful to God, as the giver of every good gift and every perfect gift, they readily lose sight of their obligation to obey him. The restraints of gratitude and reverence being removed, apostasy and moral degradation follow as a natural consequence. ¶ *Became vain in their imaginations*. Or, foolish in their speculations. It is generally supposed that the apostle here refers especially to the reasonings or speculations of men concerning the origin of “the things that are made.” Unwilling to ascribe them to the creative energy and benevolent wisdom of God, they introduced a complicated system of idolatry, through

which the worship due to the creator should be rendered to the creature. This seems, from the context, to be the special vanity, or folly, which resulted from a lack of reverence and thankfulness to God. “What it is to become vain, in the scripture language, one may see in these words: ‘And they followed vanity, and became vain, and went after the heathen, and made to themselves molten images, and worshipped all the host of heaven, and served Baal.’ 2 Kings xvii. 15, 16. And, accordingly, the forsaking of idolatry and the worship of false gods is called, by St. Paul, ‘turning from vanity to the living God.’ Acts xiv. 15.”—*Locke*. ¶ *Their foolish heart was darkened*. The word *heart* is used sometimes to denote the affections, and sometimes the intellect. It is here used in the latter sense. The philosophers, by teaching falsehood instead of truth, and the common people, by giving heed to their fables, became vain in their speculations, and their understanding was obscured. By long intercourse with falsehood, they became more familiar with it than with the truth. As a just retribution for deception on the one part, and of indolence on the other, God suffered them all to become enveloped in darkness, so that even the wisest, as well as the vulgar, suffered through the pernicious influence of their own institutions. Indulgence in sin naturally impairs the power of conscience, and renders it less sensitive, when in contact with pollution. 1 Tim. iv. 2. So, by long-continued efforts to make falsehood appear like truth, the mind becomes clouded and darkened, and partially insensible to the difference between truth and falsehood, so that evidence ceases to produce conviction. Such was, doubtless, the condition of many to whom the apostle here refers. They had abused their understanding, by concealing the true God, and devising schemes for the worship of false gods. As a natural consequence, they lost that clearness of conception which they formerly enjoyed, and even became doubtful whether there were any supreme divinity.

22 Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools,

22. *Professing themselves to be wise.* With a mock humility, they generally declined to arrogate the title of wise men, but called themselves *lovers of wisdom*, or *philosophers*. Yet it is well known that they assumed to possess all the wisdom which was extant. "This wisdom, which was not wisdom, was the rock on which the Greeks split in their rejection of the gospel, as previously in their construction of a cruel and licentious mythology. To men seeking after such wisdom, the cross of Christ was foolishness. 1 Cor. i. 22, 23. These ancient systems of false philosophy have largely infected Christian theology, and perverted the truth as it is in Jesus. It will be long before the church will outgrow entirely the errors which have been superadded to the simplicity of Christ by the pantheistic and scholastic schools of the ancient masters. Men still draw their ideas of the nature of God and man from Plato, Aristotle, Philo, and Augustine, more than from the New Testament." — *Livermore*. ¶ *They became fools.* This epithet is appropriate to persons destitute of true wisdom; and it is here so used. Professing to be wise, the philosophers were led astray by their own vain imaginations, until they became comparatively blind to the truth. The result was a system of mythology and idolatry, described in the next verse. Whether the philosophers believed the fables which they taught, or not, they shared in the rites prescribed for idolatrous worship. The word *fools* has another signification, equally applicable in this place, and equally manifested in worshipping idols instead of the true God. It denotes men who are destitute of a truly religious spirit. In this sense it often occurs in the Old Testament. This kind of folly is generally accompanied by debasement and degradation of the moral sense. The professed wise men here mentioned became corrupted by their own follies. They forsook God, and followed idols. As a natural consequence, they became guilty of as scandalous vices as ever disgraced humanity. Historians assert that the most vile crimes mentioned in the black catalogue which follows were practised by some of the

23 And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an

most eminent philosophers, in the apostolic age, as well as before and afterwards. There are those in the present day who profess to be wise beyond the wisdom of the ancient philosophers. They are not content to transfer to images the worship due to God alone, ver. 23; but they regard it as the highest wisdom to deny the existence of God, or of any being whatever entitled to the homage of man. "Professing themselves to be wise," they have been conducted by their wisdom to the precise conclusion at which fools arrived many centuries ago: "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God." Ps. xiv. 1.

23. *And changed the glory.* They transferred to images, or attributed to them, the glory which belongs only to God. They taught the people that these images, or the objects which they represented, were worthy of worship. They joined in the rites and ceremonies prescribed for such worship. And they became partakers of the vices and crimes which naturally resulted from those idolatrous practices. The real change effected was in themselves. They forsook God, and joined themselves unto idols. ¶ *Of the uncorruptible God.* The same word is rendered *immortal*, 1 Tim. i. 17. It denotes, however, moral purity rather than perpetual existence. See note on ch. ii. 7. That such is its meaning here, is manifest from its being placed in contrast with the opposite epithet applied to men and other objects, to whom moral as well as physical corruption is attributed. The idea is, that God is the proper object of worship, not merely because he liveth forever, and is always able to save to the uttermost all who confide in him, but because his infinite moral purity is worthy of universal homage and adoration. ¶ *Into an image.* This word is generally applied to carved or graven representations of objects; but it is also applicable to pictures. Very likely, at first, the people were taught to worship, not the image, but the object which it represented. But they came gradually, and not un-naturally, to regard the image as sacred, and worthy of veneration. ¶ *Like to corruptible man.* Many of the heathen gods were deified men, regarded as bene-

image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things.

factors of their race ; and of them they had images. They also had images of women, for a like reason. These were images of corruptible things in contrast with the uncorruptible God. The originals were subject to vanity while they lived, like other mortals ; they had long been dead, and their flesh had seen corruption, literally. Moreover, the most corrupt morals were attributed to many of these deities, and the rites with which they were worshipped were of a like corrupt character. It is well observed by *Clarke*, that "the finest representation of their deities was in the human figure ; and on such representative figures the sculptors spent all their skill ; hence the Hercules of Farnese, the Venus of Medicis, and the Apollo of Belvidere. And when they had formed their gods according to the human shape, they endowed them with human passions ; and as they clothed them with attributes of extraordinary strength, beauty, wisdom, &c., not having the true principles of morality, they represented them as slaves to the most disorderly and disgraceful passions ; excelling, in irregularities, the most profligate of men, as possessing unlimited powers of sensual gratification." ¶ *And to birds.* They rendered divine honors to everything from which they believed themselves to have received benefit. Birds were naturally embraced in the number of their deities ; for many of this class were serviceable in the destruction of insects and reptiles, and in various other ways. Hence the eagle of Jupiter was worshipped by the Romans, the ibis and the hawk by the Egyptians, and others by other nations. ¶ *And four-footed beasts.* Even goats, monkeys, dogs, and other similar beasts, have been worshipped by man. The Egyptians consecrated temples to the worship of the ox, which seems to have been their principal deity. Under the influence of this example, the Israelites induced Aaron to fashion a golden calf with graving tools ; and they worshipped it, and corrupted themselves. Exod. xxxii. 1, 7. Traces of this kind of idolatry are found in the Jewish history for several ages ; so strong is the

24 Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, through the lusts of their own hearts, to

force of example. A similar form of idolatry still prevails in India. ¶ *And creeping things.* Both animals entirely destitute of legs, as serpents, and those having very short legs, which assist them to crawl rather than to walk, as lizards, crocodiles, and the like. Serpent worship prevailed extensively among the ancients. One sect of professed Christians were infected with it, and hence received the name of Ophites, or Serpentinians. "It is said they had a live serpent, which they kept in a kind of cage. At certain times, they opened the cage-door, and called the serpent ; the animal came out, and mounting upon the table, twined itself about some loaves of bread. This bread they broke, and distributed it to the company ; and this they called their eucharist."—*Ency. Rel. Knowl.* The beetle and the crocodile also were worshipped by the Egyptians.

24. *Wherefore God also gave them up.* What is here asserted in general terms is expressed more specifically ver. 26, 27. "Ephraim is joined to idols ; let him alone." Hosea iv. 17. No punishment is more to be dreaded than this. If God withdraw the restraining influences of his grace, or, which is the same thing, if he permit those influences to become without effect on the human heart, if he let men alone, they inevitably wax worse and worse. Nothing can save them from destruction but the interposition of divine grace. Such was the condition of the ancient idolaters. They forsook God, and worshipped false gods. Their rites and ceremonies of worship naturally tended to deprave their morals, and to encourage the most debasing licentiousness. God permitted these circumstances to take their natural course. Nothing more was necessary to insure the result. The depravity and sinfulness resulting from their idolatry in its turn occasioned miseries appropriate to each species of vice. They were made to eat the bitter fruits of iniquity. Such is the uniform effect of forsaking the true God. To his grace alone can men look for redemption from this bondage to death. It may be observed that the punishment

dishonor their own bodies between themselves :

25 Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and

served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen.

26 For this cause God gave them

of idolatry had a close correspondence with the nature of the offence. Idolaters dishonored God in the sight of man, by transferring his glory to corrupt and corruptible objects, and by worshipping the creature rather than the Creator. As a just penalty, he allowed them to dishonor themselves, actually as well as apparently, by those vices which naturally resulted from their opinions and practices. In this punishment are involved all the consequences, both mental and physical, of the actions by which they dishonored themselves. ¶ *To uncleanness.* To defilement, both moral and physical. See the specifications in ver. 26, 27. ¶ *Through the lusts of their own hearts.* He allowed their evil propensities to have dominion over them ; he permitted them to act according to their inordinate desires. ¶ *Dishonor.* Or, disgrace. ¶ *Between themselves.* Or, among themselves ; mutually ; by their impure connection with each other.

25. *Who changed the truth of God into a lie.* See note on ver. 23. The phrase *truth of God* is regarded by many as equivalent to *the true God*. In this sense, the passage is substantially a repetition of ver. 23. Others, with perhaps quite as good reason, understand the truth of God to indicate the true idea of his character, as worthy of love, and veneration, and worship ; which idea was displaced in the minds of idolaters by the lying fables of mythology. The people abandoned the truth, and embraced a lie. Idols are termed "falsehood," and "vanity, and the work of errors," Jer. x. 14, 15, and "lying vanities," Ps. xxxi. 6 ; a graven or molten image of an idol is styled "a teacher of lies," Hab. ii. 18. ¶ *And worshipped and served the creature.* Created beings or things. What these were, is specified in ver. 23. ¶ *More than the Creator.* Or, rather than the Creator ; for so the passage may properly be rendered. They renounced their allegiance to the true God, and devoted themselves to the service of false gods. They "forsook the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water." Jer.

ii. 13. Such is the language applied by the prophet to the children of Israel, who had "gone far from the Lord, and walked after vanity, and become vain." And the penalty which he denounces in the name of the Lord is strikingly similar to that which is here described by the apostle. "Thine own wickedness shall correct thee, and thy backslidings shall reprove thee ; know therefore and see that it is an evil thing that thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God, and that my fear is not in thee, saith the Lord God of hosts." ¶ *Who is blessed forever.* This form of doxology was common among the Jewish writers, when speaking of God, giving expression to their gratitude, and keeping alive their veneration. See 2 Cor. xi. 31 ; Gal. i. 5. "The Mahometans also borrowed this custom from the Jews, and practise it to a great extent. Tholuck mentions an Arabic manuscript in the library at Berlin, which contains an account of heresies in respect to Islamism ; and as often as the writer has occasion to mention the name of a new heretical sect, he adds, 'God be exalted above all which they say.'" — *Stuart*. And so here, after mentioning the idolatrous practices by which men had "changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like unto corruptible" things, and had "changed the truth of God into a lie," the apostle gives expression to his own reverence and veneration, by acknowledging the true God as the "Creator, who is blessed forever." ¶ *Amen.* See note on Matt. vi. 13.

26, 27. The general statement embraced in verse 24 is here repeated more specifically. It has been supposed, perhaps not without reason, that in verses 24, 25, the apostle referred particularly to the philosophers and lawgivers, but that he here includes with them the whole mass of the people. The whole body politic was infected with moral disease. The populace manifested such a propensity for idolatry, that the philosophers seem to have imagined that no other system of religion could meet their wants. They therefore encouraged the practices which

up unto vile affections. For even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature :

27 And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the

the voice of nature condemned. Both leaders and followers were guilty ; and both were obnoxious to punishment. The retribution, the utter debasement of mind and body, which followed their renunciation of God and their adhesion to idolatry, is here described at large. "Without raking over the loathsome particulars of this mass of abominations, it is enough to say, in general, that the ancient Greek and Roman writers have left on their pages abundant testimony to the truth of this picture, in all its darkest colors, as painted by the apostle. And the history of modern idolatry, as given by travellers and missionaries, presents evidence of corruption and gross sensuality scarcely less horrible." — *Livermore*. The proof

of such enormities, furnished by ancient writers, is exhibited, to a considerable extent, by *Macknight*. He adds : "These things I should not have brought into the reader's view, had it not been to prove the truth of the apostle's charge, namely, that the abominable crimes mentioned by him were not prohibited either by the religion or by the laws of the heathens ; but, on the contrary, were authorized by both, and avowedly practised by men of the first characters in the heathen world. When, therefore, the statesmen, the philosophers, and the priests, notwithstanding they enjoyed the light of nature, improved by science, thus avowedly addicted themselves to the most abominable uncleanness ; nay, when the gods whom they worshipped were supposed by them to be guilty of the same enormities ; when their temples were brothels, their pictures invitations to sin, their sacred groves places of prostitution, and their sacrifices a horrid mixture of superstition and cruelty, there was certainly the greatest need of the gospel revelation to make mankind sensible of their brutality, and to bring them to a more holy practice. That some professing Christians are guilty of the crimes of which we have been speaking, is true. But it is equally

woman, burned in their lust one towards another ; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompense of their error which was meet.

true that their religion does not, like the religion of the heathens, encourage them in their crimes, but deters them, by denouncing, in the most direct terms, the heaviest wrath of God against all who are guilty of them. Besides, the gospel, by its divine light, hath led the nations to correct their civil laws ; so that in every Christian country these enormities are prohibited, and, when discovered, are punished with the greatest severity. The gospel, therefore, hath made us far more knowing, and, I may add, more virtuous, than the most enlightened and most polished of the heathen nations were formerly." ¶ *Receiving in themselves that recompense of their error which was meet*. By *error* is here denoted idolatry, with its rites, as in 2 Pet. ii. 18. Idolatry is emphatically called error, because it is the most pernicious of all errors. Its starting-point is a denial of the true God, a renunciation of his authority, and rebellion against his laws. Whoever goes thus far is prepared to adopt any error of opinion, however absurd, and to commit any sin, however high-handed or disgusting. Thus did the error of those who forsook God and cleaved unto idols embrace all those minor errors which followed in its train. The *meet* or proper *recompense*, which these idolaters received, was manifold. It affected the body, producing weakness, debility, and premature old age, with all the intermediate diseases which are the natural effect of licentiousness and debauchery, and which often terminate in an early and miserable death. The mind was affected no less disastrously. Its natural strength and activity became impaired, and a state of imbecility or fatuity succeeded. Insanity is often the result of the same cause. It also affected the moral sense. All relish for truly spiritual enjoyment was lost, and the conscience became scared as with a hot iron. Thus the whole man became dishonored, debased, and degraded. Such was the *meet* and the *natural*

28 And even as they did not like to retain God in *their* knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate

mind, to do those things which are not convenient ;

29 Being filled with all unright-

recompense of idolatry. So corrupt was the character attributed to the gods, and so corrupt the ceremonies observed in their honor, that nothing short of a miracle could preserve the worshippers from corruption. Such a miracle was not consistent with the design of God, until he revealed himself in the gospel of his Son. He gave them up to the natural consequences of their error, as a meet recompense. What those consequences were, and how bitter and awful the retribution, is sufficiently plain from the language of the apostle and the concurrent testimony of history.

28. *And even as they did not like.* Or, approve. They did not so approve the character of the true God as to choose to retain him in their thoughts, or to meditate on his character and to adore his perfections. ¶ *God gave them over.* See note on verse 24. ¶ *To a reprobate mind.* Or, an unapproving mind. The same word which is rendered *like*, in the former clause, occurs here in a modified form. The idea seems to be that, because they voluntarily neglected to study and meditate the character of God, inasmuch as they had a distaste for it, he allowed them to become morally incapable of appreciating the loveliness of his character. Or, the word may be understood, in its more natural and usual sense, to mean *unapproved* ; and, metaphorically, impure, depraved, perverse. It properly denotes the condition of metals which have not been purified from dross. In like manner it may denote that state of mind which needs the influence of light, or that moral condition which needs the influence of grace. In either sense of the word, it indicates the natural result of forsaking the true God, and allowing corruptible objects to usurp his place in the mind. ¶ *To do those things which are not convenient.* The original word is somewhat stronger than the translation. The idea is that they did those things which were not fit to be done ; things not suitable nor decent : things, indeed, shameful and criminal. The particular things here denominated *not convenient* are enumerated in the next three verses.

29. *Being filled.* A strong figure of speech, denoting their habitual indulgence of the unholy emotions, and their habitual performance of the unrighteous acts, embraced in the following catalogue. It was not merely an occasional lapse of which they were guilty. Like those who long before had "forsaken the Lord," and "gone away backward," and rebelled against God, "the whole head was sick, and the whole heart faint." Isa. i. 5. ¶ *Unrighteousness.* A general term, denoting all violations whatever of the divine law, whether by act, word, or thought.

¶ *Fornication.* Illicit intercourse. This crime was very prevalent among the ancient heathen, and was even practised, by authority, in some of their idolatrous ceremonies of worship. ¶ *Wickedness.* The word here used denotes a desire to injure others ; an evil disposition, or malice. ¶ *Covetousness.* A desire to appropriate wrongfully what belongs to others. This desire is so pernicious, and so fruitful of iniquity, that it is specially forbidden in the Tenth Commandment. ¶ *Maliciousness.* The word used here "denotes evil in general ; rather the *act* of doing wrong than the *desire* which was expressed before by the word *wickedness*."

— *Barnes.* ¶ *Envy.* Uneasiness and discontent, on account of the welfare of others, accompanied with a sensation of dislike or hatred. ¶ *Murder.* The wilful destruction of human life, without sufficient cause. Technically, murder implies malice in the offender. But the word here used is more broad in its signification, and includes what is now termed manslaughter, and indeed all unnecessary homicide. The apostle is supposed to refer not only to the killing of individuals, from motives of malice, or greediness of gold, but to the destruction of life in wars, and more particularly to the gladiatorial contests in the amphitheatre, where human lives were sacrificed merely for the gratification of the spectators. Perhaps no malice, properly speaking, is chargeable to the authors of wars, or to those who established and patronized the mortal combats of gladiators, so common at

eousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness: full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers,

30 Backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents,

Rome at the date of this epistle. But there is manifested, in both these forms of legalized murder, a most unchristian disregard of human life, and an utter absence of that love for others which the gospel requires. ¶ *Debate*. The original denotes contention, strife, what we sometimes describe as quarrelling. The word debate is generally used now in a good sense, as applicable to cool, deliberate discussion of important subjects, for the purpose of ascertaining the truth. But here it implies anger and ill-will, as in 2 Cor. xii. 20. The same word is rendered *contention*, 1 Cor. i. 11; *strivings*, Titus iii. 9; and *strife*, Rom. xiii. 13; 1 Cor. iii. 3; Gal. v. 20; Phil. i. 15; 1 Tim. vi. 4. ¶ *Deceit*. Deception is a common accompaniment of graver crimes. Few, who are vicious enough to violate human or divine laws, will not attempt to conceal their guilt. Of the ancient Cretans, it was said they were "always liars." Tit. i. 12. And there is reason to believe the dwellers at Rome were not much more trustworthy. Such also is the general character of pagan nations in the present age. Would that Christendom were free from the same vice! ¶ *Malignity*. The word here used is said to indicate that peculiar form of malignity which exhibits itself in misrepresenting the actions, words, and intentions, of others; which attributes good actions to bad motives, and bad actions to the worst motives. We have a sample of this spirit in Job i. 9—11, where Satan inquires, "Doth Job fear God for naught?" and asserts that if he should be deprived of the gifts previously bestowed on him, he would "curse God to his face." *Livemore* remarks, that this is "a devil of great power in modern days." ¶ *Whisperers*. That is, of evil things. Secret calumniators. There are those who indulge in hints and insinuations, and cautiously, and under pledge of secrecy, give currency to slanderous reports, but lack courage to speak openly. Such are here intended.

30. *Backbiters*. Those who openly and publicly slander the absent. As

now used, the word is generally understood to indicate "a privy calumniator; a censurer of the absent." But it is here placed in opposition to *whisperers*, in the previous verse, and denotes those who reproach the absent openly, in contradistinction to those who do the same thing privately. ¶ *Haters of God*. Not only those who cherish a spirit of absolute enmity to God and to his divine law, but those who disbelieve the testimony of his works and his word, and who fail to render to him due homage and obedience, are styled haters of God, in the Scriptures. Thus our Lord said concerning the Jews, "If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin; but now they have no cloak for their sin. He that hateth me hateth my Father also. If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin; but now have they both seen and hated both me and my Father." John xv. 22—24. With much propriety might the ancient idolaters be called haters of God; for they disregarded the testimony of "the things that are made," "changed the truth of God into a lie," and lived in the habitual disregard of his holy law. ¶ *Despiteful*. "This word denotes those who abuse, or treat with unkindness or disdain, those who are present. Whisperers and backbiters are those who calumniate those who are absent." — *Barnes*. ¶ *Proud*. Elated on account of some real or supposed advantage over others. Pride is so commonly and openly exhibited, that it needs not a description. If men would consider the vast difference between their Creator and themselves, it would cure them of their overweening pride of place or station; and if they would compare their conduct with the requisitions of his law, they would cease to be proud of their works; instead of thanking God, with the haughty Pharisee, that they are not as other men, they would feel constrained to join in the prayer of the humble and contrite Publican, "God, be merciful to me, a sinner." ¶ *Boasters*. Those who arro-

31 Without understanding, cov- enant-breakers, without natural

gate to themselves qualities, and excellences, or possessions, which do not rightly belong to them, or who make a vain-glorious display of what they do possess. Samples may be found in the Pharisees, who prayed in the corners of the streets that they might have glory of men, and sounded a trumpet before them that their alms might not be unobserved, Matt. vi. 2, 5; and in Jchu, who exclaimed, "Come with me, and see my zeal for the Lord," 2 Kings x. 16. ¶ *Inventors of evil things.* "Who piqued themselves on making some new discoveries in the arts of sensuality and mischief." — *Doddridge.* With the progress of luxury, new forms of indulgence are greedily sought. In the practice of vice, similar variations are demanded. The appetite becomes sated, and some additional stimulant becomes necessary. It is related of a Roman emperor, that he offered a great reward to any one who would invent a new pleasure. Some of the vile inventions of evil things are hinted at in ver. 26, 27. A common instance, within the observation of all, may serve as an example. A man indulges in the habitual use of wine. After a time this ceases to produce the desired excitement, and he addicts himself to brandy. This, in its turn, becomes unsatisfactory, and he adds laudanum, or seeks some other more fiery form of the destroyer. As with this vice, so with others. A constant hankering exists for some more vivid excitement, and new things are invented. "This was eminently true of ancient Rome; a place where all the arts of luxury, all the devices of passion, all the designs of splendid gratification, were called forth to excite and pamper the evil passions of men. Their splendid entertainments, their games, their theatres, their sports, cruel and bloody, were little else than new and ever-varying inventions of evil things, to gratify the desires of lust and pride." — *Barnes.* ¶ *Disobedient to parents.* "Honor thy father and mother (which is the first commandment with promise), that it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth." Eph. vi. 2, 3. Those who slighted the law of God, and rebelled against his authority,

would naturally despise the counsels of their parents, and of those who had legal dominion over them. The apostle may, perhaps, here include in disobedience that neglect of parents, that disregard of their reasonable desires and absolute wants, which was and is a distinguishing characteristic of heathenism. Unkindness and disrespect to the aged, especially to one's own parents, indicates a heart sadly corrupted. If a man honor not his parents, whom he hath seen, how can he honor God, whom he hath not seen? 1 John iv. 20.

31. *Without understanding.* They became vain in their imaginations; and, by slighting the means of attaining the truth, they lost the true knowledge of God. ¶ *Covenant breakers.* False to their promises and agreements. This vice infects both individuals and nations; none more, perhaps, than politicians, who are notorious for falsifying promises, and sometimes deliberately violating the most solemn engagements. It is a high honor to a man that it should be said of him, "his word is as good as his bond." It is a disgrace to a man, a politician, or a nation, that covenants or agreements should be broken for the sake of honor, or gain, or the accomplishment of any selfish object whatever. For this vice the heathen were notorious. Nor has it yet disappeared from the earth. Men who call themselves Christians furnish mournful examples of it, even in this age of light. ¶ *Without natural affection.* The affection which exists between parents and children, and between other near kindred. This is represented in the Scriptures as one of the strongest emotions which can exist on earth. See Isa. xlix. 18; Matt. vii. 9, 10. Yet so besotted had the ancient heathen become, through their idolatrous opinions and practices, that this affection was crushed out of their hearts. Some legislators prescribed that children should be separated from their parents, and be brought up at the public charge, as children of the state. It was not unusual for children to suffer their parents to perish through neglect, nor for parents to destroy the lives of their children because their

affection, implacable, unmerciful :

support was considered burdensome. By some lawgivers parents were required to destroy their children. Among the ancient heathen nations the sacrifice of children was one of the rites of worship. Of the Canaanites it is said that they "sacrificed their sons and their daughters unto devils, and shed innocent blood, even the blood of their sons and their daughters, whom they sacrificed unto the idols of Canaan ; and the land was polluted with blood." Ps. cvi. 37, 38. The Jews were sometimes guilty of the same enormity. Manassch, one of their most impious kings, "caused his children to pass through the fire in the valley of the son of Hinnom." 2 Chron. xxxiii. 6. It was in consequence of such horrible rites that this valley, under the name of Gehenna, became the type of all which was hateful and intolerable. The Greeks and the Romans, with all their boasted civilization, practised infanticide. The same practice still exists in pagan nations. Especially is it prevalent in India, where thousands of infants are said to be destroyed annually. In many nations children were no less cruel to their parents, neglecting to provide for their wants in sickness and old age, and exposing them, as in India, to perish, or burying them alive, as in the Sandwich Islands, before their customs were changed by Christianity. This state of things, so abhorrent to a spirit of natural affection, was the result of abandoning the true God, and worshipping idols. By the operation of the system of idolatry which prevailed, enforced by its cruel, sanguinary, and disgusting rites and ceremonies, natural affection was stifled in the heart of devotees, so that they could even make their own children pass through fire unto Moloch. This is rightly placed in a prominent position by the apostle, as one of the characteristics of the sinful and degraded condition to which the heathen nations had sunk, in consequence of changing the truth of God into a lie. It is not a mere idle inquiry, nor is it made thoughtlessly or irreverently, "Shall mortal man be more just than God? Shall a man be more pure than his Maker?" Job iv. 17. If, as some theologians teach,

32 Who, knowing the judgment

God has so little affection for his offspring that he will inflict on them inconceivable tortures, through eternity, why should men be denounced as sinful because they lack affection, and destroy the mortal life of their children? It is but a feeble copy of the original, falling as far short of it as time falls short of eternity. Our Saviour gives an entirely different representation of the divine character. Matt. vii. 11. The character which he describes may safely be imitated ; and the more closely it is imitated, the more fervently will natural affection burn in the heart, and the more kindly and tenderly will one's offspring be treated. Moreover, it hath been said by them of old time, and some continue to echo the assertion, that the saints in heaven will rejoice in the perpetual and endless torment of their own children, and of others who on earth were bound to them by the ties of natural affection. Can that which is denounced as sinful on earth be holy in heaven? If a present lack of natural affection be characteristic of gross sinfulness, will an entire destitution of a like affection hereafter be consistent with perfect holiness? But it is disagreeable to dwell on this theme. Would that there were no occasion even to allude to it thus briefly ! ¶ *Implacable*. "This word properly denotes those who will not be reconciled where there is a quarrel ; or who pursue the offender with unyielding revenge. It denotes an unforgiving temper ; and was doubtless common among the ancients, as it is among all heathen people." — *Barnes*. ¶ *Unmerciful*. Not merely to enemies, but to those who have not offended. The heathen were not careful to relieve the wants of the destitute and distressed. It was left for Christianity to exhibit this grace.

32. *Who, knowing, &c.* They were not entirely ignorant of the difference between moral good and evil. See ch. ii. 14, 15. Besides, they felt in their own bodies the punishment of their sins, and witnessed similar retribution in the case of others. If they were inexcusable for their idolatry on the ground that the divine power and God-head were sufficiently manifest in the

of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death ; not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them.

things that are made, they were equally inexcusable for their unrighteousness on the ground that their own consciences condemned it, and the dispensations of God indicated his design to punish it. ¶ *Judgment of God.* Not the punishment which he inflicts, but rather his righteousness, which is manifested by such punishment. The same word is rendered *righteousness*, ch. ii. 26 ; v. 18 ; viii. 4 ; and *justification*, ch. v. 18. It occurs nowhere else in this epistle. It imports the just administration of the divine government, by which every man is rewarded according to his works. ¶ *That they which commit such things.* Namely, the crimes specified in the preceding verses. ¶ *Are worthy of death.* Deserve death as a just retribution. Several of the older commentators interpret *death* here to mean natural death, or the death of the body. This interpretation seems improbable. Some of the crimes named in the foregoing catalogue have been punished by destroying the life of the offender, both anciently and in more modern times. But neither human nor divine law, I think, has denounced that penalty against envy, whispering, backbiting, pride, boasting, and the like. The language of the apostle is general. They who commit such things, that is, all or any of the crimes specified, or others like them, deserve death. But it is not proved, and I am not aware that it has been alleged, that the Gentiles knew or believed that the death of the body was the proper penalty for every species of transgression. The apostle, however, refers to a death which they had witnessed, and quite uniformly witnessed : else what evidence had they that it was according to a divine law or appointment ? They had felt misery of some kind, whether remorse of conscience or bodily pain, or whatever other form it may have taken, as the consequence of their own sins, and had witnessed manifestations of like results in others. This just and righteous retribution followed not only murder and other unnatural crimes, but those also of a less aggravated nature. It was so uniform that sufficient evidence was furnished of its divine

appointment. For a more extended examination of the nature of that death which is the "wages of sin," see note on ch. vi. 23. "The word *death* in the Scriptures is often used to denote punishment. But it does not mean here that these deserved capital punishment from the civil magistrate, but that they knew they were evil and offensive to God, and deserving of punishment from his hand." — *Barnes.* ¶ *Not only do the same.* They were not the only persons who have persisted in crime while enduring its just punishment. There are those, even now, who continue to violate the law of their nature, while they know, both by observation and experience, that the way of the transgressor is hard. ¶ *But have pleasure in them that do them.* Approve the sinful conduct of others ; are pleased with it ; give countenance and encouragement to it. This seems to be the climax of ungodliness. A good man may be overcome by temptation, and do things which he ought not. Ch. vii. 18—25. Yet he mourns over his infirmity, and bitterly regrets his sinfulness. But to approve iniquity in others indicates a state of spiritual lethargy and deadness which is absolutely appalling.

Such was the result of human efforts, guided by the light of nature, for a period of four thousand years. Exceptions, doubtless, might be found, and some instances of comparative virtue. Ch. ii. 14, 15. But the description of the apostle must be understood to apply to the great majority, the mass of the people. And even the less sinful were far from yielding sinless obedience to the divine law. It was thus manifest that none had attained such perfect purity as to be justly entitled to perfect happiness as a reward, or to claim the blessings of heaven as a debt due to them. This fact is illustrated and enforced by the apostle, to convince the Gentiles that their condition was hopeless, unless some other way of salvation had been ordained, and to make them the more willing to embrace the gospel, in which that way was revealed. A similar course is adopted with the Jews, in the next chapter. And thus both Jews and Gentiles are

CHAPTER II.

THEREFORE thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou

taught that their only hope of perfect salvation is in the free, unpurchased grace of God. "The description which the apostle hath given of the national manners of the Greeks, however disgraceful to human nature, being perfectly true, merits attention; because it is a complete confutation of those who contend that natural reason hath always been sufficient to lead mankind to just notions in religion, and to a proper moral conduct. For, after the weakness of human reason, in matters of religion and morality, hath been so clearly demonstrated by experience in the case of the Greeks, who, of all mankind, were the most distinguished for their intellectual endowments, the futile pretence of the sufficiency of the light of nature, set up by modern infidels for the purpose of rendering revelation needless, should be rejected with the contempt due to so gross a falsehood. And all who are acquainted with the actual state of the world, under the guidance of the light of nature, ought thankfully to embrace the instruction contained in the gospel, as the most effectual means of training ignorant sinful creatures to virtue; and should humbly submit to the method of salvation by Christ, therein revealed as of divine appointment, as the only method in which sinners can be saved."—*Macknight*.

CHAPTER II.

Having exhibited, in the previous chapter, the condition of the Gentiles, the apostle next shows that the Jews had equally failed to attain perfect holiness. Guided by the light of nature alone, the Gentiles had in fact degenerated, instead of becoming more pure. This fact afforded sufficient evidence that a more clear light, like that of the gospel, was necessary for their guidance. Moreover, there was not the slightest prospect of their ever attaining a state of perfect and sinless purity by their own exertions. For four thousand years the most virtuous among them had fallen far short of perfection, and the mass had waxed worse and

art, that judgest: for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest doest the same things.

worse. Hence the absolute necessity of a righteousness of God's appointment, ch. i. 17, as the only method through which a deliverance from the power of sin could be anticipated. The general wickedness of the Gentiles was freely admitted by the Jews, and severely enough condemned. Nothing short of becoming proselytes, and yielding obedience to the law of Moses, was considered productive of any benefit to them. But the apostle proceeds to show that even this would be wholly ineffectual, inasmuch as the Jews, having the full benefit of this law, had also failed to attain perfection. Indeed, considering the purer light they enjoyed, and the more favorable opportunity of knowing the divine will, they were even more guilty than the Gentiles. Luke xii. 47, 48. So that they had no better reason to expect the attainment of perfection by the aid of the law, than the Gentiles by the aid of the light of nature. There remained, therefore, the same necessity for a righteousness of God's appointment, the free gift of his grace, and not the reward or natural result of human effort.

1. *Therefore*. Commentators have been somewhat perplexed to interpret the precise force of this word. It ordinarily indicates a conclusion from something which has preceded; but it is not easy to fix on the precise statement in the former chapter from which the conclusion here is drawn. *Macknight* is substantially followed by others, and is very probably correct in saying that the word is here "used to introduce a conclusion, not from what goes before, but from something not expressed, the proof of which is to be immediately added, as if the apostle had said, For this reason, O Jew! thou art without excuse in judging the Gentiles worthy of death, because by that judgment thou condemnest thyself." ¶ *Thou art inexcusable*. This was true, in a two-fold sense. They had no excuse for condemning others, when they were themselves equally guilty; and they had no excuse for their own sins. If the Gentiles were without excuse for not *glori*

2 But we are sure that the judgment of God is according to truth

fyng God by due veneration and obedience, when they knew him only through his works, ch. i. 20, 21, much more were the Jews inexcusable, on the same principle, and to a greater extent, for not yielding a like veneration and obedience, when they possessed the additional advantage of "the oracles of God." ¶ *O man.* The address is general; and, in this sense, the allegation is just. No man has a right to condemn other sinners, who bears the stains of guilt upon himself. See John viii. 7. But, although general in its form, the application is made specific in what follows. "It is plain, from ver. 17 and 27, and the whole tenor of the chapter, that St. Paul, by these words, means the Jews; but there are two visible reasons why he speaks in these terms. (1.) He makes his conclusion general, as having the more force, but less offence, than if he had bluntly named the Jews, whom he is very careful, in this epistle, to treat in the softest manner imaginable. (2.) He uses the term man emphatically, in opposition to God, in the next verse." — *Locke.* ¶ *Whosoever thou art that judgest.* Or, condemnest. The Jews did not hesitate to pronounce the Gentiles guilty, and worthy of punishment, on account of their sins. Indeed, they judged them to be not meet companions for themselves, even in the future life, unless they would previously pass through the gate of Moses, or become proselytes. They regarded the Gentiles as unclean persons, with whom the people of God might not associate, and considered them entirely unworthy of the divine grace and compassion. It excited their indignation to the utmost, when the gospel was proclaimed to Gentile as well as to Jew. Traces of this supercilious judgment concerning the Gentiles, and unwillingness to admit them to equal privileges, abound in the apostolic history. A sample is found in Acts xxii. 21, 22. ¶ *For whom thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself.* The same rule which you apply to others will condemn you with equal severity. If you condemn others because they are sinful, by thus pronouncing sin to be worthy of condemnation you condemn yourself, for you also are sinful. The succeeding

words render the rebuke even more specific. ¶ *Thou that judgest doest the same things.* Namely, the same things which are named in the black catalogue of Gentile iniquities, at the close of the former chapter; for to these special reference is had. The apostle does not care to enumerate them again, but refers to them in a mass in this general manner. "If to any one it seem strange that the apostle should pronounce the Jews guilty of the same sins of which he had accused the Gentiles, ch. i., let him consider what their own Josephus hath recorded of them, and he will cease to wonder. For, first, he assures us there was not a nation under heaven more wicked than they were. What, saith he, have you done, of all the good things required by our Lawgiver? What have ye not done, of all those things which he pronounced accursed? So that, had the Romans delayed to come against these execrable persons, I believe, saith he, either the earth would have swallowed up or a deluge would have swept away their city, or fire from heaven would have consumed it, as it did Sodom; for it brought forth a generation of men far more wicked than those who suffered such things. There is not a sin mentioned, ch. i., of which he doth not, in that history, accuse them, not excepting that of unnatural lusts; for of their zealots he saith, 'They freely gave up themselves to the passions of women, exercising and requiring unnatural lusts, and filling the whole city with impurities.' And again, 'They committed all kinds of wickedness, omitting none which ever came to the memory of man, esteeming the worst of evils to be good, and finding that reward of their iniquity which was meet, and a judgment worthy of God.'" — *Whitby.* Such was the character of the Jews, drawn by Josephus, himself a Jew, who lived at the very same time with Paul, and who never abandoned the faith of his fathers. If it be not exaggerated, — and the language of our Lord, and other declarations in the Scriptures, indicate that it is not, — it affords confirmation strong that the apostle's allegation was true to its utmost extent. See ver. 21—24.

2. *But we are sure.* We know. It is a fact admitted by all. Even the

against them which commit such things.

heathen had not entirely obliterated their sense of accountability to a higher power. Ch. i. 19, 21, 32. The Jews could not lawfully entertain any doubt on that point; for it was announced and reiterated in that law which they steadfastly believed was given by divine authority. ¶ *That the judgment of God.* Or, the condemnation of God, the sentence of punishment for sin. It is a light thing to be judged by man; but there is a Judge whose knowledge is perfect, and whose justice is incorruptible. None can escape his authority, or evade the operation of his unchangeable law. ¶ *According to truth.* "Righteous art thou, O Lord, and upright are thy judgments." Ps. exix. 137. God judgeth not according to appearances, but his judgments are righteous. See John vii. 24. Men may "outwardly appear righteous," while inwardly they "are full of hypocrisy and iniquity." Matt. xxiii. 28. Human judgment may be misdirected by the deception practised upon it. But none can deceive God. He seeth the actions of men, and discerneth their inmost thoughts and intentions. He is able, therefore, to apportion to each the precise amount of punishment which is due, and to "render to every man according to his deeds." Ver. 6. His judgment is according to truth, in another respect, to which the apostle probably had special reference. He has no particular favorites to be shielded from the retributions of justice; nor is he moved by enmity to inflict unjust or excessive punishment on others. It was idle for the Jew to imagine that God would punish the Gentiles for their sins, and permit him and his kindred to escape with impunity, though guilty of the same sins. Jew and Gentile were amenable to the same just law, and its penalties were to be enforced without respect of persons. Ver. 9, 11. Some have vainly imagined that God has one measure of justice for the converted, and another for the unconverted; that he will pass over the sins of the former, and remit the punishment due to their transgressions, while the latter shall be compelled to drain the cup of retribution to the very dregs. Not the slight-

3 And thinkest thou this, O man, that judgest them which do

est foundation for such an opinion exists in the gospel. On the contrary, the only difference which is recognized by our Lord between the two classes is this: that the children of light, those who have attained a knowledge of the truth, shall be punished for their sins more severely than those who yet sit in darkness and the shadow of death. "That servant which knew his Lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes." Luke xii. 47, 48. And the reason is added, showing that such a distinction is according to the strict rule of justice: "for unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required; and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more." It is right and just that men who know and realize their duty, and still fail to perform it, should suffer more severely than others who transgress in like manner, through ignorance. In awarding a just recompense "to every man according to his deeds," ver. 6, it cannot be doubted that every aggravating and every mitigating circumstance will have its just weight. For "the judgment of God is according to truth." Let no man, therefore, hope to evade divine justice, because he is numbered among the people of God. His responsibility is actually greater than that which rests on his less enlightened brethren. ¶ *Against them.* Against all, without respect of persons or nations. ¶ *Which commit such things.* Such, namely, as are described in the previous chapter; or, in general terms, the workers of iniquity.

3. *And thinkest thou.* In the previous verse a general proposition was asserted, which none could gainsay, namely, that God is just, and will render a just and impartial judgment against all sinners. The apostle now appeals to the conscience of the Jew, and enforces upon him the application of the general truth before declared. The Jews had condemned the Gentiles, and judged them worthy of condign punishment for their sins. He desires them to consider

such things, and doest the same, that thou shalt escape the judgment of God?

seriously whether they have any good reason to expect to be exempted from like punishment, if guilty of the same crimes, so long as they believe that God is just. ¶ *That thou shalt escape.* It is notorious that the Jews regarded themselves as the chosen people, the peculiar favorites of God, and imagined that he would pardon in them what he punished in others. As children of Abraham, they expected to escape the calamities which befell other sinners. See note on Matt. iii. 9. The apostle appeals to their common sense whether they could properly entertain any such expectation, while they believed and admitted the justice of God. Justice is not partial in its administrations. How, then, should they "escape the judgment of God," with whom "there is no respect of persons"? Verse 11. "The apostle shows them that crime is crime, wherever committed; that sin does not lose its essential character by being committed in the midst of religious privileges; and that those who professed to be the people of God have no peculiar license to sin. Antinomians, in all ages, like the Jews, have supposed that they, being the friends of God, have a right to do many things which would not be proper in others; that what would be sin in others they may commit with impunity; and that God will not be strict to mark the offences of his people. Against all this Paul is directly opposed, and the Bible uniformly teaches that the most aggravated sins among men are those committed by the professed people of God. Comp. Isa. i. 11—17; lxx. 2—5; Rev. iii. 16." — *Barnes.* See note on verse 2.

4. *Despisest.* Or, misconstruest; or, overlookest. It is not to be supposed that the Jews or any other people were ever so utterly depraved as to scorn, contemn, or abhor, the goodness of God; for such is the definition of the word despise, according to the lexicographers. But they were regardless of it, or they misinterpreted it. They were not moved by it to gratitude and repentance; but, on the contrary, they persisted in sin, through the vain hope that the divine favor would exempt them

4 Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness, and forbearance, and long-suffering; not knowing

from punishment. This was doubtless true in respect to the unbelieving Jews; and it is true, also, in regard to all sinners. It is very possible, however, that Paul had reference, in this passage, to a calamity then impending over the Jewish nation, the signs of which were disregarded. See note on verse 5. ¶ *Riches of his goodness.* His abundant goodness. Riches imports abundance, an overflowing measure. *Macknight* suggests that special reference is had to the divine goodness manifested in the adoption of the Jews as a peculiar people. "God's goodness, of which the Jews formed a wrong opinion, consisted in his having made them his church and people, and in his having bestowed on them a revelation of his will. From these marks of the divine favor they vainly inferred that God would punish no descendant of Abraham for his sins. But in this they formed a very wrong judgment of the goodness of God, which was not intended to make sinning safe to the Jews, but to lead them to repentance." However this may be, it is doubtless true that the divine goodness is rich and overflowing to all men individually, as well as to nations. And it is equally true that all men, in a less or greater degree, are unmindful of that goodness, and unthankful for its fruits. Could we fully and constantly realize the riches of his goodness, we should not live in estrangement from God, and in habitual disobedience to his commandments. But whoso is heedless of that goodness, or presumes upon it by transgressing the divine law in hope of escaping the just recompense of his sins, is assuredly treasuring up for himself a retribution in proportion to his heedlessness or his presumption. ¶ *And forbearance, and long suffering.* "The apostle multiplies words to describe the enduring mercy of God; and in proportion as that was great, the darker and deadlier became the sin of impenitence." — *Levermore.* ¶ *Not knowing.* The word used here denotes not merely ignorance, but rather a habit of inattention or heedlessness. The state of mind indicated by the apostle was not a lack of knowledge,

that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?

for this of itself would not involve guilt; but it was rather a lack of proper use of knowledge, either in actual possession or attainable by reflection. The idea embraced in the question is equivalent to that which may be expressed in this form: Art thou regardless of the rich goodness, forbearance, and long-suffering of God, not considering that this goodness leadeth thee to repentance? ¶ *Leadeth thee to repentance.* Or, to reformation; to that change of mind and purpose which shall result in habitual obedience to the divine law. See note on Matt. iii. 2. Nothing is so effectual as a realizing consciousness of the divine goodness, to produce a permanent beneficial change in the human heart. Men may be made to fear God by exhibitions of his power. They may be made to tremble by false representations concerning him, as if he were filled with enmity and fury. But their love can be excited only by convincing them that God is love; that he is good, and affectionate, and gracious, and therefore worthy to be loved. 1 John iv. 19. Rightly viewed, the punishment which men endure for their sins is an evidence of the divine goodness; because it is designed for their good, that they might become partakers of holiness. Heb. xii. 10. When men fully realize that all the dispensations of providence, the "grievous" no less than the "joyous," have their source in a spirit of love, and are designed "to yield the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby," they will be constrained to love and obey their heavenly Father.

5. *After.* According to. ¶ *Hardness.* Obduracy. The heart not moved to penitence by the experience of divine goodness and mercy may well be styled obdurate. ¶ *Impenitent heart.* This is an explanation of the previous word hardness, or obduracy. It indicates the spiritual condition of one who persists in sin, notwithstanding all the influences of God's gracious spirit to the contrary. ¶ *Treasurist up.* "In our language a treasure signifies a collection of things useful or precious. But the Hebrews gave that appellation

5 But after thy hardness and impenitent heart, treasurest up

to a heap or an abundance of anything, whether good or bad. 'Treasures of wickedness.' Prov. x. 2." — *Macknight.* ¶ *Wrath.* Or, punishment. Judging from the outward appearance only, punishment may seem to indicate wrath, as that word is ordinarily understood. But, in respect to the penalties of the divine law, it should be remembered that God is not capable of anything like human passion, and especially the passion of revenge. See note on chap. i. 18. While the punishment continues, however, it is as painful and afflicting as if it were administered in a different spirit. ¶ *Day of wrath, &c.* Or, day of punishment. There may be here a special reference to an impending national calamity, which is often described by similar phraseology in the New Testament. "As the Jew shall have had the privilege to be first rewarded for his good performances, as appears by Christ's being first revealed to him, in whom consequently and proportionally he shall have all spiritual grace and crown, if he embrace Christ and live exactly and constantly according to his directions, so must he also expect to have his punishment and destruction first, and that a sad one at this present by the Roman armies, upon their final rejecting and refusing Christ. The greater his privileges are, the greater also his provocations and his guilt will be. And then the Gnostic also, that takes part with the Jews, shall bear him company in the vengeance. As for the Gentiles, as they are put after the Jews only, and not left out, in the mercies of God, particularly in the revealing of Christ, so shall their punishments upon their provocations only come after the punishment of the Jews, not be wholly superseded. And accordingly it is to be seen in the predictions of both their ruins, in the Revelation, the Jewish unbelievers and Gnostics are punished first, and then the Gentiles and carnal Christians with them also." — *Hammond*, on ver. 8—10. Not only the phraseology "day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God," is similar to other passages, such as Matt. iii. 7; x. 15; xi. 22, and the like, which confessedly refer to a national calamity; there is an-

unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of the

righteous judgment of God ;

6 Who will render to every man

other fact worthy of consideration. In the previous verse there is an intimation that, through the forbearance and long-suffering of God, punishment had been hitherto delayed. This is not the usual manner in which the punishment of individuals is represented. Ordinarily, if not indeed always, men are represented as receiving their just punishment without delay. See ch. vi. 21 ; Heb. ii. 2. But the punishment of nations, and especially this signal punishment of the Jewish nation, is often spoken of as delayed from year to year, and from age to age, until the cup of iniquity should become full. A remarkable instance of this is found in Matt. xxiii. 32—36, where it is intimated that a general recompense was to be rendered for the national sins of the Jews, for sins committed through a long course of ages. The parable, Luke xiii. 6—9, was spoken to illustrate a declaration of similar import. The blood of certain Galileans had been mingled with their sacrifices. Others were crushed beneath the falling tower in Siloam. Our Saviour assured the Jews that they should perish by as signal destruction, unless they repented. He added the parable to illustrate and enforce his declaration, in which the divine forbearance and patience appear to have long delayed the punishment, which was now near at hand. From such considerations, it may be considered at least probable that the apostle here had special reference to the same period of great tribulation, which he might well describe as the "day of wrath." But, whether or not he had such reference, a general truth is manifest ; that those who slight the privileges which they enjoy, disregard the evidences of divine goodness, and persist in disobedience, thereby accumulate the afflictions which a just God will assuredly cause them to suffer, as the meet recompense of their ingratitude and iniquity.

6. *Who will render, &c.* He will administer justice impartially to every man. He will respect no nation, or kindred, or sect, or profession. The Jew cannot expect to escape the punishment which is considered due to the

Gentile for the same crime. Without respect of persons, a just recompense will be rendered to every man according to his deeds. It may not be improper to remark that the general nature of the truth here asserted does not conflict with the supposition that special reference may be had to a signal display of divine justice. Almost precisely the same words were used by our Lord, Matt. xvi. 27, with reference to such a display, then near at hand.

In the following verses, 7—11, the apostle amplifies his general statement, and describes the kind of recompense rendered, to some extent. It will aid us in understanding his language, if we keep distinctly in our minds the general scope or design of this part of his epistle. We must not forget a peculiar characteristic of the writer, referred to in notes on ch. i. 5, 7. It is doubtless true that he sometimes adds remarks, which, however true and important in themselves, are not absolutely necessary to the conclusiveness of his argument. It is equally true that, unless we are ready to deny, not his inspiration only, but his common sense, we must not interpret such additional remarks so as to contradict the main fact which he announces and labors to prove. In examining the nature of the rewards and punishments, therefore, described in these verses, we may safely assume that they are perfectly consistent with the main theme of discourse. That theme is announced in ch. i. 17, to wit: that God has revealed, in the gospel of his Son, a righteousness of his own appointment ; a method, and the only method, which can effectually insure the perfect and permanent righteousness of mankind. To show the necessity of this method, Paul first exhibits the condition of the Gentile world, guided by the light of nature. None of them had attained righteousness. On the contrary, they had sunk deeper and deeper into idolatrous darkness and the shadow of death. He then exhibits the condition of the Jews, who had the additional advantage of the "Oracles of God." They also had failed to attain righteousness, and, as a nation, were now ripe for destruc-

according to his deeds :

tion. To impress this fact distinctly on the Jews, it was necessary to overcome the error which they so fondly cherished, that, as the chosen people of God, they were to be treated differently from the Gentiles. The apostle, therefore, asserts the strict impartiality of God, and illustrates it by the fact that he will administer justice to Jew and Gentile, — to all men, in fact, according to their works. Having thus cleared the way, he completes his exhibition of the utter failure, by the Jews, to attain righteousness by the deeds of the law. As neither Jew nor Gentile had succeeded in this effort, from the foundation of the world, the necessity for some other method was manifest. What that method is, is unfolded in the subsequent chapters. It is sufficient here to notice its results, "that where sin abounded grace did much more abound: that as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord." Ch. v. 20, 21.

This method of righteousness, whose result is announced to be thus glorious, is the main theme of discourse. The effects of obedience and disobedience, the reward of that imperfect virtue which men here attain, and the punishment of the manifold vices of which they are guilty, must be understood in a sense consistent with God's method of securing the righteousness of mankind, if we would not make the apostle contradict himself. I remark, then, (1) That, if we understand, by the reward mentioned ver. 7, 10, endless happiness in the future life, as most commentators assert, we must conclude that such happiness is a "reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt," ch. iv. 4. But the apostle repeatedly declares that such is not the fact. The method of righteousness revealed in the gospel rests on the foundation of divine grace. Human effort had been proved insufficient to attain perfect righteousness; and this fact is set forth as the reason why a method of grace was indispensably necessary for the accomplishment of the object. (2.) If we interpret the reward to be endless happiness, we must conclude that it is the reward of

7 To them who, by patient con-

perfect virtue, or of imperfect virtue. If of perfect virtue, we contradict the main theme of discourse, which asserts the contrary: if of imperfect, we deny that it is *according* to the deeds or the merits of men, and thus contradict the assertion of the apostle in this verse. (3.) If the reward be not endless happiness, no good reason can be given why the punishment, ver. 8, 9, should be understood to be endless misery. It is incredible that a just God, to say nothing of his mercy and grace, would subject his children to a trial under such circumstances that endless happiness could not possibly be merited by obedience, while endless misery should be the penalty of disobedience. (4.) If the penalty here described be endless misery, what hope remains for any? All have sinned; and the penalty is on account of sin. And of what avail is the method of righteousness revealed in the gospel? That method was offered to Jews and Gentiles, guilty though they were of all the abominations described in these two chapters, with the assurance that it should prove to them the power of salvation, whenever they embraced it by faith. Upon so many as thus embraced it the penalty of endless misery could not be inflicted. But the apostle declares that the penalty of which he speaks shall be inflicted without respect of persons. Either, then, the penalty must be so interpreted that it may be fully inflicted and yet be succeeded by the rich gift provided by divine grace, or the apostle must be understood to contradict himself, and to deny in detail what he asserts as a general truth.

I suppose the simple truth here asserted is this: that although God hath purposed, by a method of his own appointment, to secure the final holiness and happiness of all his children (of which blessing they may become in some degree partakers in this world, by faith, 1 Tim. iv. 10), it is nevertheless true that while men live in the flesh they shall be rewarded or punished, shall be happy or miserable, according to their deeds. In this view of the case, the testimony of the apostle is consistent with itself, and with the teachings of his and our Master.

tinuance in well-doing, seek for glory, and honor, and immortal-

7. *To them.* That is, to all, to every one, whether Jew or Gentile. ¶ *Patient continuance in well-doing.* Or, perseverance in a good work. "This good work being put in the singular number, seems to intimate some work eminently so. Now, when the Jews asked our Saviour, 'What shall we do, that we may work the works of God?' his answer was, 'This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent.' John vi. 28, 29. The preaching of this faith is styled emphatically *the work*, Acts v. 31; xiii. 2; xiv. 26; xv. 38; and sometimes the work of Christ, Phil. ii. 30; the work of the Lord, 1 Cor. xvi. 10. The faith wrought by it is the *work of faith*, 2 Thess. i. 11; and he that begets it in us is said to begin in us the good work, Phil. i. 6." — *Whitly.* This interpretation receives some support by comparison with the following verse, where the contrast is made between those who persevere in the good work and those who obey not the truth. But, whether there be this special allusion here or not, the general truth is embraced, that all who persevere in their efforts to do right, to obey the divine law, shall receive an adequate reward. ¶ *Seek for glory, honor, &c.* "Glory is the good fame which commonly attends virtuous actions; but *honor* is the respect paid to the virtuous person himself, by those who have intercourse with him." — *Macknight.* ¶ *Immortality.* Rather, incorruption. The Greek word denotes *purity* rather than *continuance* of life. In 1 Cor. xv. 42, 50, 53, 54, it occurs four times, and is uniformly rendered incorruption, while in two of the instances another word is used to denote immortality. In Eph. vi. 24, and Titus ii. 7, the same word is rendered *sincerity*. It is found in only one other place in the New Testament, 2 Tim. i. 10, where it is rendered immortality. That it means incorruption, or purity, in the text, is evident from the fact that purity of life is a legitimate object to be sought by men. By a constant self-denial when excited by evil passions, by cultivating the spirit and imitating the example of our Lord Jesus Christ, we may hope to become

ity; eternal life:

8 But unto them that are con-

more and more pure from the pollution of sin. But immortal life, an endless existence, is not within the reach of human exertion. It is not to be obtained by good works or holy desires. I am not aware that any have pretended that immortality depends, in the slightest degree, upon the conduct of men; unless, indeed, this be the opinion of those who believe that the impenitent will be utterly annihilated. The Scriptures certainly represent the resurrection of the dead and the endless life which shall succeed it as the act of God, and of him alone; whether that life shall be a source of happiness to all, as we believe, or whether, as many Christians imagine, it shall be a source of happiness to some, and of misery to others. In either case the life itself is clearly independent of the deeds of men in the flesh. But the apostle manifestly refers to something which men might reasonably hope to attain, or at least to approach, by their exertions. And we may therefore conclude that he uses the word in its more usual sense of incorruption, or purity. ¶ *Eternal life.* Spiritual life, peace, joy. For the true meaning of this phrase, see note on John iii. 15. That it belongs to the present life, as the consequence of faith or virtue, see note on ver. 6. See also 1 John iii. 14.

8. *Contentious, and do not obey the truth.* "Rebellious, or stubborn in opposition. The Jews were called 'stiff-necked,' and that is the quality indicated here. By the truth is here meant whatever each man feels to be the truth; what is truth to him, — Jewish truth to the Jews, and Gentile truth to the Gentile." — *Livermore.* Perhaps the meaning may be the universal law of right, ordained by the divine law-giver, to which the apostle alludes in ver. 14, 15. This law, more clearly revealed in the gospel, was shadowed forth in the Jewish Scriptures, and was dimly perceived even by the Gentiles, aided only by the light of nature. Whitly supposes special reference is had to the gospel; and his argument is plausible, at the least. "The gospel being styled the truth of God, Rom. iii. 7; xv. 8; the word of truth, Eph. i.

tentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness; indignation and wrath,

9 Tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of

13; Col. i. 5; 2 Tim. ii. 15; Jas. i. 18; the knowledge of it being the knowledge of the truth, 1 Tim. ii. 4; iv. 3; 2 Tim. ii. 25; Tit. i. 1; Heb. x. 26; the belief of it being the belief of the truth, 2 Thess. ii. 13; obedience to it being obedience to the truth, Gal. iii. 1; v. 7; walking according to it being walking according to the truth, 1 John ii. 4; iii. 3; the gospel itself being emphatically styled the truth, Eph. iv. 21; 2 John ver. 2, 3; 3 John ver. 12; to know it being to know the truth, 1 John ii. 21; to profess it being to be of the truth, 1 John iii. 19; to reject it, not to believe the truth, 2 Thess. ii. 12; to err from it, to err from the truth, Tit. i. 14; Jas. v. 19; — I say, this being so, they that are contentious here, and obey not the truth, may be, first, the unbelieving Jews, or false apostles coming from them, who preached Christ out of contention against Paul, Phil. i. 16; and, secondly, the Gentiles, which spake against the truth and rejected it. Both these obeyed and gave up themselves to falsehood: the Gentiles, by changing the truth of God into a lie, ch. i. 25; the Jews, by adhering to their vain traditions, which made void the commands of God, and owning them as derived from Moses, when they were only the doctrines of men." ¶ *But obey unrighteousness.* Unrighteousness is here placed in contrast with the truth, intimating clearly enough that by the truth is intended the law of right, whether revealed in the gospel or elsewhere. To obey unrighteousness is to be under the dominion of evil and corrupt propensities; to be under the pernicious influence of sinful habits. Thus we often say a man is the slave of habit. ¶ *Indignation and wrath.* These shall be rendered to the contentious, and disobedient, and unrighteous. That is, they shall be punished. We are not, however, to understand these terms to indicate in the divine Judge what they indicate when used to describe certain

the Gentile;

10 But glory, honor, and peace, to every man that worketh good, to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile;

11 For there is no respect of

corrupt passions in men. See note on ch. i. 18.

9. *Tribulation and anguish.* The apostle multiplies words, to give emphasis to his assurance that, under the divine law, every transgression and disobedience shall receive a just recompense of reward. Heb. ii. 2. ¶ *Upon every soul of man.* Upon every man, without exception. Some have imagined that this phraseology was intended to denote that the punishment of sin is mental, rather than physical. However true it may be that such is the ordinary character of punishment, I apprehend that it is not proved by this phrase, because it is often used to denote simply persons. Every soul of man, and every man, are equivalent expressions. Every man's soul might bear a different interpretation. ¶ *Of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile.* The general fact stated is, that all men shall be rewarded or punished, in other words, shall be happy or miserable, according to their works. But, to impress more strongly on the Jewish mind the fact that divine justice is strictly impartial, regardless of sect or kindred, it is added, of the Jew and of the Gentile; nay, more, that as the Jews had been preëminently favored as to the means of knowing the divine law, and were thus more guilty than the Gentiles for the same violation of its requirements, so their punishment also should be conspicuous, and more severe; of the Jew first; and also of the Gentile. See ver. 12.

10. *But glory, honor, and peace.* See note on ver. 7. The same terms are repeated, with a slight variation: *peace* here takes the place of *immortality*, in ver. 7, indicating that by immortality, or rather incorruption, is denoted purity. Peace of mind is often named as the result of purity of heart. Ps. cxix. 165; Prov. iii. 17; Isa. xxxii. 17; John xiv. 27; Rom. viii. 6; Gal. v. 22.

11. *For there is no respect of persons with God.* That is, God is strictly im-

persons with God.

12 For as many as have sinned

partial. And, because he is impartial, he will render to all men, without distinction of name, or race, or station, a just and equitable recompense, according to their deeds, whether good or bad. See note on Acts x. 34. No man has yet been able to attain such legal righteousness, or righteousness by works, as to secure perfect and permanent happiness as a reward. All have sinned, and punishment is the certain result of sin. Hence follows the necessity of a more effectual method of attaining righteousness, else there were no hope for any man. This method is revealed in the gospel. See note on ch. i. 17. The apostle urges the impartiality of God, in order to convince the Jews that the gospel, and the righteousness revealed in it, could not be more necessary for the Gentiles than for themselves, on the one hand, and, on the other, that they had no peculiar claim to the blessing, to the exclusion of the Gentiles. "However nationally the Jews might be distinguished by the possession of a divine revelation, that circumstance, individually, would not alter the grounds of the equitable assignment of good to the good, and evil to the evil. An effectual quietus is here administered to the haughty Jewish pride, which took airs to itself for enjoying, however it might use, the rich gifts of the divine mercy. To rebuke that disdainful selfishness was one of the first steps towards accomplishing the object of the epistle, and proclaiming the right of the Gentiles to become Christians without first becoming Jews, and being circumcised. That spirit, once condemned by Paul, is still to rife in the Christian world; and, in the narrow and jealous spirit of its exclusiveness, the church has proved itself to be too often, as it were, only a second edition of Judaism. It has not come to be a superfluous task to preach that God is no respecter of persons, even in the nineteenth century of our Lord. For the walls of caste and class and clan still tower aloft, and divide the great brotherhood into hostile sects, parties, races, and nations."—*Livermore*.

12. For as many as have sinned. That

without law, shall also perish without law: and as many as have

is, all who have sinned, without exception. The strict impartiality of the divine judgment is still urged, and it is exemplified by the fact that, in determining the amount of guilt, the condition and opportunities of each individual are taken into the account, and are allowed their proper weight. The same fact is distinctly stated by our Lord, Luke xii. 47, 48. So that, instead of exulting over the Gentiles as fit objects of wrath, the Jews had occasion rather to anticipate more severe judgments upon themselves, because they had sinned against greater light. ¶ *Without law.* Namely, without a written law; with manifest allusion to the Jewish Scriptures, or the "oracles of God." Ch. iii. 2. It is not to be understood that the Gentiles were entirely destitute of law, for the contrary is expressly asserted in ver. 14, 15. But they had not enjoyed the benefit of a written law, and consequently had a less accurate knowledge of their duty to God and man than others had the means of obtaining through the law. ¶ *Shall also perish without law.* Shall be punished without law. "That is, they shall not be judged by a law which they have not. They shall not be tried and condemned by the revelation which the Jews had. They shall be condemned only according to the knowledge and the law which they actually possess. This is the equitable rule on which God will judge the world."—*Barnes*. Their punishment was to be graduated according to their guilt, and their guilt to be estimated according to the degree of light and knowledge in their possession, or within their reach. The word *perish*, which is here used to indicate punishment, has been strangely misinterpreted and misunderstood. Most commentators assert, and very many pious Christians believe, that this word here indicates endless misery in the future life. Aside from the question whether such misery be anywhere revealed in the Scriptures, or whether it shall be endured by any person whatever, it is manifest that such cannot be the meaning of the apostle in this place. To show the necessity of God's plan or method of

sinned in the law, shall be judged by the law ;

righteousness, he had already appealed to the condition of the Gentile world, exhibiting a uniform and utter failure to attain righteousness by perfect obedience. In this chapter he exhibits the same fact in regard to the Jews. As the result of this exhibition, he declares that he has "proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin," ch. iii. 9 ; in other words, that all were sinners. In the immediate context, to convince the Jews that they had as much need as the Gentiles of the grace manifested in the gospel, he declares the impartiality of God in the retribution rendered for good and evil. He adds, as an illustration of the divine impartiality, that God will apportion punishment to transgressors, not only according to their deeds, but according to their opportunities for knowing their various duties towards God and man. Accordingly, in this verse he declares that the Gentiles shall perish without law, that is, that they shall be punished without reference to the Jewish law, and that the Jews shall be condemned under the provisions of their law, or punished according to the rule therein revealed. In either case, the punishment was sure to be inflicted. The fact is reiterated, that God *will* render to every man according to his works, without any exception whatever. Not merely are sinners represented as in danger of punishment, but they are assured that punishment is certain. And this punishment was certain to all, because all, both Jews and Gentiles, were sinners ; but to each in his own order : to the Jew according to the law, and to the Gentile according to that lesser light which he enjoyed. Suppose, then, that the apostle designed to indicate endless misery by perishing without law, and by being condemned, or punished, according to the law. The result is manifest. No hope would remain for either. The proclamation of the gospel would be useless. If all were sinners, and all sinners must endure endless misery, even divine grace could not secure the final holiness and happiness of a single individual. Either, then, the apostle did not believe that all sinners would be pun-

13 (For not the hearers of the law *are* just before God, but the

ished, and asserted what he did not believe ; or he did not believe that those who had once been sinners, and had been punished for their sins, could afterwards enjoy the peaceable fruit of righteousness, and asserted what he did not believe, ch. vi. 19—22 ; or he did not intend, by the perishing of the Gentiles and the condemnation of the Jews for their sins, that they should endure endless misery. Such an interpretation of this text is utterly inconsistent with the general scope of the whole passage ; it is, therefore, to be rejected without hesitation. Whatever else *perish* may mean here, it cannot be understood to indicate endless misery. The simple matter of fact, I apprehend, is this : the word *perish* here means neither more nor less than is expressed in ver. 8, 9, by the terms indignation, wrath, tribulation, and anguish. By these accumulated terms the apostle had described the punishment of all sinners. His object in this verse is not to reaffirm the fact that sinners shall be punished, nor to intensify the degree of punishment, but simply to illustrate the divine impartiality by declaring that God would distinguish between those who sinned without a knowledge of revealed law and those who knowingly disobeyed that law. All would be punished according to their actual deserts. Those who were ignorant of the revealed law, being less guilty, would be punished less severely than those who possessed and yet slighted and disobeyed "the oracles of God." See note on Luke xii. 47, 48. ¶ *Judged*. This word is by no means synonymous with that which is rendered *perish* in the former clause of the verse ; yet, as here used, it conveys substantially the same idea. Both are used figuratively, and both indicate the rendering of a just retribution to sinners. The remarks already made in reference to the meaning of *perish* apply with equal force to the word *judged*.

13—15. These three verses, in our common translation, are very properly marked as a parenthesis. They are interposed in the midst of the discourse for the purpose of explaining two points on which the Jewish mind would be

doers of the law shall be justified :

14 For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the

things contained in the law, these having not the law, are a law unto themselves ;

likely to stumble. This being accomplished, the discourse proceeds, at ver. 16. Such parentheses abound in the writings of this apostle.

13. *For not the hearers, &c.* This was the first point for explanation. The Jews fancied that their regular hearing of the law, in the synagogues, was a work of great merit ; and especially that an accurate knowledge of its precepts gave them important advantages over the Gentiles. Ver. 17—20. When the apostle asserted that they should as certainly be punished as the Gentiles, they were disposed to inquire what real advantage they derived from their cherished privileges, ch. iii. 1, if his assertion were true. He assured them, therefore, that the hearing or the knowledge of the law availed nothing towards becoming just, unless obedience accompanied knowledge. Indeed, he had previously intimated that knowledge was an aggravation of disobedience. But the point here is, that if they would become just by the law, or attain righteousness by the law, they must not only know its requirements, but yield a perfect obedience to every jot and tittle. Hence it followed, that if they were disobedient, all their knowledge was vain, and they were subject, equally with the Gentiles, to a just retribution. If they could succeed, as no one of their race ever had succeeded, in rendering perfect obedience to the law, without a single exception, then they would be just, and free from sin ; in which case, they might rely on their own righteousness, having no need of the righteousness of God, revealed in the gospel. But, if they failed to do this, they must endure the just penalty of their disobedience, and could entertain no rational hope of ever attaining perfect righteousness, except through the method of God's appointment.

14. *For when the Gentiles, &c.* The other point, so difficult to be understood by the Jews, is here illustrated. They had an utter contempt for the Gentiles, and regarded them as altogether vile, and unworthy to enjoy the least blessings of God. It was strange, in their ears, to be told that the virtuous en-

deavors of Gentiles, as well as of Jews, should be rewarded, ver. 7, 10 ; and that, in the apportionment of both rewards and punishments, "there is no respect of persons with God," ver. 11. They were assured, therefore, that when the Gentiles conformed to the eternal principles of right, even though they lacked the instructions of revealed law, they were justly entitled to the reward of well-doing. On precisely the same principle that the Jews did not become just while they were not doers of the law, the Gentiles did become just when they were doers of the things contained in the law. Not that any one became absolutely just ; for the apostle declares that all were under sin, ch. iii. 9. But they became comparatively just, by obedience, and enjoyed the reward of well-doing. "This verse is not to be understood as affirming, as a historical fact, that any of the heathen ever did perfectly obey the law which they had, any more than the previous verse affirms it of the Jews. The main point of the argument is, that if men are justified by the law, their obedience must be entire and perfect ; that this is not to be external only, or to consist in hearing or in acknowledging the justice of the law ; and that the Gentiles had an opportunity of illustrating this principle as well as the Jews, since they also had a law among themselves. The word *when* does not imply that the thing shall certainly take place ; but is one form of introducing a supposition, or of stating the connection of one thing with another. Matt. v. 11 ; vi. 2, 5, 6, 16 ; x. 19. It is, however, true that the main things contained in this verse and the next actually occurred ; that the Gentiles did many things which the law of God required." *Barnes.* ¶ *Which have not the law.* Who have not a revealed law, such as the Jews had. ¶ *Do by nature.* By the guidance of that natural sense and conscience which is implanted in all men. The phrase *by nature* indicates that state which is described in ch. i. 19, 20. The Gentiles, though destitute of a revealed law, had the guidance of God's works and providences, and the

15 Which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and *their* thoughts the mean while accusing, or else excusing one another ;)

natural capacity to understand them ; and thus were able to form tolerably accurate ideas concerning right and wrong. Hence they were virtuous by doing the right, and guilty by doing wrong. ¶ *Do by nature the things.* Not merely hear the precepts, but obey them ; perform the deeds which are required. See James i. 22—25. ¶ *Contained in the law.* Required by the law. ¶ *Are a law unto themselves.* The manner in which the Gentiles were a law unto themselves is explained in the following verse. Their natural sense and conscience, guided by the light of nature, distinguished between right and wrong ; and thus they had a natural law, equivalent, in a certain degree, to the revealed law.

15. *Which show the work of the law.* The requirements of the law ; or, the work which the law requires. ¶ *Written in their hearts.* Or, impressed on their moral nature. The phrase is figurative. The law given to Moses was graven or written on stone. With an allusion to that fact, probably, the moral law, given to all men, is said to be written or impressed on their hearts. ¶ *Their conscience bearing witness.* The fact that conscience approved some actions, and condemned others, afforded evidence that the Gentiles felt themselves subject to a moral law. Had they been entirely unconscious of any such law, they could have had no idea of right and wrong, and conscience could neither approve or disapprove. ¶ *Their thoughts the mean, while accusing or else excusing one another.* Stuart translates, “ their thoughts alternately accusing or excusing ; ” which he explains thus : “ Between each other, at mutual intervals, alternately ; that is, in succession, first one kind of thoughts, that is, approbation ; then another kind, that is, disapprobation.” He adds : “ The meaning of this clause is not, as has frequently been supposed, that one man blames or applauds another, or that men mutually blame or applaud one another (although the fact itself is true) ; but that in the thoughts or judgment of the same individual approbation or condemnation exists, according

to the tenor of the actions which pass in review before him. Thus the voice of conscience, which proceeds from a moral feeling of dislike or approbation, and the judgment of the mind, when it examines the nature of actions, unite in testifying that what the moral law of God requires is impressed in some good measure on the hearts even of the heathen. Those commit a great mistake, then, who deny that men can have any sense of moral duty or obligation, without a knowledge of the Scriptures. The apostle’s argument, in order to convince the Gentiles of sin, rests on a basis entirely different from this. And if it be alleged that in this way the necessity of a revelation is superseded, I answer, not at all. The knowledge of some points of moral duty, or the power to acquire such knowledge, is one thing ; a disposition to obey the precepts of natural religion is another. The latter can be affirmed of few, indeed, among the heathen of any age or nation. Again, faculties adapted to discover the path of duty are one thing ; the use of them so effectually as to do this is another. The former the apostle asserts ; the latter he denies. And justly ; for, after all, what have the heathen done and said which renders the gospel in any measure unnecessary ? Little, indeed ; in some respects, we may say, nothing. What authority had their precepts over them ? And how was it with them as to doubts and difficulties about some of the plainest principles of morality ? Their minds were blinded by their passions. Hence the voice within them was not listened to. But this does not prove that God left himself without sufficient witness among them. The apostle most plainly and fully asserts that he did not.” The importance of the subject discussed in this note will certainly justify its length. The idea that God, for four thousand years, left the great majority of his children entirely destitute of moral knowledge, is altogether too preposterous for belief.

16. *In the day when God shall judge,* &c. The subject which was broken off at the end of verse 12 is here resumed.

16 In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Je-

The three verses which intervene are to be regarded as a parenthesis, in which certain points, previously stated, are more fully explained. The meaning is, that the Gentiles, without revealed law, and the Jews, according to the revealed law, are both to be judged at the time here specified. "*When* would express the simple sense of the *day*, without its dramatic garb."—*Livermore*. A general truth is here asserted, with a particular application. The general truth is, that God will assuredly render to every man according to his works. The particular application is indicated by the phraseology employed, denoting a special manifestation of the general truth. The day, or the time here mentioned, is doubtless the same which is called the "day of wrath" in verse 5. See the note. That it may properly be understood in reference to a signal display of divine justice, is manifest from the language of our Saviour. "For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father, with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works. Verily, I say unto you, there be some standing here which shall not taste of death till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom." Matt. xvi. 27, 28. The points of similarity are two-fold: all men, both Jews and Gentiles, were to be rewarded according to their works, without respect of persons; and they were to be so rewarded by the Son of man, the Lord Jesus Christ, to whom the Father hath committed all judgment. John v. 22. Yet the period of that special judgment is expressly limited to the lifetime of some who heard our Lord's declaration. In both cases a particular and visible manifestation of divine justice is indicated, which was then near at hand. However true it is that God will reward and punish all men as individuals, according to their works, it is no less true that he sometimes renders such retributions in a more signal manner on whole nations, or larger or smaller bodies of men in a mass. Thus, on one day of judgment, the old world was destroyed by water; on another, Sodom and Gomorrah perished

by fire; on another, Jerusalem was utterly overthrown, more than a million of Jews perished, and the remnant of that devoted nation were scattered to the four winds. At about the same time great distress befell the Gentiles also. To this time of tribulation, the like of which was not known, either before or afterwards, Matt. xxiv. 21, allusion is had by the apostle. So manifest is this, that *Grotius* was constrained to admit that, "although what is here said may properly apply to the punishments of another life, yet God chooses more speedily to manifest in a signal manner his severity against the contumacious: against the Romans, by subjecting them to the worst species of tyranny, and to bloody civil wars; and against the Jews, by utterly casting them out from their native land, and abolishing their political and ecclesiastical privileges." Note on verse 9. Such was the day of wrath, then near at hand. ¶ *The secrets of men*. Not only the conduct of men, but their most secret thoughts and intentions, are open to the divine judgments. Indeed, the moral character of actions depends on the intentions. These are clearly discerned by God. They are also clearly discerned by him whom God hath appointed to judge in his name, and by his authority. See John ii. 25. The most studied arts of the hypocrite, however successful in deceiving men, avail nothing in the sight of God. The sanctimonious Pharisees, appearing beautiful outwardly, but inwardly full of all uncleanness, grinding the faces of the poor, and devouring widows' houses, and for a pretence making long prayers, receive the greater damnation. Matt. xxiii. 14—27. They deserve a double measure, because they are guilty of hypocrisy in addition to their criminal deeds. All must receive a just recompense, according to their moral character; and that character depends, not alone on the outward conduct, but on the thoughts and intents of the heart. ¶ *By Jesus Christ*. See notes on John v. 22; Acts x. 42. "The distinct and independent personality of Christ, as another being than God, could not, in any form of language, be

17 Behold, thou art called a Jew

and retest in the law, and makest

more explicitly announced than in the text." — *Livemore*. Nor can the fact of his superiority to men be more explicitly announced than by the declaration that God hath appointed him to judge the world, and to administer a righteous retribution in his name. Such power he hath not committed to weak, fallible man; but only to his beloved Son, the brightness of his own glory and the express image of his person, who sitteth on the right hand of the majesty on high. Heb. i. 3. ¶ *According to my gospel*. Some have supposed the apostle to refer to a gospel which he had written, calling it his gospel, as we speak concerning the gospel of Matthew, and the others. There is no good evidence, however, that any such gospel was written by him at any time. It is altogether probable that he uses the word gospel here as in chap. i. 15, 16, to denote the substance of the message delivered by him, namely, good tidings from God to man. Some of the leading facts in this gospel he had already enforced, and was still enforcing: such as, that no man, Jew or Gentile, could obtain perfect deliverance from the power of sin by his own exertions; that God had provided a method by which this unspeakable blessing should be secured without possibility of failure; but that, in the mean time, while men remain imperfect, they shall be happy or miserable, according to their deserts; and that, in all respects, they shall be treated impartially by their heavenly Father. In accordance with the principles of this gospel the apostle declares that both Jews and Gentiles shall be judged. Not that all were to be tried by the specific precepts of this gospel; because the contrary is asserted in verse 12. But both Jews and Gentiles were to be held accountable for the privileges which they respectively enjoyed. Their guilt or innocence should be determined by this righteous rule, and judgment be rendered accordingly.

17. *Behold*. Some translate, "but if." If this be the true reading, the apostle may be understood as appealing to the Jews, why, with all their advantages, they did not make better use of them; if thou enjoyest all these

privileges, why not teach thyself a more pure morality? Ver. 21. Or, if the common translation be correct, the word may be regarded as an exclamation, designed to attract attention to the important matters about to be discussed. ¶ *Thou art called a Jew*. Several subjects are named, in regard to which the Jews doubtless had an advantage over the Gentiles, but of which they were unduly proud. Ch. iii. 2. They were proud also of their name, as if it necessarily denoted their superiority to others. "After the returning of the Israelites from the Babylonish captivity, they were all called Judæi Jews, because Judah was the principal and almost the only tribe then existing, and because to that tribe the others joined themselves. And as the Jews differed from all nations in point of religion, the name Jew and Israelite at length signified the profession of religion. When, therefore, it is said, 'Behold, thou art surnamed a Jew,' the meaning is, thou art a worshipper of the true God, and enjoyest the benefit of a revelation of his will. In this and the following verses, if I mistake not, the apostle addressed the men of rank and learning among the Jews. It is no objection to that supposition that probably there were no doctors of the law nor Jewish scribes and priests at Rome, when this epistle was written; for, as the apostle was reasoning against the whole body of the nation, his argument required that he should address the teachers of every denomination to whom the things written in this and the following verses best agree. Besides, as he had addressed the heathen legislators, philosophers, and priests, in the first chapter, for the purpose of showing them the bad improvement they had made of the knowledge they derived from the works of creation, it was natural for him, in this, to address the Jewish scribes, priests, and doctors, to show them how little they had profited by the knowledge which they had derived from revelation. Of the Jewish common people the apostle speaks, ch. iii. 20, where he proves that they also were extremely vicious." — *Macknight*. But, to whatever class special allusion be made, the general drift of the argu-

thy boast of God,

18 And knowest *his will*, and approve the things that are more

ment is sufficiently manifest; namely, that the Jews had misimproved their advantages; that they had utterly failed to attain perfection; that they were as dependent as the Gentiles on the gracious design of God for deliverance from the power of sin; and that they had no special interest in that grace, to the exclusion of the Gentiles. All were equally needy and dependent. God was no respecter of persons. None, therefore, could properly complain that they were admitted to share the benefits of the dispensation of grace. ¶ *Restest in the law.* By law, is to be understood the Mosaic law, which the Jews regarded as the standard of perfection. Not considering that this was merely introductory to a more full and clear revelation of the divine character and purposes, a schoolmaster, conducting to Christ, Gal. iii. 24, they were unwilling to allow that any could enjoy the divine favor, unless they first became proselytes to the law. Their own faith in the law, therefore, they regarded as evidence of their superiority to all others. ¶ *Makest thy boast of God.* The heathen believed that each nation was under the peculiar care of some one of their lords many and gods many, 1 Cor. viii. 5; and that such tutelary god not only lavished his favors on his chosen people, but was ready to vex and destroy their adversaries. The Jews, at some time and in some manner, had imbibed similar opinions concerning the one God whom they acknowledged. They believed that God had chosen them as a peculiar people; and, to a certain extent, their belief was well founded. But their error consisted in believing him to be unfriendly to other nations; in believing that he was not the God of the Gentiles, in the same sense in which he was the God of the Jews. This error is combated by the apostle, ch. iii. 29—34. He alludes to it here as one of the reasons why the Jews assumed such superiority over the Gentiles.

18. *And knowest his will.* It was the common boast of the Jews that God had made known his will to them, as he had not made it known to others.

excellent, being instructed out of the law;

19 And art confident that thou

The apostle allows that they had the oracles of God, which, properly improved, was an advantage, ch. iii. 2. Yet he would have them understand that this furnished no cause for boasting; for, if they did not give heed to the law so as to understand it, they derived no profit, but were guilty for their negligence; and if they did understand it, and yet were disobedient, they failed to secure its moral advantages, ver. 13, and became liable to more severe punishment for their disobedience, on account of the knowledge of which they boasted. See Luke xii. 47, 48. Their boasting, in either case, was vain. ¶ *Approvest.* Or, triest. The same word occurs 1 Thess. v. 21, and is there rendered *prove*. It is often used to denote the testing of the quality of metals; and may properly denote the process of examining the nature or quality of opinions or conduct. It would be inconsistent with the apostle's argument to understand this as a declaration that the Jews honestly *approved* the more excellent things, in the ordinary sense of that word. They could, however, distinguish between right and wrong more accurately than the Gentiles, by the help of the revealed law; they could try or test the character of opinions or conduct by this standard. ¶ *Things that are more excellent.* Or, things that differ; for such is the primary signification of the word used here. It is not a forced meaning, however, as it stands in the text. *Barnes* understands the apostle to refer specially to the rites and ceremonies observed by the Jews: "The reference is to the rites and customs, to the distinctions of meats and days, &c., prescribed by the law of Moses. The Jew would pride himself on the fact that he had been taught by the law to make these distinctions, while all the heathen world had been left in ignorance of them. This was one of the advantages on which he valued himself and his religion." *Stuart* gives a more general interpretation: "*Things that differ* are virtue and vice; that is, lawful and unlawful, praiseworthy and base things." Both may be substantially correct; for

thyselt art a guide of the blind, a light of them which are in darkness,

20 An instructor of the foolish,

the Jews manifestly regarded a conformity to their rites and ceremonies as the surest criterion of moral character. The Pharisee thanked God that he had attained excellence by fasting and giving tithes, Luke xviii. 12; and the common complaint of the Jews against our Lord and his disciples — indeed, the only immorality charged against them — was that they did not conform to the customs which were considered sacred. See Matt. xii. 2, 10—14; xv. 2. ¶ *Bring instructed out of the law.* Or, enlightened by the Jewish Scriptures. There can be no doubt that the Jews were more enlightened than the Gentiles in regard to the character and requirements of God. This clearer light they had from the holy oracles. Their fault was, that they boasted of their acquisitions, instead of employing them to good purpose. They boasted that they knew their duty; but they did not perform it. See ver. 21—24.

19. *And art confident.* The Jews had not the slightest doubt of their own superiority over the Gentiles. Especially did the priests and Pharisees glory in their superior knowledge. They could not receive instruction even from the Lord Jesus Christ. They were disciples of Moses, John ix. 28, and that was enough. They were learned in the law, and they both boasted of their own attainments and reviled those who had less knowledge of it. John vii. 49. The apostle admitted their pretensions in this regard; he admitted their acquired knowledge, and their capacity to instruct; yet, afterwards, he shows that their guilt was aggravated in the same proportion. ¶ *Guide of the blind.* This, like the other expressions which follow, figuratively denotes an instructor of the ignorant. Whoso imparts knowledge to the ignorant may be said to guide them to wisdom. Ignorance is often represented by the figure of mental blindness or obscurity. Isa. xlii. 7, 16, 18, 19; lvi. 10; Matt. xv. 14; xxiii. 16, 17, 26; Luke iv. 18; John ix. 39—41; 2 Pet. i. 9; Rev. iii. 17. ¶ *Light of them which are in darkness.* The same idea is repeated under

a teacher of babes, which hast the form of knowledge, and of the truth in the law:

21 Thou therefore which teach-

another figure. Ability to instruct, the capacity of imparting knowledge, is called *light*, in Matt. v. 14. A state of ignorance is called *darkness*, and the communication of knowledge is represented as the influx of light. Isa. ix. 2; Matt. iv. 16; Luke ii. 32; John i. 9; v. 35; Acts xiii. 47. This figure abounds in the Scriptures.

20. *An instructor of the foolish.* That is, of those who were destitute of wisdom. The word sometimes denotes the irreligious, as in Ps. xiv. 1; but in this place it seems to have reference to the intellect as uncultivated, rather than to the morals as depraved. ¶ *A teacher of babes.* Of those who were ignorant as children. Adults who are beginning to acquire knowledge, but have made slight progress, are styled babes. Heb. v. 12, 13. All these terms, blind, benighted or in darkness, foolish, and babes, were freely bestowed by the Jews upon the Gentiles, and by the priests upon the common people of the Jews. Of their own superiority in this respect they were very confident, and did not scruple to boast of it openly. They claimed to be competent to teach all nations, and were active in making proselytes. Matt. xxiii. 15. ¶ *Which hast the form of knowledge, and of the truth in the law.* Perhaps a Hebraism for form of true knowledge by the law. The word here translated form is rendered "image" by Macknight; "delineation," by Stuart. The idea is, that in the oracles of God the Jews had a revelation of a certain measure of divine truth. Additional truth was revealed through Jesus Christ. But, before his advent, very important truth had been communicated to the Jews. Of this fact they boasted and were proud. Had their gratitude been equal to their pride, and had they been as diligent to perform as to hear the precepts of the law, they had escaped the righteous and scorching rebukes in Matt. xxiii. The apostle allows them all the advantages of which they boasted, and, in the next four verses, exposes their guilt in the misimprovement of these privileges.

est another, teachest thou not thyself? thou that preachest a man should not steal, dost thou steal?

21. *Thou therefore which teachest, &c.* By a series of questions the apostle brings home their guilt to the Jews as effectually as if he had made direct charges of misconduct. By *teaching*, in this place, we are to understand something more than the communication of knowledge, and something more even than a knowledge of the requirements of the law. The Jews must have already acquired the knowledge which they imparted to others, whether of human science or of the divine law, and in this regard they needed not to teach themselves the same thing again. The obligation to obey the precepts of the law must be here included in the lesson taught. And the point of inquiry is, Art thou careful to perform the duties which thou enforcest on others? Thou that teachest another that he is bound to obey the law, dost thou impress the same obligation on thine own heart? Such is the general charge. The several specifications follow. The Jewish priests were ready to enforce on their own kindred, and even on the Gentiles, the duty of strict obedience to the moral as well as the ceremonial law, but they were notoriously slack in personal obedience. Their conduct was sadly different from their teachings. Our Lord distinctly charged this kind of guilt upon them. "The Scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat. All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do ye not after their works; for they say, and do not. For they bind heavy burdens, and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers." Matt. xxiii. 2—4. ¶ *Thou that preachest.* That is, that declarest publicly, whether in the form of sermon or exhortation, or in whatever other manner, or in whatever place, in the synagogue, at the corners of the streets, or elsewhere. The place or the manner is of minor consequence. The material thing is the authoritative announcement by one to another. ¶ *Dost thou steal?* It is not necessary to the apostle's argument that each one of the class ad-

22 Thou that sayest a man should not commit adultery, dost thou commit adultery? thou that

dressed should be supposed guilty of every specified dereliction of duty. It is sufficient if such were the general characteristic of the class. If we may believe their own historian, there was just cause for the allegation in the text; for Josephus accuses them of theft. Our Saviour did not hesitate to accuse them in like manner, and of a kindred crime, even less manly than theft, because, being perpetrated under the form of law, it escaped punishment by the civil magistrate when detected. He alleged that they had converted the temple of the living God, erected as "a house of prayer," into "a den of thieves;" and that they oppressed the weak and defenceless, and "devoured widows' houses." See Matt. xxi. 13; xxiii. 14. Those who would do these things were not slandered by the inquiry whether they would steal.

22. *Dost thou commit adultery?* "The Talmudical books show that many of the Rabbins were addicted to this and kindred vices. And Justin, against Trypho, alleged the lasciviousness of the Jewish rulers." — *Grotius*. Our Lord compelled them to acknowledge their own guilt, when the Scribes and Pharisees brought before him "a woman taken in adultery." The lecherous hypocrites, desiring to find cause to accuse him, said, "Moses, in the law, commanded us that such should be stoned: but what sayest thou?" He replied, "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her." This was an unexpected result. "And they which heard it, being convicted by their own conscience, went out, one by one, beginning at the eldest, even to the last." John viii. 3—9. Never were men more effectually snared in the work of their own hands, and never was a more practical acknowledgment of guilt. ¶ *Abhorrest idols.* The Jewish Scriptures are full of denunciations against idolatry. The people, to be sure, from the time when they worshipped the golden calf in the wilderness, manifested very frequently a fondness for this forbidden worship. But the prophets who succeeded Moses denounced it as an abomination. The

abhorrest idols, dost thou commit sacrilege?

23 Thou that makest thy boast

teachers of the law could do no less than to express an abhorrence of a vice against which they were bound to caution the people. And, very probably, the great majority of them honestly abhorred idolatry in its grosser forms. ¶ *Dost thou commit sacrilege?* "Sacrilege is the crime of violating or profaning sacred things, or of appropriating to common use what has been devoted to the service of religion. In this question the apostle shows remarkable tact and skill. He could not accuse them of idolatry, for the Jews, after the Babylonish captivity, had never fallen into it. But, then, though they had not the *form*, they might have the *spirit*, of idolatry. That spirit consisted in withholding from the true God that which was his due, and bestowing the affections upon something else. This the Jews did, by perverting from their proper use the offerings which were designed for his honor; by withholding that which he demanded of tithes and offerings, and by devoting to other uses that which was devoted to him, and which properly belonged to his service. That this was a common crime among them is apparent from Mal. i. 8, 12—14; iii. 8, 9. It is also evident from the New Testament that the temple was in many ways desecrated and profaned in the time of our Saviour." — *Barnes*. Matt. xxi. 12, 13, is a case in point.

23. *Makest thy boast of the law.* See note on ver. 18. It was the constant boast of the Jews that God had given them, in the law, more accurate knowledge of his character and will than the Gentiles enjoyed. Whoso was ignorant of the law was deemed by them accursed. John vii. 49. Those who knew the law were blessed. ¶ *Through breaking the law.* Disobeying its precepts; doing that which was prohibited, and neglecting the duties commanded. ¶ *Dishonest thou God?* See note on ch. i. 23, 25. It is not in the power of man literally to dishonor God, that is, to disgrace him, or to bring shame upon him. But a law-giver is said to be dishonored when his authority is slighted, and his com-

mands are disobeyed. In this sense the Jews dishonored God. Not only were they guilty of many vices prohibited by the law, as the apostle has already intimated, but they even made conscience of violating the commandments by their besotted observance of the traditions of men. For an example, see Matt. xv. 1—9, and the notes. See also Matt. xxiii. 23. Sad, indeed, is the condition of any people when, under the guise of religious forms and ceremonies, the spirit of the divine law is disregarded, and its most important injunctions are unheeded.

24 For the name of God is blas-

phemed. Irreverently spoken of. See note on Matt. ix. 3. ¶ *Among the Gentiles through you.* Either by the Jews, in the midst of the Gentiles, among whom they were widely scattered, or by the Gentiles, in consequence of the conduct of the Jews. The latter seems the more probable interpretation. Such was the abandoned conduct of many of the Jews, in connection with their boastful professions of reverence for the law and its author, that the Gentiles, steeped though they were in wickedness, were disgusted, and were induced to contemn and despise both the law which appeared to produce such fruits, and its alleged author. Would that the Jews were the only persons who have brought disgrace upon their own profession of faith, and caused "the way of truth to be evil spoken of," by their own wickedness. It were well for every professed Christian to reflect that the world will judge of his faith by his works; and that if his works be evil, his faith will be accounted corrupt. In which case, either it will be concluded that his faith is not according to the revealed will of God, or the character of that God will not be revered. It becomes every Christian not only to keep a conscience void of offence towards God and towards man, but, even in things indifferent, to "abstain from all appearance of evil." 1 Thess. v. 22. See also 1 Cor. viii. 7—13. ¶ *As it is written.* It is not certainly known to what particular portion of the Jewish

mands are disobeyed. In this sense the Jews dishonored God. Not only were they guilty of many vices prohibited by the law, as the apostle has already intimated, but they even made conscience of violating the commandments by their besotted observance of the traditions of men. For an example, see Matt. xv. 1—9, and the notes. See also Matt. xxiii. 23. Sad, indeed, is the condition of any people when, under the guise of religious forms and ceremonies, the spirit of the divine law is disregarded, and its most important injunctions are unheeded.

phemed among the Gentiles through you, as it is written.

25 For circumcision verily profiteth, if thou keep the law; but if

Scriptures the apostle here refers. Isa. lii. 5, and Ezek. xxxvi. 22, 23, have been named as sufficiently similar. But, whether the reference be to these or to some other, the apostle designed, probably, not to cite a prophecy concerning the present character and conduct of the Jews, but rather, by an appeal to their own sacred history, to show that he was bringing no new and strange charge against them, and that their ancestors had been reproved in like manner by the prophets of God. Our Saviour adopted a similar course, alleging that the Jews were walking in the footsteps of their fathers, and filling the measure of their wickedness. See Matt. xxiii. 31—36.

25. *Circumcision verily profiteth.* Circumcision was the outward sign of affinity to Abraham, and of fealty to the Jewish church. It seems here to be put for that affinity and fealty. The descendants of Abraham, the members of the Jewish church, enjoyed greater privileges than others, because, having the "oracles of God," they were better able to know their duty. Moreover, they thus had a more accurate knowledge of God, could trust in him with more confidence, and could serve him with a more pure service. On the condition afterwards specified, it was profitable for them to be children of Abraham, and members of the commonwealth of Israel. ¶ *If thou keep the law.* See ver. 13. To derive the profit naturally flowing from their privileges, it was necessary that they should obey the law. Mere position in life avails nothing. Privileges enjoyed, but misused, afford no profit. It was vain for the Jews to rely on their relationship to Abraham, while their characters were altogether different from his. They could reap the proper fruits of their privileges only by being faithful, and by making proper use of them. If they obeyed the law, the possession of it was profitable to them. If they disobeyed, their guilt was aggravated by its possession. ¶ *Thy circumcision is made uncircumcision.* That is, thy circumcision becomes unprofitable, and thou art

thou be a breaker of the law, thy circumcision is made uncircumcision.

26 Therefore, if the uncircum-

to be regarded as an outcast from the true Israel. See note on Matt. iii. 9.

26. *Therefore.* Inasmuch as the fact of circumcision, or even the relation to Abraham, or to the church, which is signified by it, avails nothing unless it be accompanied by a proper improvement of the privilege. ¶ *If the uncircumcision.* Namely, the Gentiles, or those who were uncircumcised. ¶ *Keep the righteousness of the law.* Obey the precepts of the law. The reference is manifestly to the moral precepts of the law; because the Gentiles were ignorant of the ceremonial or ritual law. The apostle does not affirm that any among the Gentiles rendered perfect obedience; indeed, he asserts the contrary. But he supposes the case, and appeals to the Jewish conscience, whether the Gentiles would not be entitled to a just reward under such circumstances. He had already declared that some of the Gentiles had obeyed the moral law to a certain extent, ver. 14, 15. And his argument is, that just so far as they obeyed, they became characteristically the children of Abraham. ¶ *Shall not his uncircumcision, &c.* Shall the fact that he is uncircumcised be any bar to his acceptance with God? Shall he not be treated as a son of Abraham, if he be obedient to the moral law? Shall he not be rewarded for his obedience as much as if he were a member of the Jewish church, sealed by its peculiar seal? The Gentiles are not to be excluded from the divine favor, because they are destitute of the privileges so much boasted of by the Jews. On the contrary, "in every nation, he that feareth God and worketh righteousness is accepted with him." Acts x. 35. Outward distinctions are of little account when compared with the condition of the heart. The apostle subsequently shows how the Jews and Gentiles, the circumcision and the uncircumcision, had actually changed places, in consequence of their different improvement of their respective privileges. Chap. xi. "There is a running argument conveyed by implication all along in these verses. Its purport is,

cision keep the righteousness of the law, shall not his uncircumcision be counted for circumcision?

27 And shall not uncircumcision which is by nature, if it fulfil the law, judge thee, who by the

that if, even under the former dispensation, righteous uncircumcision was better than unrighteous circumcision, how much more would the same principle hold good under the spiritual system of Christianity, and how vain to require the Gentiles to be Jews before they could be recognized as Christians!"—*Livermore.*

27. *Which is by nature.* The natural state of a Gentile, not admitted to the Jewish church as a proselyte. ¶ *Judge thee.* Condemn thee. The idea is, that the obedience of Gentiles, under all their disadvantages, would make more palpable and notorious the guilt of the disobedient Jews, whose means of knowledge and improvement were so abundant. Our Lord uses a similar form of expression, Matt. xii. 41, 42, for a similar purpose. ¶ *Who by the letter and circumcision.* Some interpret this to refer to the Mosaic law, and the rite of circumcision. So *Stuart* translates: "Who, in possession of the Scriptures and a partaker of circumcision, art a transgressor of the law." Perhaps, however, it may be a Hebraism for "literal circumcision." Literal and spiritual circumcision are thus contrasted in ver. 29; and such may be the meaning here. The general idea, in the whole verse, is sufficiently obvious: that the guilt of the Jews, who were disobedient notwithstanding all their boasted advantages, would be rendered more apparent by the obedience of the Gentiles, who were destitute of such advantages. "The tables would be turned. The Jew who began, ver. 1, with taking the bench of judgment, would find himself at the criminal's bar; while the man whom he had condemned as the culprit would be seen rising into the majesty of the judge. We must remember that this epistle, though addressed to the Romans, was intended for Roman Jews in general, or those who, once Jews, had then become Christians. Paul takes them on their own ground, and, by holding up

letter and circumcision dost transgress the law?

28 For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh:

the high spiritual demands even of the law, demolishes their boasted infallibility and sinlessness as Jews, and shows the superiority of the faithful heathen over the faithless Hebrew. He breaks to pieces their national idols, and, including all under the same category of disobedience, infers the universal need of Christ."—*Livermore.*

28. *He is not a Jew.* He is not a religious man; for Jew and a religious man were regarded as convertible terms by the Jews. See note on ver. 17. Or, the meaning may be, he is not to be regarded as a Jew, as a member of the Jewish church, a true son of Abraham, an Israelite indeed. The idea is, that mere natural consanguinity, or outward profession, did not prove the existence of the character and spirit required of that people who had been set apart as the peculiar people of God. ¶ *Neither is that circumcision, &c.* Circumcision was but a sign of purity; see Deut. x. 16; even as baptism is "the answer of a good conscience toward God," 1 Pet. iii. 21. The outward sign was of no value without the thing signified by it. It was vain for the Jews to boast of outward circumcision, or to rely on it as a safeguard. If the heart remained corrupt, the sign was false and useless.

29. *He is a Jew who is one inwardly.* See Gal. iii. 7, 29. Whoso cultivates a spirit of confidence in God, and exercises faith in him; a spirit of reverence for God, and worships him; a humble spirit, and obeys the divine commandments; he it is who manifests the spirit of the true Jew, and in the most important sense may be regarded as a child of Abraham. ¶ *And circumcision is that of the heart.* The only valuable circumcision is that which consists in cutting off or repressing the evil and corrupt passions of the heart, of which the outward rite is only a sign. ¶ *In the spirit.* A spiritual work; the purification of the spirit. ¶ *Not in the letter.* A mere literal or outward circumcision, according to the prescribed rule,

29 But he *is* a Jew which is one inwardly ; and circumcision *is that* of the heart, in the spirit, *and not* in the letter ; whose praise *is not* of men, but of God.

was not sufficient. It was indeed valueless, except when accompanied by a corresponding inward work. ¶ *Whose praise, &c.* "That is, the praise of the Jew who is truly a Jew, after the hidden or internal man, is not of men, but of God. 'Man looketh on the outward appearance, but God looketh on the heart.' The Jews considered it a great privilege, and a ground of high preëminence over others, that they were descended from Abraham, were circumcised, and were intrusted with the Scriptures. All this, says the apostle, does not entitle them, in the least degree, to the praise of God. The state of the heart is what he considers ; and this alone is of any real moral value in his sight." — *Stuart*. Most effectually in this chapter does the apostle rebuke the spiritual pride of the Jews. All their grounds of boasting are removed. Instead of trusting in themselves that they were righteous, and despising others, Luke xviii. 9, they were made to understand that they were actually as far from perfection as others ; and even more guilty, inasmuch as they had abused greater privileges. They were, at the least, in equal need of that dispensation of grace which the gospel reveals. That, and that alone, afforded any reasonable ground of hope, to Gentile or Jew, of ultimate deliverance from the power of sin.

CHAPTER III.

Thus far the apostle has proved the necessity of that method of righteousness which a gracious God has devised, by showing that not only the Gentiles by the light of nature, but the Jews with the additional guidance of a revealed law, had failed to attain righteousness. All were in equal need of the grace which was revealed in the gospel. In this respect the Jews had no preëminence ; nor had they any solid ground of objection that the Gentiles should become joint partakers of the promised blessing. But the Jews were a people not easily con-

CHAPTER III.

WHAT advantage then hath the Jew? or what profit *is there* of circumcision?

2 Much every way : chiefly, be-

vinced ; especially when their national pride was involved in the question. The apostle anticipated that his general argument might not effectually remove all doubts from their minds. These doubts he states in the form of objections to the doctrines he had advanced, and answers them in detail.

1. *What advantage then hath the Jew?* This is the first objection. It was impossible for the Jews to divest their minds of the idea that they were the chosen people of God. They could not readily understand how the Gentiles were to enjoy an equality with themselves. If, as the apostle had alleged, the obedient Gentiles were to be treated as kindly as the obedient Jews ; if the disobedient Jews were to be punished as severely as the disobedient Gentiles ; if the Jews were as incapable of attaining perfect righteousness by the law, as the Gentiles without the law ; if all were equally dependent on the grace of God for deliverance from the power of sin ; if all this were true, the inquiry was natural in the Jewish mind, what peculiar advantage has a Jew over others, and how does circumcision, or a conformity to the ritual law of which that was a sign, benefit him?

2. *Much every way.* Or, in all respects. This is the apostle's answer to the objection. He would have the Jews continue to believe that God had treated them as a peculiar people, and that they were bound to be grateful for his distinguishing favors. They had slighted his blessings, to be sure, and misimproved their privileges. But it was none the less true that God had bestowed on them advantages which, up to that time, no other nation had enjoyed. ¶ *Chiefly.* Principally, most of all. The apostle omits many advantages which he elsewhere specifies, ch. ix. 4, 5, and confines himself to a single one as sufficient for his purpose. ¶ *Unto them were committed the oracles of God.* The word rendered *oracles* "means any kind of divine response or communication." — *Stuart*. In this place,

cause that unto them were committed the oracles of God.

3 For what if some did not be-

however, the reference is probably to the Jewish Scriptures, containing a record of the communications of the divine will through men who "spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." 2 Pet. i. 21. The idea is, that God had given to them peculiar spiritual advantages; a better opportunity than the Gentiles enjoyed to become true worshippers by understanding his character, and faithful servants by doing his will. Whatever use they might have made of it, the Jews would not deny that a choice treasure had been committed to them. God had been gracious to them, whether they had suitably improved the blessing or not. If a man will shut his eyes and persistently walk in darkness, it is none the less a blessing to him that God's sun is in the heavens, steadily shining on the evil and on the good.

3. *What if some did not believe?* This is regarded by many commentators as another objection supposed to be made by the Jews. They understand the whole verse to intimate an objection that, if what the apostle had said was true, it involved unfaithfulness in God; namely, that he would not bestow on his chosen people the blessings which he had promised. Thus *Macknight*:—"In the covenant with Abraham, God having promised, Gen. xvii. 8, to give to him and to his seed the land of Canaan for an everlasting possession, and to be their God, the Jews affirmed that if they were cast off from being his people, and driven out of Canaan for not believing on Jesus, the oracles of God, instead of being an advantage, would be a disadvantage to them, and the faithfulness of God, in performing his promises, would be destroyed. It seems the apostles, in their discourses to the Jews, had told them that, for crucifying Jesus, they were to be punished in that manner." A different interpretation appears to me more probable. The true idea seems to be indicated in the paraphrase by *Whitby* of this and the preceding verse:—"Much, every way, ch. ix. 4, but chiefly because that unto them were committed the oracles of God, in which the covenants

believe? shall their unbelief make the faith of God without effect?

4 God forbid: yea, let God be

and promises made to them, and chiefly that of the Messiah, and of justification by faith in him, were contained. Which oracles must be made good, notwithstanding their infidelity; for what if some of them, to whom these oracles and the promise of a Messiah, or a seed in whom the nations of the earth shall be blessed, were committed, did not believe in the promised seed: shall their unbelief make the faith or fidelity of God, in making this promise to Abraham, of none effect?" ¶ *Make the faith of God without effect?* Or, destroy the faithfulness or fidelity of God. In referring to the possession of the divine oracles, ver. 2, as a distinguishing blessing, the apostle manifestly includes the promises as well as the precepts of God. To inquire whether the unbelief of men would render the precepts void, would be impertinent to the argument. He had steadily asserted that the precepts were in force, and that their penalties should be executed upon the disobedient and unbelieving. No occasion existed for inquiring whether the doctrines which he announced were not inconsistent with the divine precepts. The only question pertinent to the argument was, whether the promises for which the fidelity of God was pledged could be made void, or without effect, by the unbelief of men. And such was the purport of the question in the text. A similar question is suggested and fully answered, Gal. iii. 17, 18, where it is asserted that the law, comprehending, of course, its penalties, cannot make void the promise of God.

4. *God forbid.* Let it not be; by no means; assuredly not. This is a phrase of strong and earnest negation. There is no word in the original, however, answering to God. The apostle denies, in the most absolute manner, that the fidelity of God can be affected by the unbelief of men. The fulfilment of his promises is secured by his own purpose and grace. While men remain in unbelief, they fail to enjoy the special salvation which accompanies faith, 1 Tim. iv. 10; but their unbelief cannot prevent the ultimate triumph of divine

true, but every man a liar; as it is written, That thou mightest be justified in thy sayings, and mightest

overcome when thou art judged.

5 But if our unrighteousness commend the righteousness of God,

grace, and the full performance of all which God hath promised. See ch. xi. 32. On the contrary, the unbelief of men makes the faithfulness of God the more conspicuous. "The advantage of the Jews consisted in their being intrusted with the outward revelation of God's will. Their faithlessness to this trust only established God's faithfulness, by furnishing the occasion for its display."—*Conybeare*. ¶ *Let God be true, but every man a liar*. Let the veracity of God be undoubtingly trusted, even though it involve the falsehood of all men. The apostle would not be suspected of advocating doctrines inconsistent with the faithfulness of God. He would not have his own testimony received, unless it were in accordance with the great truth, that the purpose of God is unchangeable, and his truth everlasting. See Gal. i. 8. Much rather would he be regarded as a false teacher, than that the character of God should be dishonored. He proceeds, however, to show that the doctrines he had advanced were perfectly consistent with the great truth that "he is faithful that promised." Heb. x. 23. ¶ *As it is written*. See Ps. li. 4. In reasoning with Jews, the apostle confidently quotes the testimony of the Old Testament, as sufficient proof; because the Jews believed their sacred books were given by inspiration, and neither desired nor dared to question their authority. The passage quoted is the language of David, acknowledging the heinousness of his sin, and the justice of his punishment. Its pertinency and force will the more readily be perceived, if we carefully consider the precise purpose for which it is here introduced. The apostle had referred to the "oracles of God," containing promises of universal blessedness through the Messiah. But he had also taught, in the previous chapter, that the Jews, no less than the Gentiles, had grievously sinned, and should assuredly be punished. The question arises whether, if the Jews be thus punished for their unbelief and disobedience, the promise of God will not fail, and his faithfulness become without

effect. In this aspect of the case the apostle refers to David, who acknowledged the justice of his punishment, and who also regarded it as perfectly consistent with the faithfulness of God, and in no wise interfering with his promises. This is manifest from the succeeding portion of the Psalm, in which David expresses his confidence that his punishment should be succeeded by the promised blessing; that his iniquities should be blotted out, and that the joy of salvation should be restored to him. In like manner the Jews should be punished for their transgressions, even as others; yet they need not suppose that the faithfulness of God would fail. On the contrary, this was but a part of his original scheme of government. Happiness and misery were ordained from the beginning, as concomitant with virtue and vice. His final purpose, to deliver men from the power of sin by his own grace,—a deliverance which they had not sufficient power to accomplish,—was not impeded, much less frustrated, by this intermediate discipline. ¶ *That thou mightest be justified, &c.* That all thy ways may be seen to be just and right. David acknowledged that he had sinned, and that therefore his punishment was just: not that he had sinned for the purpose of exemplifying the justice of punishment; but his sin was the occasion of this manifestation of justice. ¶ *When thou art judged*. *Stuart* translates, "when thou judgest;" and understands the passage thus: "Let us not attempt to justify ourselves when we are accused of being unfaithful; but let us justify God in all respects, when he condemns our conduct and vindicates his own." Others, with perhaps better reason, accept the common translation, and understand that when men attempt to examine or judge of the ways of God, they will be constrained to acknowledge their justice.

5. *But if our unrighteousness*. Our sin. The particular sin mentioned in verse 3 was unbelief. Here the general term is used, that the whole force of the objection may appear. ¶ *Commend*. Exhibit in a favorable light; render

what shall we say? *Is God un-* righteous who taketh vengeance?

conspicuously glorious. ¶ *The righteousness of God.* His faithfulness, as opposed to their unbelief; his holiness, as opposed to their iniquity. Or, perhaps, the phrase may be understood, as in chap. i. 17, to indicate that righteousness which God hath secured by a method of his own appointment, which method he hath revealed in the gospel, to wit, by the exercise of his own grace; thus accomplishing what human power has from the beginning proved unable to accomplish, — a perfect and entire deliverance from sinfulness. In this sense the phrase is unquestionably used, verses 21, 22; and very possibly here also. "This is to be regarded as an *objection* which a Jew might make. The force of it is this: (1.) It had been conceded that some had not believed; that is, had sinned. (2.) But God was true to his promises. Notwithstanding their sin, God's character was the same. Nay, (3) in the very midst of sin, and as one of the results of it, the character of God as a just being shone out illustriously. The question, then, was, (4) If his glory resulted from it, if the effect of all was to show that his character was pure, how could he punish that sin from which his own glory resulted? And this is a question which is often asked by sinners." — *Barnes.* It may be added that this question has been a stumbling-block to many sincere and pious Christians. If God has so created men that all are or become sinners, and his own glory is thereby made conspicuous, why punish them for their sins? Sometimes the difficulty takes this specific form: If God has so constituted men that they are incapable by their own power to deliver themselves from sinfulness, and if he displays his own glory by accomplishing that deliverance through the exercise of his own grace, why should he punish them for those sins which alone afforded the opportunity of displaying such grace and glory? To a Christian, a sufficient reply might be found in the language of the apostle, chap. xi. 33. "O, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!" To others, who are not

ready to take the inspired word as a conclusive answer, sundry considerations might be presented, tending to remove the difficulty, some of which are presented by the apostle in what follows. But, it is important to remark, that if we would satisfy ourselves, or others, on this point, we must be careful that we do not regard the punishment of sin as indicating in God the existence of anger, wrath, and the like passions, which, in men, are denounced as sinful. See note on chap. i. 18. It would be a hopeless task to demonstrate why God should manifest hatred towards his children because they were just as imperfect as he made them, and because that imperfection had resulted precisely as he knew it would from the beginning: or why he should be angry, as men are angry, on account of human sinfulness, when it affords an opportunity for such a conspicuous display of divine glory in its removal. But, if we admit, at the outset, that the design of God is benevolent throughout; that in kindness he subjected the human race to vanity, chap. viii. 20; that in kindness he administers a wholesome discipline, and consults the benefit of all whom he chastises, Heb. xii. 10; and that, in the same spirit of kindness, he will ultimately deliver the whole race "from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God," chap. viii. 21; then, indeed, we may hope to understand that God is just and right in causing us to suffer pain for our moral delinquencies, even though they result from the condition in which he has placed us, and afford opportunity for a display of glory, in our deliverance. ¶ *What shall we say?* What follows? What is the result from the supposition stated? ¶ *Is God unrighteous?* Some translate, "is not God unrighteous?" The meaning is substantially the same in either form. Is it wrong that God should punish, under such circumstances? ¶ *Who taketh vengeance.* Who punishes men for their sins. "The idea of *vengeance* is not necessarily in the original. It is commonly rendered *wrath*, but it often means simply *punishment*, without any reference to the state of the mind of him who inflicts it. Matt. iii. 7; Luke

(I speak as a man.)

6 God forbid: for then how shall God judge the world?

7 For if the truth of God hath

more abounded through my lie unto his glory; why yet am I also judged as a sinner?

8 And not *rather*, (as we be slan-

iii. 7; xxi. 23; John iii. 36; Rom. i. 18; iv. 15." — *Barnes*. See also note on chap. i. 18, where the same word occurs, and is rendered *wrath*. ¶ *I speak as a man*. I speak as a man would be likely to speak who was unable to reconcile the doctrines which I have asserted with the eternal justice of God. I state the objection as it would naturally arise in the human mind.

6. *God forbid*. See note on verse 4. ¶ *For then how shall God judge the world?* If it be wrong that God should punish iniquity, how shall he administer the government of the universe? The Jews admitted that God would judge the world; they believed he would condemn and punish the Gentiles. The apostle admonishes them that while they believed that God was a righteous governor and judge, they could not believe it was wrong that he should punish the ungodly, even though that ungodliness was incidentally conducive to his own glory.

7. *For if the truth of God, &c.* This is a continuance, indeed, almost a repetition, of the objection stated in verse 5. The apostle, in his impressive and energetic manner, interposes a protest against the objection, verse 6, as if it were too blasphemous to be entertained for one moment. Having given utterance to his emotion, he proceeds with the objection. If the truth or faithfulness of God hath more abounded, or become more conspicuous, through my lie, or my unfaithfulness, unto his glory. See note on verse 5. ¶ *Why yet am I also judged as a sinner?* Why am I accounted a sinner, and held liable to punishment as for iniquity, if it be true that my transgressions actually render the glory of God more conspicuous, through his faithfulness in performing his promises? This is, substantially, the objection stated in verse 5, but in a slightly different form. The question there is, whether God can righteously punish, under such circumstances; here, whether men should be regarded as sinners. "How can that act be regarded as evil which tends to

promote the glory of God? The fault in the reasoning of the objector is this: that he takes for granted that the *direct* tendency of his conduct is to promote God's glory, whereas it is just the reverse; and it is by God's *reversing* that tendency, or overruling it, that he obtains his glory." — *Barnes*. An illustration in point may be found in the barbarous treatment of Joseph by his brethren. They were guilty of sin by violating both the law of nature and divine law; and most bitterly did they repent and suffer for their iniquity. Yet this very action was overruled by God for the display of his glorious goodness. "Be not grieved nor angry with yourselves that ye sold me hither; for God did send me before you to preserve life." Gen. xlv. 5. Why were they accounted sinners, and made to endure punishment? The solution is given by Joseph. "As for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good; to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive." Gen. i. 20. The brethren of Joseph were guilty and punishable, because their intention was evil. Nevertheless, God's glory was commended to notice, or was more conspicuously displayed, because he "meant it unto good," and, by means of it, "saved much people alive." Thus, also, the Jews, "by wicked hands," crucified and slew the Lord Jesus Christ; for which act of unrighteousness they suffered condign punishment. Nevertheless, our Lord was delivered into their hands for this very purpose, "by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God." Acts ii. 23. They were guilty and punishable, because their intention was evil. God's glory was manifested, because he meant it unto good, that the great object of his Son's mission might be fully accomplished. In like manner the faithfulness of God to his promise is abundantly manifested, and his glory conspicuously exhibited, by delivering mankind from a state of sinfulness; for if none were sinners, there would be no opportunity

derously reported, and as some affirm that we say,) Let us do evil,

to display redeeming grace ; yet men are none the less sinful and punishable while they remain disobedient, because their intention is evil. If their intention corresponded with that of God, the case would be different. See note on verse 8. But, because their intention is opposite to his, they are sinful.

8. *And not rather.* That is, instead of being regarded, or regarding ourselves, as sinners, why not rather conclude that we are justified in doing evil that good may come? Such seems to be the idea, omitting the parenthetical part of the verse. ¶ *As we.* The apostles. Paul speaks in the name of himself and of his brethren in the ministry of the gospel. ¶ *Be slanderously reported.* Literally, be blasphemed. See note on Matt. xii. 31. "This is the legitimate and proper use of the word blaspheme, to speak of one in a reproachful and calumnious manner."—*Barnes.* The word, by common consent, has long been confined in its application to irreverent, reproachful, and calumnious language concerning God. And hence the phrase "slanderously reported" was properly enough substituted for "blasphemed" by the translators of this passage. But, in the apostolic age, the word was used to denote the calumny of men, as well as the calumny of God ; and it is so used in this place. ¶ *As some affirm that we say.* Though the Jews are not specially designated as the calumniators, there can be little doubt that they were the persons intended. The apostle was particularly addressing them, and answering their objections. Moreover, the whole apostolic history clearly shows that the principal opposition to the promulgation of the gospel, in that age, was made by the Jews, who were perpetually carping and finding fault, even when they refrained from open violence ; while, generally speaking, the Gentiles heard the word with gladness. *Theodoret*, as quoted by *Livermore*, says, "It is right to know that when the holy apostles taught that where sin abounded grace did much more abound, some professors of the old religion, spreading falsehoods to their prejudice, reported that they said, Let us do evil, that good may

that good may come? whose damnation is just.

come." It has often been alleged that this principle of action naturally grows out of certain doctrines ; though I am not aware that men now have the hardihood to assert positively that any of their brethren adopt and avow such a principle. The apostles, however, seem to have been thus blasphemed, or calumniated. ¶ *Let us do evil, that good may come.* Let us disobey God, that his glory may be manifested. Such is the force of the expression, taken in connection with what precedes it. The following observations deserve special notice : "Why they should affirm this is not known. It was doubtless, however, some perversion of the doctrines that the apostles preached. The doctrines which were thus misrepresented and abused were probably these: the apostles taught that the sins of men were the occasion of promoting God's glory in the plan of salvation ; that 'where sin abounded, grace did much more abound,' ch. v. 20 ; that God, in the salvation of men, would be glorified just in proportion to the depth and pollution of the guilt which was forgiven. This was true ; but how easy was it to misrepresent this as teaching that men ought to sin in order to promote God's glory ; and, instead of stating it as an inference which they drew from the doctrine, to state it as what the apostles actually taught. This is the common mode in which charges are brought against others. Men draw an inference themselves, or suppose that the doctrine leads to such an inference, and then charge it on others as what they actually hold and teach. There is one maxim which should never be departed from : That a man is not to be held responsible for the inferences which *we* may draw from his doctrine ; and that he is never to be represented as holding and teaching that which *we* suppose follows from his doctrine. He is answerable only for what he avows."—*Barnes.* There is yet another view to be taken of this charge against the apostles. Unless I greatly mistake, it is absurd in itself. It is a principle upon which it is impossible that men should act. To be sure, there may be a sort of reckless feeling, inducing a man to

9 What then? are we better *than they?* No, in no wise: for

say, I will wallow in iniquity, and God may glorify himself thereby, if he can and will. But this is not what is charged. There is also that principle of expediency adopted by many, that the end justifies the means; and therefore that evil may properly be done, if there be good reason to expect beneficial results. Hollow and pernicious as this principle is, it has doubtless been practised, and its evil effects have been visited upon all concerned. But neither is this what is charged in the text. Although the allegation is general, that the apostles said, "Let us do evil, that good may come," the context clearly shows the specific charge to be, Let us do evil, disobey God, commit sin, that God's glory may be promoted. In this form, I repeat, the charge seems absurd, involving a principle which cannot be reduced to practice. An apostle defines sin to be "the transgression of the law," 1 John iii. 4, that is, of the divine law. And our Lord has taught us that the law may be violated in thought, no less than by an overt act; in other words, that guilt consists in the intention to transgress. See Matt. v. 28. If a man be incited to action by a spirit of rebellion, or of opposition to the divine will, then are his deeds sinful. But, if he act from a spirit of devotion to God, a sincere desire to promote his glory, can his intention be counted sinful? A case in point is furnished in the Scriptures: Abraham believed that God required him to destroy the life of his son Isaac, and to offer him as a sacrifice. He perfectly well knew that the voluntary destruction of human life was denounced as sinful. Yet, in spite of the general divine prohibition, in spite of the pleadings of natural affection, in spite of the fact that his dearest hopes centred in Isaac, the father made all the preparations for a burnt-offering, and "stretched forth his hand, and took the knife to slay his son." Gen. xxii. The life of Isaac was spared by an intervention of a marvellous kind. But the intention was fully formed in the father's mind; and, whether right or wrong, the law forbidding the voluntary destruction of human life was as absolutely transgressed as it would have been had Isaac actu-

ally been slain on the altar. The apostle represents the sacrifice as complete. No one doubts that the guilt of murder would have rested on Abraham's soul if he had taken "the knife to slay his son" in anger, or in a spirit of opposition to God, and contempt of his authority. But his real object was to obey God, and to promote his glory. Was he therefore sinful? Did he design to commit sin, that God might be glorified? The apostle shall answer: "By faith, Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac; and he that had received the promises offered up his only-begotten son, of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called; accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead: from whence also he received him in a figure." Heb. xi. 17—19. Instead of being accounted sinful for this transgression of the law, in the belief that God would manifest his glory by overruling it for good, Abraham is commended, and is called the father of the faithful. He did that which, had his intention been evil, would have been a heinous sin. But, as his intention was to glorify God, his act was not sinful, but an act of faith. How, then, shall men be able to intend the commission of sin for the express purpose of promoting the glory of God? Men may mistake in regard to their duty. Their call may not be so clear as they imagine. But they are to be judged by their intention; and an intention to glorify God cannot be regarded as an intention to commit sin. ¶ *Whose damnation is just.* "Whose condemnation is just. He means that the condemnation of those who falsely attributed such doctrines to the apostles and other preachers was just; in other words, that their offence was of such a nature, that it deserved punishment." — *Stuart.*

9. *What then?* What follows? What is the result? Some understand this as the language of a supposed objector; others, as a mere introduction, by the apostle, to what follows. The meaning is much the same in either case. ¶ *Are we better than they?* Are we Jews better than the Gentiles? that is, morally better. Have we attained a more perfect righteousness than they? ¶ *No, in no wise.* Not at all. *This*

we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all

answer shows that the question must relate particularly to moral character ; because the apostle had already admitted, ver. 1, 2, that, in other respects, the Jews were more highly blessed than the Gentiles. The same fact is equally evident from what immediately follows. Both the question and answer refer to the main subject of discourse ; namely, the fact that both Jews and Gentiles had hitherto failed to attain righteousness by the law, or by a perfect obedience of law ; that what all had uniformly failed to attain, during a period of four thousand years, must be regarded as unattainable by human exertion ; and that the only rational hope of perfect righteousness, for Gentile or for Jew, was in that method of righteousness through faith, devised by the grace of God, and revealed in the gospel. In this regard, all stood on a level. Neither could establish a claim to the blessing, as the reward of works. It was to be regarded by all as the fruit of pure grace. ¶ *For we have before proved.* Stuart translates : " We have already made the accusation." He says the word does not properly mean *proved*, absolutely, but rather the allegation of a charge, and offering evidence in its support. " The apostle," he adds, " means to say, that, having already advanced the charge against Jews and Gentiles of being sinners without exception, and of standing in need of the mercy proffered in the gospel, of course he cannot now concede that the Jews have any exemption from this charge, or any ground of preference to the Gentiles, so far as the matter of justification is concerned." ¶ *They are all under sin.* They are all sinful ; they are all under the power of sin ; they are all destitute of perfect righteousness.

10—18. In these verses the apostle groups together several testimonies from the Old Testament, applicable to his purpose. The language is very general in its character, but requires some limitation in its application. As this subject is placed in a clear light by Stuart, I use his language in preference to my own, for obvious reasons. " What is the object of this appeal ? Evidently

under sin ;

10 As it is written, There is

it is to illustrate and confirm the point now in dispute. And what, then, is this point ? Why, plainly, that the Jews have no preference over the Gentiles, so far as their guilt and inability to justify themselves are concerned. The apostle had just said (in answer to the question put by a Jew, Have we any preëminence ?), None at all. Why not ? Because he had already involved the Jews, as well as the Gentiles, in the charge of universal guilt ; therefore both were in the same condition, with respect to their need of a Saviour. What, then, is the object of further proof or illustration here ? Surely it must be the point in question, namely, whether in fact the Jews, equally with the Gentiles, lie under the imputation of guilt before God. The quotations, then, have special reference to the Jews. So Chrysostom, Calvin, Grotius, Tholuck, Flatt, and others. So ver. 19 obliges us to construe the quotations in question. The quotations are taken from various parts of the Hebrew Scriptures, and mostly in the words of the Septuagint. The general strain and object of them is to show that charges of guilt were made in ancient times against the Jews, of a nature not less aggravated than the charges now made by the apostle. The Jew could make no reply to this, so long as he allowed the full weight and authority of the Old Testament. The apostle, then, in adducing such charges from it, says, in effect, You cannot accuse me of making strange and novel charges against you. Your own Scriptures are filled with charges of the like nature. That such is the general object of the quotations which follow, there seems to me no good reason to doubt. Certainly some of the passages adduced have not an *unlimited* signification applicable to men of all times and all nations ; at least, they have not such a meaning in the Old Testament, in the connection in which they stand. Nothing can be more certain than that the writers of most of them are not treating of the question whether *all* men are depraved, but are advancing charges against the unbelieving and impious part of the Jewish nation. Now, what characterized unbo-

none righteous, no, not one :

11 There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God.

believing Jews of old may be still affirmed of them, that is, of all who reject a Saviour. This must proceed from wickedness of heart ; and therefore the apostle may apply to all who are guilty of it those descriptions of wicked Jews which the Old Testament exhibits. Such seems to be the plain and obvious method of interpreting the quotations before us. I am well aware that they have not unfrequently been understood and explained in a different way ; namely, as having a *direct* bearing on the *universal* depravity of the human race. The context, both in ver. 9 and 19, shows, however, that such an assumption is not well grounded, and that the citations have respect to the apostle's argument in regard to the moral condition of all unbelieving Jews. I say *unbelieving* Jews ; for it is not to his purpose to show that such as believe and are already justified are still under the condemning sentence of the law ; nor could this be said without contradicting what he frequently asserts in the sequel of this epistle."

10. *As it is written.* Namely, in the Scriptures of the Old Testament, which the Jews admitted to be authentic, and of divine authority. ¶ *There is none righteous, no, not one.* This is substantially quoted from Ps. xiv. 1. There is none perfectly righteous on earth. No one who has attained years of discretion and accountability has wholly avoided transgression ; and those who have done neither good nor evil, although innocent, are not to be accounted righteous, or just, as the word properly signifies. We are not to understand that there was no righteousness or justice extant among men ; for the contrary is plainly enough admitted by the apostle, in regard to both Jews and Gentiles. The general proposition in debate was this : that no man had ever yielded such perfect obedience to the divine law as to attain absolute deliverance from the power of sin ; and that all were equally dependent on the grace of God for such deliverance. In proof of this proposition, the various citations are made. If the Old Testament asserted

12 They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable : there is none that doeth good, no, not one.

so much, it was sufficient for the purpose. So much, doubtless, was asserted by the Psalmist in the passage quoted ; and it is not necessary to the apostle's argument that its meaning should extend further.

11. *There is none that understandeth.* See Ps. xiv. 2. There is none that perfectly comprehends the divine character. Knowledge of God and deliverance from sin are often represented as closely connected. See note on John xvii. 3. To say, therefore, that a man was ignorant of the true character of God, was equivalent to saying that he was yet under the dominion of sin. ¶ *There is none that seeketh after God.* It is surely not intended, in the broadest sense, that *no* man made *any* effort to learn the will and character of God ; for the contrary is expressly asserted in the Scripture history. But none, by searching, had found out the Almighty to perfection. Job xi. 7. It is equally true, that none had sought, with entire singleness of heart, to acquire that knowledge. Other and inferior pursuits had distracted the attention of the most devout searchers after the truth. And of others it was doubtless true that their subjection to sin was so absolute, that "they did not like to retain God in their knowledge." Ch. i. 28. Such being the facts, confirmed by the divine testimony, it follows that the proposition maintained by the apostle is true ; namely, that none, by their own exertions, have attained perfect righteousness, and that all equally depend on the divine grace for its bestowment.

12. *They are all gone out of the way.* See Ps. xiv. 3. Namely, from the way of strict integrity and holiness. No man, in the flesh, hath walked in all the statutes and commandments of the Lord, blameless. All, like sheep, have gone astray ; some further than others, but all to some extent. All therefore have need of redeeming grace, manifested through him who was "in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." Heb. iv. 15. ¶ *They are together.* Not a single individual, or class, or nation ;

13 Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of

but mankind generally. The imperfection pervades the whole race which was subjected to vanity by him who hath granted hope of a glorious deliverance through his own grace. Ch. viii. 20. ¶ *Unprofitable*. This word does not occur elsewhere in the New Testament. The corresponding adjective is found in Matt. xxv. 30, and Luke xvii. 10; and is rendered *unprofitable* in both places. No man can be directly profitable to God; for "who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again?" Ch. xi. 35. But men may be profitable to themselves and to their brethren by a diligent endeavor to learn and to perform their duty. Yet, so far short of perfection do all come, in this respect, that they are rightly denominated unprofitable. Unprofitable they surely are, to this extent, that none have succeeded in accomplishing entire deliverance from sin, for themselves or for others. ¶ *None that doeth good, &c.* See note on ver. 10.

13. *Their throat is an open sepulchre.* See Ps. v. 9. Our Lord likened the Pharisees to "whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones and of all uncleanness," because they were "full of hypocrisy and iniquity," notwithstanding their outward show of righteousness. Matt. xxiii. 27, 28. A similar figure is used here, probably to denote the corrupt language proceeding from men, injurious to others, like the exhalations from the putrid contents of sepulchres. The idea is amplified in what follows. ¶ *With their tongues they have used deceit.* They are false and treacherous to each other. ¶ *The poison of asps is under their lips.* See Ps. cxl. 3. The language becomes more intense. Not only deception and treachery lurk in the words of men, but slander also, and that kind of evil speaking, which is as destructive of human peace and happiness as the poison of serpents, of which the asp is accounted among the most deadly, is fatal to human life. To the same effect the apostle says, "The tongue can no man tame: it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison."

asps is under their lips.

14 Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness.

James iii. 8. The general idea embraced in this whole verse is sufficiently expressed in few words: "As from the sepulchre issues forth an offensive and pestilential vapor, so from the mouths of slanderous persons issue noisome and pestilential words."—*Stuart*. Hence the frequent admonitions to guard well our tongues, inasmuch as we are to be judged for our words as well as for our deeds. Both are joined in the exhortation by the Psalmist: "What man is he that desireth life, and loveth many days, that he may see good? Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from speaking guile. Depart from evil, and do good: seek peace and pursue it." Ps. xxxiv. 12—14. The apostle quotes and approves this exhortation. 1 Pet. iii. 10—12. While the spirit of enmity, which is inseparable from a state of sinfulness, dwells in man, evil words will escape. So, also, evil words afford evidence that the heart is not wholly sanctified. Hence the apostle alleges this common frailty of mankind, to show the universal need of that righteousness of God which is revealed in the gospel.

14. *Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness.* See Ps. x. 7. The same idea is here repeated, in a different and more intense form. Most commentators suppose that David had special reference to his enemies in this passage. Shimei had cursed him, and so had others. Yet the apostle quotes the language here as generally applicable to mankind, and especially to the Jews, of whom he particularly speaks in this chapter. Of course we are not to understand him as asserting that this is the only characteristic of mankind; that their mouths are full of cursing and bitterness, to the utter exclusion of all holier words and sentiments. Another apostle declares that "out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing," Jas. iii. 10; and, though he laments the cursing, and declares that "these things ought not so to be," yet he recognizes the fact that some good is mingled with the evil.

15. *Their feet are swift to shed blood.* This, and the two following verses, seem

15 Their feet *are* swift to shed blood :

16 Destruction and misery *are* in their ways :

17 And the way of peace have they not known :

to be quoted from Isa. lix. 7, 8, in a condensed form. Although the language was probably uttered by the prophet with specific reference to certain blood-thirsty persons of his own time, yet we may suppose the apostle to have adopted it as expressive of that disposition in the unsanctified heart which prompts to destruction. This destructive propensity has manifested itself in all ages of the world ; sometimes in private combats, sometimes in cowardly assassinations, and sometimes in wars which have convulsed whole nations. Yet we are not to understand the apostle that such is the only and perpetual characteristic of sinful men ; but merely that so much of this spirit dwells in all as to indicate the existence of sinfulness and the need of deliverance ; that men had never fully succeeded in breaking the yoke of sin, and that nothing short of divine grace was sufficient to accomplish the deliverance. This was the full extent of his proposition, and we need not suppose he was attempting to prove anything more.

16. *Destruction and misery are in their ways.* The idea is similar to that which is expressed in the former verse. Whenever a spirit of hatred is allowed to have a controlling sway, destruction and misery follow as the natural result. In a modified sense, the language may be applied to the destruction of fame, reputation, or good report, and the consequent distress and misery of the unhappy victims which so often result from the unrighteous use of an unbridled tongue.

17. *The way of peace.* Peace is often put for the happiness which results from religion. Perhaps its meaning here may be more confined, as opposed specially to the excitement and tumults of battle, and to the misery resulting from deeds of blood and of destruction.

18. *Fear of God.* Reverence toward God, or regard for his authority. Disobedience always implies a disregard

18 There is no fear of God before their eyes.

19 Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law : that every mouth may be stopped,

of the law and of the law giver. Until men shall be wholly liberated from bondage to sin, it will be true concerning them that they are destitute of a perfect and constant reverence towards God.

Here ends the testimony, cited by the apostle from the Old Testament, in proof that men had not succeeded by their own endeavors in attaining deliverance from sinfulness. Less than this the language quoted cannot mean ; and more than this was not necessary to the apostle's argument. Some have understood the passage to prove the universal and total depravity of mankind. Without discussing the question whether such depravity be a doctrine of the Scriptures, it is sufficient to observe that the apostle had no occasion to introduce it here. He had not asserted it, and there was, therefore, no occasion for him to prove it. He had asserted that no man on earth had attained righteousness by the law ; in other words, that no man had rendered a perfect and sinless obedience to the divine law. As no man had done this, it was proper to conclude that none ever would fully succeed. It followed that all were dependent on the grace of God for that deliverance which they were unable to accomplish by their own exertions. Such was his argument. In proof of the premises, he quoted the Scriptures, whose authority was admitted by the Jews. The conclusion, which had previously been hinted at, is more fully enforced and illustrated in what follows.

19. *Now we know.* It is a fact not disputed ; certainly not to be disputed by the Jews. ¶ *Whatsoever things the law saith.* Whatsoever is contained in the law, whether precepts, promises, denunciations, histories of the past, predictions of the future, or declarations concerning the present. As none of the preceding quotations are taken from the books of Moses, it is manifest that by *the law* the apostle did not refer

and all the world may become guilty before God.

specially to the Mosaic code. He used the word, as it often was used by the Jews, in reference to the Old Testament generally. To these Scriptures he appealed, knowing that they were admitted by the Jews, as well as by himself, to be of divine origin, and, consequently, of binding authority. ¶ *It saith to them who are under the law.* The application of the testimony is now enforced. The Jews were willing to admit that the Gentiles were sinful: they were even forward to assert it, and to judge or condemn them for their iniquity. They had no doubt that all the language quoted by the apostle was strictly applicable to the Gentiles. He assures them here that it was no less applicable to themselves, by declaring that the law addressed those who were under the law, namely, the Jews. The object of the apostle is to show that the Jews can in no way avoid the force of what is here said. It was originally addressed to Jews, and of course could not be repudiated as inapplicable to those who claimed to be a chosen race. They could not say the language was no longer applicable to their nation, or to themselves individually, on account of an improvement in moral character; for not only the testimony of the apostles, who were of the same kindred, but that of Josephus, and of profane historians, shows that at this very time the Jews were as guilty as their fathers, if not more abundantly. ¶ *That every mouth may be stopped.* "A stopped mouth denotes the confusion of a guilty person, who, being accused, hath no answer to make for himself." — *Mac-knight.* ¶ *And all the world may become guilty before God.* All the world, both Jews and Gentiles, are guilty of disobedience to the divine law, and therefore liable to punishment. Such is the fact, without exception, in regard to all who can discern between good and evil, and who are thus capable of committing sin. We are not to understand that the law uttered its voice for the purpose of making the world guilty. The language is similar to that in ch. v. 20. "The law entered that the offence might abound." The meaning is, that the imperfection and guilt of men is made manifest by the law. Were there

no rule by which human conduct could be tried, it might be difficult to determine its moral character. The law has been given, and a trial has proved that none are able of themselves to yield perfect obedience; and thus is the guilt of the whole world manifested. "But how extensive is the conclusion here? I answer, (1) It extends to all who are out of Christ. I draw this conclusion, not so much from the mere forms of expression, such as *every mouth*, and *all the world*, as I do from the nature and object of the apostle's argument. What is this? Plainly his design is to show that there is but one method of acceptance with God now possible, and this is the way of gratuitous pardon or justification. But why is this necessary in all cases? The answer is, because all have sinned. Certainly, if those who do not believe in Christ can be pardoned only for his sake, this is because they are sinners, and have need of pardon on the ground of simple mercy. Consequently, all who are out of Christ, as they cannot be justified by the deeds of the law, are sinners. But, (2) All who are in Christ, that is, are justified, have once been sinners, and do still commit more or less sin, for which pardoning mercy becomes necessary. Once they were among the impenitent and unregenerate. What the apostle asserts, then, in our text, of all men, need not be limited, and should not indeed be limited, merely to those who are out of Christ at any particular time, but may be extended to all who were ever out of him. That this is a *bona fide* application of the principle which he here contends for, is clear from his own commentary on this doctrine in ch. iv. For what does he say there? He shows that even Abraham and David, as well as the grossest sinners, were justified only in a *gratuitous way*, being utterly unable to obtain the divine approbation on the ground of perfect obedience. What is the inference from all this? Plainly, that all men are sinners, and that none, therefore, can be saved by their own merits. So does ver. 20 virtually declare; so, explicitly, says ver. 23." — *Stuart.* The argument in the foregoing note is worthy of consideration, whether

20 Therefore by the deeds of the law, there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin.

its author had or had not a perfectly correct conception of the character of that gift which God bestows gratuitously through our Lord Jesus Christ. That salvation from sin was never attained by perfect obedience to the law, is clearly the doctrine taught by the apostle, and is recognized as an undeniable fact in this note. Perfect obedience may be, and doubtless will be, a result of perfect salvation from sin, but it cannot be its cause.

20. *Therefore.* The conclusion from what precedes, to wit, that all are sinners, and are guilty because they have disobeyed the divine law, is about to be stated. And this conclusion is the main theme of the epistle thus far, namely, that men cannot deliver themselves from sinfulness, but are dependent on divine grace for deliverance. ¶ *By the deeds of the law, &c.* By the deeds required by the law. By obedience to the law. As the apostle is declaring a general truth, applicable equally to Jews and Gentiles, we are not to understand him as referring exclusively to the Mosaic law. The Gentiles had the law of nature to guide them; but none perfectly obeyed its requisitions. The Jews had a written law, given by revelation, in which the moral duties were explained and enforced; but this equally failed to secure perfect obedience. Some had enjoyed clearer light than others; but none had been faithful, in all respects, to that light. Some had a more distinct and specific law than others; but not one had yielded entire obedience to the commands which he acknowledged to be binding upon him. Hence it followed that none had become just before God. None could truly say, I have at all times, without exception, performed my whole duty towards God and towards man. None could truly say, the yoke of sin is utterly broken by my constant and energetic efforts, and I am now entirely free from bondage. None had yet accomplished this work; and the apostle declares that none ever would accomplish it through obedience to law. Nothing short of entire obedience, with-

21 But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets;

out exception, could justify or render just by law. Such obedience no man had rendered or could render. ¶ *For by the law is the knowledge of sin.* "That is, by all law. The connection shows that this is the sense. Law is a rule of action. The effect of applying a rule to our conduct is to show us what sin is. The meaning of the apostle clearly is that the application of a law to try our conduct, instead of being a ground of justification, will be merely to show us our own sinfulness and departures from duty. A man may esteem himself to be very right and correct until he compares himself with a rule or law. So, whether the Gentiles compared their conduct with *their* laws of reason and conscience, or the Jew his with his *written* law, the effect would be to show them how far they had departed. The more closely and faithfully it should be applied, the more they would see it. So far from being justified by it, they would be more and more condemned. Comp. Rom. vii. 7—10."—*Barnes.* The law is useful to teach men what is right and just; and obedience is productive of happiness in proportion to its perfectness. The law is also useful to teach men how very far short of perfect purity and righteousness their best endeavors reach. When they try their conduct by this rule, they will find more occasion to lament their shortcomings than to exult in their progress towards perfection. They will be constrained to exclaim, with the Psalmist, "I have seen an end of all perfection; but thy commandment is exceeding broad." Ps. cxix. 96. In this respect "the law was our schoolmaster, to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith." Gal. iii. 24. The law, whether natural or revealed, whether engraved in stone or written on the heart, causes us to realize our sinfulness, our inability to attain perfection by our own exertions, and our need of the grace of God, manifested in his Son Jesus Christ. When this is thoroughly impressed on the mind it will humble the heart; and instead of going about to establish our own righteousness, we

22 Even the righteousness of God, which is by faith of Jesus

shall be disposed meekly to submit ourselves to the righteousness of God. See chap. x. 3.

21. *But now.* Having shown the utter hopelessness of deliverance from sin by human exertions, the apostle proceeds to exhibit a sure foundation of hope. Although some gleams of light had been perceived by the holy prophets in former times, as is indicated in the succeeding part of the verse, yet *now*, for the first time, has God openly revealed and *manifested* his glorious purpose to accomplish, by grace, "what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh." Chap. viii. 3. ¶ *The righteousness of God.* See note on chap. i. 17. The righteousness of God's appointment, or the plan of God for securing the triumph of righteousness over all opposition. ¶ *Without the law.* Rather, without law; for the reference is not merely to the Mosaic law, but to any and all law which had previously been represented as binding on Jew or Gentile. "Without the aid or concurrence of law, or in such a way as not to be by means of law, or in a way contrary to that of legal justification, which rests solely on the ground of perfect and meritorious obedience." — *Stuart.* "In a way different from personal obedience to the law. It does not mean that God abandoned his law, or that Jesus Christ did not regard the law, for he came to magnify it, Isa. xlii. 21; or that sinners, after they are justified, have no regard for the law: but it means simply what the apostle had been endeavoring to show, that justification could not be accomplished by personal obedience to any law of Jew or Gentile, and that it must be accomplished in some other way." — *Barnes.* "Without any right or claim which might result from obedience to the law." — *Clarke.* Law is not to be abrogated in a single jot or tittle. Matt. v. 17, 18. Nor is it to be considered useless or unworthy of obedience; for "the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good." Chap. vii. 12. But the righteousness of God's appointment is not bestowed *because* men have perfectly obeyed law; it is not the result or reward of such obedience: it is gratui-

tously bestowed as the fruit of divine grace. ¶ *Is manifested.* Clearly made known; revealed in the gospel of Christ. ¶ *Bring witnessed by the law and the prophets.* Here the word *law* has its more specific meaning, as indicating the Mosaic law. The law and the prophets was a common phrase to denote the Jewish Scriptures, or the Old Testament; for thus were the different portions denominated. Although the gracious purpose of God to purify his children from iniquity, and to save them from sin by the exercise of his mercy, was first clearly and distinctly made known, openly manifested by the ministry and gospel of his blessed Son, yet intimations of the same purpose had been made to holy men, who spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost, 2 Pet. i. 21; and they had left their testimony in the books styled the law and the prophets. In the subsequent chapters, the apostle quotes sundry of these testimonies, and shows their true application. See chap. iv. 6—8; ix. 15; xi. 26, 27. A similar reference to the law and the prophets is found in Luke xxiv. 27, showing that the ancient prophets had glimpses of the glory which should be manifested, and testified the grace of God.

22. *Even the righteousness of God.* "The apostle, having stated that the design of the gospel was to reveal a new plan of becoming just in the sight of God, proceeds here more fully to explain it. The explanation which he offers makes it plain that the phrase so often used by him, 'righteousness of God,' does not refer to an *attribute* of God, but to his plan of making men righteous. Here he says that it is by faith in Jesus Christ; but surely an attribute of God is not produced by faith in Jesus Christ." — *Barnes.* "What that *righteousness of God* is, which is *without law*, the apostle next proceeds explicitly to develop. The justification which is of God, by faith in Jesus Christ. This explanation makes it clear as the noonday sun that the righteousness of God, in this connection, does not mean righteousness or the love of justice as an *attribute* of God. For in what possible sense can it be said that God's righteousness or justice (as an

Christ unto all, and upon all them that believe ; for there is no differ-

essential attribute) is by faith in Christ? Does he possess or exercise this attribute, or reveal it, by faith in Christ? The answer is so plain, that it cannot be mistaken."—*Stuart*. This righteousness is predicated not of God, for he was always righteous ; but of mankind,—of those who, being sinful and unable of themselves to break the bands of iniquity, have need of deliverance, that they may become partakers of righteousness. It is called the righteousness of God, because it is secured by a plan of his own appointment, by his own purpose and grace. It is, in short, a free gift of grace, and is so represented throughout this epistle, and in other epistles by the same writer. See ver. 24 ; v. 21 ; vi. 23 ; Eph. ii. 8, 9 ; Phil. ii. 13. ¶ *By faith of Jesus Christ.* "Through faith of Jesus Christ."—*Macknight*. "By faith in Jesus Christ."—*Stuart*. It is manifest that the apostle does not refer to faith as exercised by Christ, but to the faith exercised by men in Christ ; or, perhaps rather in the divine grace revealed through Christ, and manifested in his character. Even this faith is not the procuring cause of righteousness, but only the medium through which it is communicated. Men are saved, that is, delivered from sin, purified from iniquity, made righteous, through faith ; nevertheless the whole regenerating process is none the less a free gift of divine grace. "By grace are ye saved, through faith." Eph. ii. 8. Hence the result of such salvation is styled the "righteousness of God," as it is a free gift bestowed by him. The medium through which it is communicated is faith. Faith in God and in his Son Jesus Christ, faith in the gospel of grace, knowledge of the truth, knowledge of God and of his glorious purposes, is often represented by the sacred writers as intimately connected with salvation from sin, and the enjoyment of eternal life. See note on John v. 24 ; xvii. 3. To the same effect our Lord testified, "No man cometh unto the Father, but by me." John xiv. 6. See the note. ¶ *Unto all, and upon all them that believe.* Commentators have been sorely perplexed, to explain this passage consistently with the idea that a portion of mankind

will never become partakers of righteousness. They have sought for a distinction between "unto all" and "upon all," which might relieve the difficulty. A distinction, undoubtedly, there is ; but what is its character? *Clarke* gives the common Arminian view :—"That method of saving sinners, which is not of works, but by faith in Jesus Christ ; and is not restrained to any particular people, as the law and its privileges were, but is *unto all* mankind in its *intention* and *offer*, and becomes effectual to them that believe." Such a view may perhaps be consistently enough maintained by one who believes that God has no definite purpose concerning the salvation of his children, nor any accurate knowledge how far his benevolent wishes towards them may be gratified. But it is not easily understood how those can adopt such an explanation who believe that God has a definite purpose, which shall infallibly be accomplished ; that he knows precisely how many and who shall be saved, and how many, if any, shall not be saved. It is absurd to talk of an *intention* to benefit all mankind, by an offer of salvation from sin, supposing all the while that God knew and purposed that it should benefit only a part ; and equally absurd to speak of *offering* salvation to those concerning whom God knew and purposed that they should never receive it. Could such an offer be regarded as made in good faith? And are we to suppose that the God of infinite justice, to say nothing of his mercy, will tantalize his children, by professing to offer them what he has determined they shall not accept? To avoid this difficulty, others adopt language different from that of *Clarke*. Thus, *Macknight*, in his paraphrase, says this righteousness of God is "graciously counted unto all, and rewarded upon all who believe." But how can it be counted unto all, or reckoned as in any wise belonging to all, if some are never to partake of it? But, more recently, *Stuart* and *Barnes* adopt the precise idea of *Clarke*, notwithstanding their firm belief that the purposes of God will stand fast, and that his designs shall be accomplished. "Unto all denotes those to whom the proclamation of gratuitous pardon is

ence :

made; that is, to all men. *And upon all them that believe*, I should consider, then, as a parenthesis, thrown in to guard against the idea that the actual bestowment of justification is as universal as the offers of it. The offer is made to all men, without exception; *believers* only, however, are entitled to the actual reception of it."—*Stuart*. To the same effect, and in nearly the same words, *Barnes* says: "The plan was ample for all, was equally necessary for all, and was offered to all. The second phrase, *upon all*, may be designed to guard against the supposition that all therefore would be benefited by it, or be saved, by the mere fact that the announcement had come to all." If it be true, as both these writers admit, that God knew from the beginning, and had, indeed, definitely determined precisely how many and who should be made partakers of righteousness, how can he be supposed to have offered salvation, in good faith, to any who were not included in the chosen number? And what possible benefit could result? Would it benefit him to whom it was offered, God knowing and having determined that he should not be saved? No one pretends any such thing. Would it redound to the glory of God? Yes, if the formal offer of that which he knew and had determined should not be received be honorable and glorious; otherwise not. What, then, is the true distinction between *unto all* and *upon all*, as the phrases here occur? And what is the true meaning of the passage? I apprehend the truth is not difficult to be understood, if no preconceived theory stand in the way. The same apostle uses a similar phrase in another epistle, which may reflect some light upon this: "For therefore we both labor and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, especially of those that believe." 1 Tim. iv. 10. Because those who believe enter into the present enjoyment of salvation, and become partakers of the blessing, to a considerable extent, even in the present life, it is none the less true that God is the Saviour of all men. His purpose is fixed and definite; its execution may be gradual, but the result is certain. Thus, in the passage

23 For all have sinned, and come

under consideration: the "righteousness of God," to wit, the righteousness which God has purposed to secure to mankind by a method of his own appointment, is secured "unto all" men. It is actually bestowed "upon all them that believe;" that is, as soon as men believe in that goodness, which was revealed and manifested in our Lord Jesus Christ, they enter into rest, Heb. iv. 3, and experience at least a partial deliverance from the power of sin. None can expect a perfect deliverance while they remain on earth; like the apostle, they will find a law in the flesh making them subject to sin, ch. vii. 21—23; but when they shall become immortal, they may expect to realize the full blessing of salvation from sin, and redemption from iniquity. Although the present enjoyment of this righteousness cometh through faith, and although faith may be the channel through which it shall come to all, yet it is none the less certain that the blessing is secured to all, in the purpose of God, which shall stand, and according to his pleasure, which shall be fully accomplished; for he hath sworn by himself that all shall have righteousness in him. Isa. xlv. 23, 24; xlv. 10. ¶ *For there is no difference*. Some interpret this as meaning simply that God puts no difference between the Jews and Gentiles; but that he bestows salvation on each class according to the same principle. I apprehend, however, that the apostle designs to assert the general principle which underlies the fact that Jews and Gentiles are on an equality, namely, that there is no respect of persons with God; that all men are his children, and the objects of his parental love; that he rewards and punishes all according to their deeds, without favoritism, on the one hand, or prejudice, on the other; and that, in the bestowment of his gifts, he is equally impartial; that he recognizes no claim to eternal life on the ground of human merit; and, as all are equally unable to claim it as a just reward of obedience, he will freely bestow it on all as the fruit of spontaneous and universal grace.

23. *For all have sinned*. This is assigned as the reason why no difference is recognized, among men, in respect to

short of the glory of God ;

24 Being justified freely by his

the righteousness of God. The apostle had already asserted the fact that all men, Jews as well as Gentiles, were under sin, ver. 9 ; and he here refers to that fact as a sufficient reason why the God and Father of all should make no difference among them, in bestowing that abundant grace which the most virtuous was just as unable as the most vicious to purchase, to obtain as a reward. "All must be saved, if saved at all, in the same mode, whether Jews or Gentiles, bond or free, rich or poor, learned or ignorant. None can be saved by works ; and all are, therefore, dependent on the mercy of God in Jesus Christ."

— *Barnes*. "All have sinned, and consequently are equally helpless and guilty ; and as God is no respecter of persons, all human creatures being equally his offspring, and there being *no reason why one should be preferred before another*, therefore his endless mercy has embraced ALL." — *Clarke*. I have preserved the italics and capitals in this note, as they indicate the earnestness of the writer. How he could believe that any would fail to receive the blessing, which was wholly the fruit of divine mercy, when all were equally guilty, and no reason of preference existed, is marvellous. Verily, there was but a step between him and a full view of impartial and effectual grace. Happy for us, if, while we believe that God's "endless mercy has embraced all," we can also steadfastly believe the testimony of our Lord : "I give unto them eternal life ; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all ; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand." John x. 28, 29.

¶ *Come short of the glory of God*. "They have failed of rendering him that glory which was so justly his due." — *Doddridge*. Others, with apparently better reason, because more in conformity with the general theme, understand "glory" to indicate approbation, as in John v. 41, 44, where the same Greek word is translated *honor*. The meaning, according to this interpretation, would be, that none had so perfectly obeyed the divine law as to be pronounced by God upright and free from sin, the

highest honor for which men could strive.

24. *Being justified*. Being made just, or free from sin. This was what no man had been able to accomplish on his own behalf. Even the well-disposed, who had used their utmost exertions to yield perfect obedience to the divine law, had failed. All had sinned, and come short of the glory of God. See note on ver. 23. The apostle had labored, at great length, to establish this fact, that his brethren might fully realize their inability to save themselves from sin. What none had been able to do, from the foundation of the world, none were likely to accomplish. Nevertheless, God had revealed a method of justifying men, or of making them just, or of saving them from sin, to which the apostle has occasionally referred as God's righteousness, and which he fully explains in the subsequent chapters. In connection with the utter helplessness of men, he again refers to the divine method of purification, here, more distinctly than he had before, and declares that the operation is entirely gratuitous, or a matter of grace. ¶ *Freely*. Not of obligation, or as a reward to men for anything which they had earned. ¶ *By his grace*. The blessing, namely, deliverance from sinfulness, here styled being justified, or being made just, is bestowed as a matter of pure grace. And such is the manner in which the apostle uniformly represents its bestowment. See ch. v. 21 ; vi. 23 ; Eph. ii. 8, 9. In the divine grace is found the only ground for assurance of salvation. Human exertions, by works, are wholly inadequate. Such exertions had never been successful, up to the time when the apostle wrote. They have been equally unsuccessful until now. There is no good reason to expect a different result "while the world standeth." But the grace of God is abundant, and will secure the desired result. He is "a just God and a Saviour." Isa. xlv. 21. As a just God, he will "render to every man according to his deeds." Ch. ii. 6. As a Saviour, his grace will be manifested in causing "all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth" 1 Tim. ii. 4. For this purpose, "the Father

sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world," 1 John iv. 14; and he exhibited "his love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us," ch. v. 8. In the divine grace we may securely trust. The Father is greater than all; and none shall be able to pluck us out of his hands. John x. 29. Nothing can separate us from his love, manifested in his Son. Ch. viii. 38, 39. Happy are we, if we can so lay hold on the promise, by a spirit of living faith, as to become present partakers of that special salvation which is the portion of believers. 1 Tim. iv. 10. ¶ *Through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.* Such is the manner in which God justifies men, or makes them just. His grace is the efficient cause; but it manifests itself through his well-beloved Son, as the medium of communication. He sent his Son to save mankind from their sins, to redeem them from iniquity, to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins; to turn away every one from his iniquities. Matt. i. 21; Tit. ii. 14; Acts iii. 26; xxvi. 18. Through such a redemption are men justified, or made just. I am fully aware that a different interpretation has extensively prevailed; and I verily believe that it has produced much mischief. It has been alleged that the word rendered *redemption* implies the idea of a ransom, or a price paid for the liberation of mankind, as captives or slaves were formerly redeemed from those who held them in bondage. The price, in this particular case, it is alleged, was the blood or the life of Jesus Christ, referred to in the succeeding verse, which he offered as an expiatory sacrifice to purchase the liberation of men. And on this and on similar passages has been erected the theory of vicarious atonement. Supposing the word to imply the idea of a price paid, the question naturally arises, to whom was it paid? Who or what had any property, or claim, or interest, in mankind, which nothing short of such a sacrifice could extinguish? Various answers have been given to this inquiry, many of which have become obsolete, and others, from their sheer absurdity, no longer require attention. The form of this theory now most prevalent seems to be this: That divine

justice, or God as a merely just being, had a claim against mankind, that they should endure endless misery as a penalty for their sins. That our Lord Jesus Christ interposed on their behalf, and paid a ransom for them, by enduring in his own person what was equivalent to their endless misery; that, the claims of divine justice being thus satisfied, the penalty of sin will be remitted to all who exercise a true faith in the atoning sacrifice. "A regard merely to the law, that is, a sense of justice merely on the part of God, or he being just merely, does not in itself permit justification by overlooking or setting aside the penalty of the law; but the death of Christ is an expedient of infinite wisdom, by which the full claims of the law may be admitted, and yet the penalty avoided, because a moral compensation or equivalent has been provided, by the sufferings of him who died in the sinner's stead."—*Stuart.* On this theory of redemption, a remission of the just penalty of sin, in consideration of a vicarious suffering, as a ransom or price, I remark, (1) The Scriptures do not announce a remission of the just penalty of sin, but they expressly assert that it shall be fully executed upon the sinner. In this epistle, the fact that God "will render to every man according to his deeds," ch. ii. 6, has been distinctly declared; and if every man receive a meet reward for well-doing, and endure the just penalty of his sins, it is not easy to see how that penalty is to be remitted. To the same effect, the same apostle declares, "He that doeth wrong shall receive for the wrong which he hath done; and there is no respect of persons." Col. iii. 25. Our Lord came to save men from sin, not from its just penalty; to redeem them from iniquity, not from its penalty. Matt. i. 21; Tit. ii. 14. (2.) If divine justice demanded the endless misery of men as the just penalty of their transgressions, and yet suffered them to escape, in consideration of the sufferings of an innocent person, offered as a ransom or a price for their liberation, what conception can be formed of that justice? The case, divested of all rhetorical flourishes, seems to be this. A certain amount of pain was required as a penalty for so much sin; but whether that pain were suffered by the guilty or by the innocent, was wholly

grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus :

immaterial. If the guilty suffered it in their own persons, justice was satisfied ; it was equally satisfied, if the whole was suffered by an innocent person, one who was "without spot, and blameless." And this is called divine justice ! It suffers the guilty to escape, who deserve punishment, and inflicts the whole penalty of sin on the innocent, who does not deserve it. (3.) If such be the administration of divine justice, how are those scriptures to be understood which declare that God punishes the guilty for the purpose of reforming them, for the purpose of promoting their spiritual benefit ? See Heb. xii. 5—11. If he allow them to escape the proper penalty, how shall they receive the benefit which it is designed to produce ? If he punish the innocent instead, how shall benefit be imparted to one already free from all moral pollution ? The declared design of divine retribution would, in such case, be wholly abandoned ; and the penalty of sin, instead of being administered to the guilty in a spirit of love, for the purpose of making them partakers of holiness, would be executed on the innocent, as an act of unmitigated vengeance. (4.) It might be added, that the advocates of this theory of a ransom by way of vicarious suffering believe that Jesus Christ was truly the supreme God, one of the persons in the Trinity. If this opinion be true, then the doctrine implies that God himself endured the penalty of sin to satisfy the demands of his own justice ; and that, to enable men to escape what the same justice demanded that they should endure, he offered himself to himself as an expiatory sacrifice. But it is urged that the word here rendered redemption necessarily implies the idea of a ransom or price paid ; and much reliance is placed on this supposed fact. A careful examination would probably demonstrate the fact to be otherwise. The word occurs just ten times in the New Testament : Luke xxi. 28 ; Rom. iii. 24 ; viii. 23 ; 1 Cor. i. 30 ; Eph. i. 7, 14 ; iv. 30 ; Col. i. 14 ; Heb. ix. 15 ; xi. 35. Even *Barnes* admits that in Luke xxi. 28, Rom. viii. 23, and Eph. i. 14, it is "used in a large sense to denote simple deliverance by any means,

without reference to a price paid." In regard to the other passages where it occurs, I remark, briefly, that in 1 Cor. i. 30, and Eph. iv. 30, there is not the slightest reference to a price paid ; that in Heb. xi. 35 there is no reference to a price, nor even to Christ ; and that in Eph. i. 7, Col. i. 14, and Heb. ix. 15, although the language is figurative, and its real meaning might admit of argument, yet the effect produced is distinctly described as "forgiveness of sins" and "redemption of the transgressions," without the remotest intimation that "the penalty" of sin may be "avoided, because a moral compensation or equivalent has been provided." The following judicious remarks will furnish a suitable conclusion to this note : "Redemption signifies deliverance, but not deliverance from everything, but deliverance from that to which a man is in subjection or bondage. Nor does redemption by Jesus Christ import there was any compensation made to God by paying what was of equal value, in consideration whereof they were delivered ; for that is inconsistent with what St. Paul expressly says here, namely, that sinners are justified by God gratis, and of his free bounty. What this redemption is, St. Paul tells us, Eph. i. 7 ; Col. i. 14 ; even the forgiveness of sins. But if St. Paul had not been so express in defining what he means by redemption, they yet would be thought to lay too much stress upon the criticism of a word, in the translation, who would thereby force from the word, in the original, a necessary sense which it is plain it hath not. That redeeming, in the sacred scripture language, signifies not precisely paying an equivalent, is so clear, that nothing can be more. I shall refer my reader to three or four places amongst a great number : Exo. vi. 6 ; Deut. vii. 8 ; xv. 12 ; xxiv. 18. But if any one will, from the literal signification of the word in English, persist in it, against St. Paul's declarations, that it necessarily implies an equivalent price paid, I desire him to consider to whom ; and that, if we will strictly adhere to the metaphor, it must be to those whom the redeemed are in bondage to, and from whom we are redeemed, namely,

25 Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation, through faith in

Sin and Satan. If he will not believe his own system for this, let him believe St. Paul's words, Tit. ii. 14: 'Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity.' Nor could the price be paid to God, in strictness of justice (for that is made the argument here), unless the same person ought, by that strict justice, to have both the thing redeemed and the price paid for its redemption. For it is to God we are redeemed by the death of Christ, Rev. v. 9: 'Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood.'—*Locke*.

25. *Whom God hath set forth*. The marginal reading is "fore-ordained." The word occurs in only two other places in the New Testament, Rom. i. 13, Eph. i. 9, and in both cases is rendered "purposed;" once with reference to the design of man, and once in reference to God's design. If such be its meaning here, then the marginal reading is to be preferred. Its classical use is said to be different, having the force of *present, lay before, exhibit, expose to view*. And in this sense most commentators suppose it is used here. In either sense, it expresses an important fact, perfectly consistent with the current testimony of the Scriptures; namely, that God purposed in himself that his dearly beloved Son should be the medium through whom blessings should be conferred on men, or that he ordained him to be such a medium; and also that he had exhibited his Son to mankind as the medium of grace and salvation, as the person through whom their deliverance from bondage to sin should be accomplished. ¶ *To be a propitiation*. "A seat of mercy."—*Wickliffe*. The figure is taken from the Jewish ceremonial law. In the holy of holies was placed the ark of the covenant, between the cherubim. The covering of this ark was called the mercy-seat. And by the same word our Lord is here described. He is called a "propitiation, rather a propitiatory or mercy-seat, in reference to the mercy-seat in the Jewish temple, which was the golden lid of the ark, over which the cherubim bowed, and on which the Shekinah, or cloud of the divine glory, rested; the place of the

holy presence where God appeared and spoke his will. Exo. xxv. 17—22; Lev. xvi. 14—17; Heb. ix. 4, 5. Once a year it was sprinkled with blood. Christ was now the mercy-seat, sprinkled with his own blood, the bright and holy place of the divine presence and glory shining in his face; him over whom angels bowed and sung their song of jubilee, and through whom God appeared and spoke his will. Christ is the 'altar form of the divine;'—but, then, it is in a free spiritual sense, in no narrow, legal, technical import. This Jewish figure would have no speaking significance except to the Jews, and cannot have been meant for universal impression, because the rest of the world lack the preliminary facts on which that figure is predicated, namely, the temple, mercy-seat, sacrifices, &c., of that ancient people. Still, the scion of divine truth being once well set in the old stock of Judaism, it thrrove apace, and now the world subsists its spiritual life on Christ, not because he is a mercy-seat, but because it eats the bread God has prepared, and its tormenting hunger is satisfied, and strength and growth have come apace."—*Livermore*. Without vouching for the literal accuracy of the preceding remarks, I quote them as containing valuable suggestions. The covering or lid of the ark, under the old covenant, was called the mercy-seat, because it was the place where the divine presence was specially manifested, and where the divine goodness was proclaimed. So, when Jesus came as "the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises," Heb. viii. 6, he was styled the mercy-seat; because he was the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person, Heb. i. 3, thus manifesting the divine presence; and because, in his Father's name, he announced blessings to men as the fruit of divine grace; especially the crowning blessing of life and immortality. In this view of the figure, the declaration that God hath ordained or exhibited Jesus as a mercy-seat, for the purposes immediately specified, appears to convey the same idea which is more plainly expressed by the apostle when he declares that God "hath saved

his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God ;

us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began : but is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel." 2 Tim. i. 9, 10. ¶ *Through faith.* Here, as elsewhere, faith is represented as the means by which the blessings of the gospel are appropriated. In other words, no man enters into the full enjoyment of the promised blessings, until he lays hold upon them by a spirit of faith. The purpose of God is unchangeable, and he will assuredly perform what he has promised. Yet only those who believe, who have faith in the promises, enjoy a foretaste on earth of the joys of heaven. 1 Tim. iv. 10. And it is certainly a reasonable belief, that, both here and hereafter, salvation and a knowledge of God, or faith in his truth, advance with equal steps. John xvii. 3 ; 1 Tim. ii. 3, 4. ¶ *In his blood.* I understand *blood* to be here put for the whole character and testimony of Christ, which he sealed with his blood ; comprehending all which he taught, performed, and suffered, for the benefit of mankind. He came to bear witness to the truth ; to make known the riches of divine grace ; to save men from their sins. In the accomplishment of this work, he suffered much, and finally laid down his life. The apostle seems to have seized on the word *blood*, as expressive of his whole ministry, to carry out the figure of the mercy-seat, which, under the ceremonial law, was periodically sprinkled with blood. In like manner, the new and living mercy-seat, appointed by God, had been moistened by his own blood. Faith in his blood, therefore, is equivalent to faith in him as the true messenger of God. See note on Matt. xxvi. 28. "The cleansing power of Christ is of course in no literal sense in his blood, but in the great love and self-sacrifice that led him to do and suffer so much for man's disenthralment from sin. The noxious emphasis put upon the physical sufferings, as if they were a payment of our debts,

an endurance of what we should otherwise have suffered, but what we shall not suffer now, has often blinded men to that glorious sacrifice of the spirit, that bowing down of the most glorious nature that was ever on the earth, to shame and loss and agony, for our sakes. Judaism was legal ; but, really, Christianity, as many preach it, is made more legal than Judaism. Its cords are not cords of love, but of steel. Its spirit is made, not a spirit of salvation, but of condemnation. The mouth of the teachers is opened, not with promises, but with threatenings. Its character of gospel, or of good news, is made to consist in its declaration of safety to a mere fragment, an infinitesimal of humanity, and its consignment of a vast majority of conscious and immortal spirits to everlasting woe." — *Livermore.* ¶ *To declare.* For the purpose of declaring, or making known. God appointed his Son as the mercy-seat or medium of communication with mankind, for the purpose of making known to them his gracious designs on their behalf. "The meaning is, that the plan was adopted ; the Saviour was given ; he suffered and died ; and the scheme is proposed to men *for the purpose* of making a full manifestation of his plan, in contradistinction from all the plans of men." — *Barnes.* ¶ *His righteousness.* The righteousness which he will secure, by saving them from sin according to the method of his own appointment, namely, by the exercise of grace. See note on chap. i. 17. "There is great variety in the explanation of the word here rendered righteousness. Some explain it as meaning *veracity* ; others, as *holiness* ; others, as *goodness* ; others, as *essential justice*. Most interpreters, perhaps, have explained it as referring to an attribute of God. But the whole connection requires us to understand it here as in chap. i. 17, not of an *attribute* of God, but of his plan of justifying sinners. He has adopted and proposed a plan by which men may become just by faith in Jesus Christ, and not by their own works." — *Barnes.* ¶ *For the remission of sins.* No intimation is given that the just punishment of sin is remitted

on account of any ransom, or price paid, or otherwise. It is a remission of sins, a purification from iniquity, a deliverance from the power of sin; in short, it is a salvation from sin which the gospel teaches. And this is effectually accomplished by God's method of securing righteousness. Men have failed to purify themselves by their own exertions. Divine grace, operating through a spirit of faith, is proposed as the only effectual agent of purification. ¶ *Of sins that are past.* Lest it should be supposed that the divine plan of salvation by grace was only prospective in its operation, the apostle declares that it is equally effective in regard to the past. His argument, in proof that "by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight," is founded on the universal sinfulness of mankind in all ages. In like manner, as "there is no respect of persons with God," he makes his own plan of justification as extensive as that plan which had already proved ineffectual. Although men from the beginning had used their own powers without attaining righteousness, God would not leave them to perish utterly, but had, in fact, redeemed them from sin, or remitted their sins, in accordance with that plan which now, for the first time, he had clearly manifested to men. In this manner the impartial grace of God is discovered, and the declaration in chap. v. 20 is fully verified: "The law entered, that the offence might abound; but where sin abounded, grace did much more abound." So that, although sin had reigned over all men, and its penalty, death, had been endured, yet the grace of God had reigned as extensively, and more effectually, overcoming sin and death, and granting eternal life freely as a gift of grace: However unconscious of the result to which their interpretation might lead, most commentators have agreed that the apostle here refers to the sins and sinners of past ages. A recent commentator, however, perceives the difficulty; and, as the only means of avoiding it, undertakes to show that the reference of the apostle has been misinterpreted. "This has been commonly understood to refer to past generations, as affirming that sins under all dispensations of the world are to be forgiven in this man-

ner through the sacrifice of Christ, and it has been supposed that all who have been justified have received pardon by the merits of the sacrifice of Christ. This may be true; but there is no reason to think that this is the idea in this passage. For, (1) The scope of the passage does not require it. The argument is not to show how men *had* been justified, but how they *might* be. It is not to discuss a historical fact, but to state the way in which sin was to be forgiven under the gospel. (2.) The language has no immediate or necessary reference to past generations. It evidently refers to the past lives of the individuals who are justified, and not to the sins of former times. All that the passage means, therefore, is, that the plan of pardon is such as completely to remove all the former sins of *the life*, not of all former generations. If it referred to the sins of former times, it would not be easy to avoid the doctrine of universal salvation."—*Barnes.* To avoid this doctrine, the whole current of interpretation must be turned aside, and a new method adopted, which, unfortunately for its author, is not justified by his facts; or, rather, his facts are not according to the record. If "the argument is not to show how men had been justified," in direct terms, it certainly is indirectly. From chap. i. 18 to chap. iii. 20, the whole scope of the argument is that all men, in all ages of the world, had failed to attain justification, or freedom from sin, by the methods which they had pursued; and consequently, if justified at all, it must be by some other method. In verse 21 it is announced that God has revealed his own plan of justification, which fully meets the case. And this plan is effectual "unto all, and upon all them that believe; for there is no difference; for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God. Being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." Verses 22—24. If this do not refer "to past generations;" if the conduct of former generations be not described as "a historical fact;" if it do not refer "to the sins of former times," as well as to "the past lives of the individuals" then living; it would surely be difficult to find language by which such reference could be expressed. If "the doc-

26 To declare, *I say*, at this time his righteousness: that he might

be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.

trine of universal salvation" is implied in the apostle's language, when thus interpreted, does this furnish a sufficient reason for rejecting the interpretation, and adopting another which is not justified by the facts in the case? Is this doctrine so dishonorable to God, or so disagreeable to man, that the Scriptures must be wrested from their plain and obvious meaning, for the sake of avoiding it? See ver. 3, 4. ¶ *Through the forbearance of God.* See note on chap. ii. 4. Although all men, in all ages, had "sinned and come short of the glory of God," verse 23, yet he had borne with them. His "goodness, and forbearance, and long-suffering," had not failed. He still loved his children, and sought their good. And now, in the fulness of time, he had sent his Son to make known that gracious plan which should result in the salvation of sinners from their sins. A similar idea is suggested in Acts xvii. 30. God had not interposed his strong arm to prevent the transgressions of men by sheer force. He had permitted them to transgress; he had caused them to endure the just penalty of transgression; and he had uniformly treated them with kindness, and bestowed blessings upon them. Thus, by mingled goodness and severity, he manifested his justice, and was still true to his character as the universal Father. But he was now making a more full exhibition of his grace, by revealing a plan for the complete purification of the race from sin.

26. *To declare, &c.* Having been led aside, for a moment, to speak of the forbearance of God, the apostle returns to his main theme, and repeats that what God had done, as described in ver. 24, 25, was done in order to declare, or to manifest openly, his righteousness, that is, the righteousness which his grace has secured for men. "The apostle resumes the idea of God's declaring or setting forth this method of making men right, and thus, at the same time, 1st, showing his own righteousness, or that he himself was just, and also, 2d, making righteous or just, and of course accounting him so, whoever appropriated the benefit to himself by faith."

— *Livermore.* ¶ *At this time.* What had been concealed from former generations was now revealed. The same apostle speaks of the purpose of God, to save men from sin by the power of his grace, through the ministry of his Son, as "the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints." Col. i. 26. "At this time," at the accepted time, the day of salvation, the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world, and to declare openly his righteousness, to wit, the righteousness which he would secure by delivering men from the bondage of sin, and saving them with an everlasting salvation.

¶ *That he might be just.* Commentators have differed in interpreting the word here rendered *just*. Many understand it to mean kind, benignant, gracious, or merciful. Others assert, with equal positiveness, that such is not its meaning. "The word is used about eighty times in the New Testament, and not once in that sense of clemency and mercy." — *Whitby.* There is force in the remark, that "although the word is capable of this sense, the connection does not seem to admit it here, as it would make tautology." — *Stuart.* The method of justification, or of making men righteous, which God has revealed, is perfectly consistent with the eternal principles of justice, notwithstanding it is altogether a work of grace. There is no need, as many have supposed, that the gift of God should be purchased by the payment of a price. See note on Acts viii. 20. He hath a right to do what he will with his own; and if he choose to bless all alike, it is ungracious in any to complain. Matt. xx. 15. What does strict justice demand as its ultimate result? Plainly, universal obedience to the will and requirements of God. This may be fully accomplished by delivering all sinners from their bondage to sin, and in no other way. A sentence to endless sin and misery would interpose an insuperable barrier to that obedience which justice requires. If God were to doom any of his children to perpetual sinfulness, he would, by his own act, render it utterly impossible for them to comply with the

27 Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of

demands of his justice. This would be inconsistent with his character as a just God. Equally inconsistent with such a character would it be for him to permit them to remain in perpetual rebellion against him, if it be within his power to turn them away from their iniquities, and to cause them to love and serve him with full purpose of heart. Not only, therefore, is it *consistent* with the eternal principles of justice that mankind should be made righteous by divine grace; but it is not too much to say, that such a purifying process is imperatively *demanded* by justice. By revealing his purpose thus to deliver those who could not deliver themselves from the power of sin, and to make those righteous who could not attain perfect righteousness by their own works, God gave assurance that he is just. Truly, he is "a just God and a Saviour." Isa. xlv. 21. ¶ *And the justifier*, &c. The blessing is communicated through the Lord Jesus Christ, and is appropriated by a spirit of living faith in him as "the image of the invisible God." Col. i. 15. See note on Acts xxvi. 18. The blessing is secured to all, by the determinate purpose of God; it is upon all, or enjoyed by all, who believe; and the measure of enjoyment is in proportion to the strength of faith or the fulness of knowledge. See John xvii. 3; Rom. iii. 22; 1 Tim. ii. 4; iv. 10.

27. *Where is boasting then? It is excluded.* The apostle is supposed by many to refer specially to the Jews, who were much addicted to boasting of their peculiar privileges. But a universal principle is announced, applicable to all men, in all ages. Since all had sinned, and come short of the glory of God; since all had utterly failed to attain perfection by their own works; since justification, or the making of men righteous, was exclusively the work of divine grace, a free gift bestowed on them, without merit and without price; it followed that "no difference" existed among them which would admit of boasting. If any were already more pure than others, it was the fruit of God's mercy, not of their own merit. Instead of boasting, they might rather exclaim, "Not by works of righteous-

ness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost." Tit. iii. 5. What a rebuke to spiritual pride! Boasting is excluded. Would that all professed Christians could realize the fact announced by the apostle, and that their hearts might be pervaded by its spirit! Then would they abstain from an ostentatious exhibition of their gifts and graces, and from public proclamations that they are not like other men. Then would they rejoice, in hope that the grace of God will be effectual to the salvation of all sinners, as well as of themselves, instead of claiming a monopoly of divine grace, and regarding it as a grievance that others should be made equal with them. ¶ *By what law?* "The sense is, by what arrangement, or by what rule, is boasting excluded?" — *Stuart*. Particular reference, however, appears to be had to the two laws specified in this verse. ¶ *Of works?* Is boasting excluded by the law of works? The apostle answers this question by a decided negative, and with good reason. If perfection were attainable by perfect obedience to law, whether the law of nature or the law revealed to the Jews through Moses, and if men could and did yield such perfect obedience, they would rightly have whereof to glory, or to boast, ch. iv. 2; or, failing to reach perfection, they would feel authorized to boast of the vantage-ground obtained over others. Just so far as men have believed their works could purchase the divine favor, or entitle them to peculiar privileges, just so far has a spirit of pride and boasting been fostered. Its results are seen in the conduct of the Pharisees, generally, towards our Lord. Because he associated with sinners for the purpose of turning them from their sins, by convincing them that God is good, and worthy to be trusted and obeyed, the sanctimonious Pharisees derided him, and adjudged him unworthy of their society. The spirit of boasting is graphically exhibited in the parable spoken by our Lord to "certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others." Luke xviii. 9—

works? Nay ; but by the law of faith.

14. Such a spirit was not excluded by the law of works, but rather encouraged. If one believed himself to have made greater progress than others, he considered himself worthy of higher honor and a richer reward. Indeed, he would feel aggrieved and angry at any suggestion that others were to be made equal with him. See Matt. xx. 1—16, where, under the form of a parable, this spirit of boasting and of pride is rebuked. ¶ *Nay ; but by the law of faith.* The law of works does not exclude boasting ; but the law of faith excludes it effectually. The gospel, revealed through the Lord Jesus Christ, and here taught by the apostle, represents all men as sinners, and utterly incapable of attaining perfection, or of making God indebted to them, in any manner whatever, by their works. It represents all as entirely dependent on the grace of God for the bestowment, as a free gift, of that perfection which they could neither attain nor purchase by their own works. In short, it represents them as the mere recipients of divine mercy ; so that, whether they have received partial deliverance from sin, such as may be experienced by believers in this life, or full and entire deliverance, such as is promised to all in the resurrection, they will not be disposed to boast, as if they had merited the blessing by their works ; but will rather acknowledge their indebtedness to the mercy of God. Under the influence of this spirit the apostle exclaimed, “By the grace of God, I am what I am ; and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain ; but I labored more abundantly than they all : yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.” 1 Cor. xv. 10. The Psalmist, by the same spirit, exclaimed, “Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory, for thy mercy, and for thy truth’s sake.” Ps. cxv. 1. Whoso trusteth in God as the giver of every good gift and every perfect gift, will receive with gratitude every favor, whether temporal or spiritual ; and he will rejoice in the belief, that those who are destitute will in due time be made partakers of the same grace, instead of boasting his own

28 Therefore we conclude, that a man is justified by faith without

present superiority, as if he had attained it by his own merit.

28. *Therefore.* As the result of the whole argument ; to wit, that all men have sinned, and proved themselves incapable of attaining deliverance from the bondage of sin by their own exertions ; that their only reasonable hope of such deliverance is in the free grace of God ; and that he has revealed his purpose to extend that deliverance to all, and to save them by grace, through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. The conclusion from these premises follows. ¶ *Without the deeds of the law.* Man’s previous attempts at obedience, with whatever degree of success, are not the procuring cause of the blessing which is promised. God justifies, or makes righteous, without regard to the works of the law previously performed ; — except, indeed, that the fact of making men righteous necessarily implies that they were previously sinful. Our Lord came to call, not the righteous, but sinners, to repentance. Matt. ix. 13. If a man could be found on earth perfectly free from sin, during his whole life, I apprehend he would not be a proper subject of salvation, and that he could not be made righteous by divine grace ; for the plain reason, that he is already in the state to which grace proposes to bring sinners. With this exception, it may be repeated, God justifies or makes righteous, without regard to the works of the law, previously performed. But we are not hence to conclude that obedience to the divine law is not required under the dispensation of grace. On the contrary, the demand for obedience is more imperative than before. See note on ver. 31. “The apostle, of course, does not mean that Christianity does not *produce* good works, or that they who are justified will not obey the law, and be holy ; but that no righteousness of their own will be the ground of their justification. They are sinners ; and as such can have no claim to be treated as righteous. It may be remarked here, however, that this doctrine by no means interferes with the doctrine that good works are to be performed by Christians. Paul urges this as much as any other writer

the deeds of the law.

29 *Is he* the God of the Jews

in the New Testament. His doctrine is, that they are not to be relied on as a *ground* of justification; but that he did not mean to teach that they are not to be performed by Christians is apparent from the connection, and from the following places in his epistles: Rom. ii. 7; 2 Cor. ix. 8; Eph. ii. 10; 1 Tim. ii. 10; v. 10, 25; vi. 18; 2 Tim. iii. 7; Tit. ii. 7, 14; Heb. x. 24. That we are not *justified* by our works is a doctrine which he has urged and repeated with great power and frequency. See Rom. iv. 2, 6; ix. 11, 22; xi. 6; Gal. ii. 16; iii. 2, 5, 10; Eph. ii. 9; 2 Tim. i. 9."—*Barnes*. "All ground of glorying, whether of the Jews in the punctilious observance of their law, or of the Gentiles in their philosophy and light of nature, is, therefore, excluded. The lower system of law in both cases is superseded by the higher system of faith. The divine method of making good men, and accepting and accounting them as such, is henceforth a system of faith, a spiritual principle working by love, working on the whole nature of man, and transforming him into the image of Christ. The wise man said, 'To depart from wickedness is a thing pleasing to the Lord; and to forsake unrighteousness is a propitiation.' Eccles. xxxv. 3. Jesus is the propitiatory, as he is called in ver. 25, or the propitiation, as he is also termed, 1 John ii. 2; not because he is either, literally, and it is evident that he could not be both at the same time, except in a figure; but because the moral and divine influence he wields over the human heart is such that he disposes, draws men to accomplish that good work of faith, obedience, and the forsaking of all unrighteousness, which is a true propitiation."—*Levermore*. If by this be intended that the influence of Christ and his gospel on the human heart is of a cleansing, purifying character, ultimately resulting in that state of freedom from sin which is styled salvation, then I fully concur. But, if the concluding clause is designed to intimate that the work of faith, obedience, and the forsaking of all unrighteousness, is in any sense whatever to be regarded as the procuring *cause* of

only? *is he* not also of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also:

salvation, or as a work on the part of man entitling him to the blessing announced in the gospel as a free gift of divine grace, I do not so understand the teachings of the gospel. Boasting would not thus be utterly excluded; but men might continue to boast of their spiritual attainments, as did the Jews of their legal observances, and look down on their less favored brethren with more of contempt than of Christian affection; or, more of pity than of joy in hope of their final deliverance from the bondage of sin.

29. *Is he the God of the Jews only?* In this verse is asserted the great fact which underlies all our hopes for the salvation of the human race; the fact, namely, that our heavenly Father is the equal God of all nations and all men. He is not a local God, such as the heathen were accustomed to worship. He is not the God of a single chosen nation, to the exclusion of all others, as the Jews fondly imagined. But he is God both of the Jews and the Gentiles, or, in other words, of all nations of men; and it is equally true that he is the God of every individual of all nations. All are his; for he created them. All are subject to his government; for he is the supreme governor of the universe. All are under obligations of gratitude to him; for he is the giver of every good gift and every perfect gift. All may securely trust in him; for he is the father of the spirits of all flesh. All may look to him with a joyful hope of deliverance from the bondage of sin, and the enjoyment of eternal life; for he hath given assurance that his grace superabounds over sin, and that, although all have sinned, they shall be justified freely by his grace, which shall reign through righteousness unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord. This great fact the apostle desired to impress on his Jewish brethren at Rome, in order to remove their prejudice, common to their whole nation, against a system which admitted the Gentiles to its privileges, without requiring them first to pass through the gate of Moses. He desired them to understand distinctly that God is no respecter of persons or of nations; that

30 Seeing *it is* one God which shall justify the circumcision by faith,

and uncircumcision through faith.

31 Do we then make void the

although he had formerly selected the Jews, as a peculiar people, for the accomplishment of a particular design, yet in the great result of his moral government, in breaking the yoke of sin, overcoming all opposition to truth and justice, and establishing permanent and universal righteousness, he made no distinction between nations. He was God of all. He was Father of all. His grace was sufficient for all. He therefore declared himself to be the Saviour of all. 1 Tim. iv. 10. In the language heretofore quoted, "As God is no respecter of persons, all human creatures being equally his offspring, and there being no reason why one should be preferred before another, therefore his endless mercy has embraced all." — *Clarke*.

30. *Seeing it is one God, &c.* There is but one God, and he is equally the God of Jews and Gentiles. This God hath announced his purpose to justify men, or make them righteous, by his grace. As he is God of all, he makes no distinction between different races. His plan comprehends all, and is equally fitted to all. "As all had alike sinned, Jews and Gentiles; and as the plan of salvation by faith was adapted to sinners, without any special reference to Jews; so God could show favors to all, and all might be admitted on the same terms to the benefits of the plan of salvation." — *Barnes*. ¶ *The circumcision.* Those who are circumcised, or the Jews. ¶ *The uncircumcision.* Those who are not circumcised, or the Gentiles. By the observance or nonobservance of the rite of circumcision, the Jews and Gentiles were distinguished; and sometimes the apostle refers to the two races by this distinguishing mark as a descriptive name. See ch. iv. 9; Gal. ii. 7, 8; Eph. ii. 11; Tit. i. 10. ¶ *By faith—through faith.* These terms are of similar import. Both denote the ordinary process through which the gracious gift of God is communicated to men. Salvation from sin, or purification from iniquity, is wrought in the human heart, through the influence of a living faith in God, or an accurate knowledge of him, and of his Son our Lord Jesus Christ. See John xvii. 3,

and notes on Acts xiii. 39; xv. 9. "The sum of these verses (29 and 30) is simply that God is the God of the whole family of mankind, and not of one branch of it only; and that he is just as ready to accept to the system, whose privileges are secured by faith, the Gentile as the Jew, or, to use the abstract terms, the uncircumcision as the circumcision. *By faith and through faith mean the same.*" — *Livermore*. "There is no difference in the meaning of these expressions." — *Barnes*.

31. *Do we then make void the law, through faith?* Do we destroy or undermine the moral obligation of the divine law, by teaching that salvation is not of works, but that it is the gift of God's grace, through faith in his Son? Many, under the influence of "a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge," ch. x. 2, have urged a similar objection against the doctrine of grace. To teach that God will save men by his grace alone, it has been alleged, is to open the floodgates of iniquity. If God will overlook our past transgressions, and save us notwithstanding we have been disobedient, if our good works in the flesh contribute nothing toward the certainty of our final salvation, then, it has been said, religion is useless, and piety a burden; we may better enjoy the pleasures of sin, and take our fill of iniquity. If men really entertain such opinions and desires, and yet suppose themselves to possess a Christian spirit, they deceive themselves. If they truly delight in the service of God, and say such things in the heat of argument, they certainly speak unadvisedly with their lips. Knowing the character of the Jews, the apostle anticipated this objection on their part, and his answer is equally conclusive against similar objections in later periods of time. ¶ *God forbid.* By no means. See note on ver. 4. ¶ *Yea, we establish the law.* We admit its binding force on all. The doctrine which we teach confirms the authority of the law, and discloses indeed the only certain prospect of universal obedience to it. Such appears to be the meaning of the apostle's language. The manner in which the gospel confirms the authority of the

law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law.

law is unfolded in the succeeding chapters. It may not be impertinent to suggest in this place two considerations illustrative of the great fact here announced. By common consent, it is agreed that the apostle does not refer to the ritual or ceremonial law given by Moses. This was not established or perpetuated by the gospel; on the contrary, it was abrogated, or superseded. The reference is doubtless to that eternal rule of right which God has established for the government of mankind, which he impressed on the hearts of the Gentiles, and which was embraced in the law revealed to the Jews. Our Lord has defined this law in brief but very comprehensive terms. When one inquired, "Which is the great commandment in the law? Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets." Matt. xxii. 36—40. Such is the sum of human duty, and such the sum of the divine law in regard to men. Whoso loveth God with the whole heart will reverence and worship him. Whoso loveth his neighbor as himself will perform all the offices of justice, mercy, and affection, which are due from man to man. See notes on the passage quoted. How, then, does the gospel, and its distinguishing characteristic, the salvation of all men by the free grace of God, establish or confirm this law? In the first place, it represents God as the Father of all men; and all men as brethren, being the children of one Father. If a man lay hold on these two great facts by a spirit of living faith; if he undoubtingly believe in the universal paternity of God, and the universal brotherhood of men; if this faith be in him a living active principle, need there be any fear that he will be disobedient to the great law of love on account of that faith? Will his faith that God is his father induce him to disregard, dishonor, and hate Him? Will his faith that all men are his brethren induce him to hate and

injure them? Or, take the special form of the objection, as stated by the apostle. If a man believe in his heart that he is utterly unable of his own strength to break the yoke of sin, and to escape from its bondage; that such also is the condition of all men; that God, in infinite mercy, by the exercise of his grace, will purify the hearts of all men from sin, and make them righteous; is there anything in all this of a demoralizing tendency? The beloved apostle anticipated no danger from this source. He had no fear that a belief in the divine goodness would cause men to hate God; on the contrary, he declared, "We love him because he first loved us." 1 John iv. 19. He had no fear that a belief in God's impartial kindness to men would induce them to hate each other. "Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another." Ib. ver. 11. Just so far, therefore, as the true spirit of the gospel is embraced by faith, the principles of the moral law become more effectual in their operation upon the heart, and its precepts are more fully obeyed. It is not destroyed, but confirmed and established. Secondly, The law is the eternal rule of right, established by the supreme lawgiver. All sin consists in disobedience to that law. God has revealed "his righteousness;" that is, a righteousness secured by the power of his grace. The supposition that the law is made void or of none effect by saving men from sin, or, which is the same thing, by making them righteous, is simply absurd. Instead of thus making the law void, it is the only process by which perfect and universal obedience can be secured. Men can never attain perfection by their own exertions, as the apostle has abundantly asserted. While they remain imperfect, they remain to the same extent disobedient. When the work of God shall have been fully accomplished, his children turned away from their iniquities by his grace, saved from sin, and made equal unto the angels, the children of God being children of the resurrection, will disobedience remain? If the grace of God be effectual to the salvation of some, and others remain sinful without end,

then, indeed, the law becomes void in regard to them who never yield obedience. But the salvation of all men from sin secures entire and universal obedience. Well, then, might the apostle say, that the gospel, as taught by him, recognized the authority of the divine law, and gave assurance that it should be obeyed by every subject of the divine government; that, so far as men came under the influence of divine grace in this life, they would be quickened to more perfect obedience; and that obedience should become absolutely perfect when the work of grace was fully accomplished.

ADDITIONAL NOTE. — The words rendered *justify*, *justified*, and *justification*, which occur frequently in this epistle, have been interpreted by commentators in a technical sense altogether different from their ordinary and proper signification. They have been represented as denoting that, for certain reasons, God treats men as just or righteous, when, in fact, such is not their real character. By justification has been understood not the making of men just or righteous, but the treating of them as just when they are not morally pure. Such is not the ordinary meaning of the terms; and such, I apprehend, is not the sense in which Paul and the other New Testament writers use them. "The difficulty which the gospel meets is not how God should treat men, and how remit their offences, but how men should *become* what they ought to be — just, righteous, in heart and life. The word *justification*, some may be surprised to learn, occurs but three times in the whole Bible; and those are in this Epistle. ch. iv. 25; v. 16, 18; and in every instance the better rendering is righteousness." — *Livemore*, note on ch. i. 17. The word *δικαιοῦν* (*dikaioō*), *justify*, in its various forms, occurs nearly forty times in the New Testament. In Rev. xxii. 11, "He that is righteous, let him be righteous still," a continuance in the present condition is indicated; but no intimation is given that he should be regarded or treated otherwise than according to his actual character. In Luke x. 29, and xvi. 15, a desire is denoted to establish one's own innocence, to prove one's self free

from blame, and to be treated as just on the ground of actual desert. The word indicates the manifestation or acknowledgment of one's justice or righteousness, in Matt. xi. 19; xii. 37; Luke vii. 29, 35; xviii. 14; Rom. iii. 4; 1 Tim. iii. 16. In these places the justice or righteousness is represented as actual, and no hint is given that it is putative, in any sense whatever. The only other places where this word occurs in the New Testament are Acts xiii. 39; Rom. ii. 13; iii. 20, 24, 26, 28, 30; iv. 2, 5; v. 1, 9; vi. 7; viii. 30, 33; 1 Cor. iv. 4; vi. 11; Gal. ii. 16, 17; iii. 8, 11, 24; v. 4; Tit. iii. 7; Jas. ii. 21, 24, 25. In all these cases, a change of moral character is indicated. To *justify* means, as here used, to make just, to make pure, or righteous. The idea of actual purity, justness, or righteousness, is distinctly implied. The word does not here denote the regarding or treating of unrighteous men as righteous, unjust men as just, but rather the turning of men away from their ungodliness, and making them righteous. Even *Barnes*, although he supposes Paul to have used them in a different sense, acknowledges that this is the *primary* and *proper* meaning, not only of the original, but of the English words *justify*, and the others. "The word to *justify* means, properly, to be just, to be innocent, to be righteous." "The primary meaning of the word is, therefore, to be innocent, pure, &c.; and hence the name means righteousness in general." — Note on ch. i. 17. If interpreters had been content with the primary and proper sense of the word, much confusion and perplexity might have been avoided. There is the more reason for adhering to the natural sense of the word, because it thus denotes the precise work which the Father sent the Son to accomplish; namely, to turn men away from their iniquities, to save them from sin, to make them pure, and just, and righteous. Throughout the Epistle, therefore, I have interpreted the word in this sense; believing that those whom God justifies are thus made or thus become just, or righteous, to a proportionate extent; and that justification implies an actual corresponding degree of freedom from unrighteousness.

CHAPTER IV.

WHAT shall we then say that

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This epistle, though addressed generally "to all that be at Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints," ch. i. 7, is manifestly designed specially to remove the scruples remaining in the minds of Jewish disciples. They found it exceedingly difficult to surrender their former opinions, that the Jews were a chosen people, peculiarly dear in the sight of heaven, and that the blessings of the gospel could not be shared by the Gentiles unless they should first be proselyted, and become obedient to the ceremonial law, especially to the law of circumcision. The apostle has hitherto discussed the subject on general grounds, showing that all mankind are alike in bondage to sin, and alike incapable of accomplishing their own deliverance; that deliverance is accomplished solely by the grace of God, operating through faith in the hearts of men; that he is alike the God of Jews and Gentiles; and, consequently, that he will be equally gracious to all his children. In this chapter, he selects a single instance, one which, to the Jewish mind, must have been more conclusive than any other, and shows that Abraham, the "father of the faithful," was not only not justified by works, but that he received the blessing, through faith, while he was yet in precisely the same condition as the believing Gentiles. He did not receive the promise because he had been circumcised, and had obeyed the Mosaic ritual; for that ritual had not then been ordained, nor had Abraham been circumcised. Circumcision was added as a seal of the covenant which God made with him.

1. *What shall we then say?* The apostle anticipates an objection which would naturally present itself to the Jewish mind. If salvation be wholly of grace, through faith, how did Abraham derive advantage from circumcision, or from the other good works, for which his memory was revered by the whole nation? ¶ *That Abraham our father.* See note on Matt. iii. 9. The Jews were proud of their descent,

Abraham our father, as pertaining to the flesh, hath found?

2 For if Abraham were justi-

and were accustomed to boast of Abraham as their father; as if they necessarily inherited his faith and his virtues. See note on John viii. 39. ¶ *As pertaining to the flesh.* Or, in regard to the flesh. The phrase is sometimes translated according to the flesh. Ch. i. 3; 2 Cor. i. 17. Much difference of opinion has been expressed concerning its meaning here. Some have supposed it to denote the manner in which Abraham was father of the Jews, namely, by natural generation. Others, with apparently better reason, suppose it to refer to circumcision. After a full examination of the different interpretations, and the reasons upon which they are founded, *Stuart* comes to this conclusion, which is probably correct: "I must prefer the predominant sense of it in the epistles of Paul, namely, *in respect to circumcision*; comp. ch. iii. 1, where the very same question is put in a more literal way. The meaning of the question would then be, What good or advantage has Abraham our father obtained in respect to the distinguishing rite which separated him from all the world, and consecrated him to God? Of what use was it? The apostle, in answer to the like question in ch. iii. 1, shows that the Jewish nation were all under sin, and under condemnation, and that they can therefore lay no claim to justification on the ground of external privileges. The objector, however, is not satisfied with this general answer, but now suggests the case of Abraham as a more urgent one, and wishes to know whether we can justly hold that no preëminence was given to him on account of the covenant and the rite of circumcision. The apostle, in his answer, does not deny, or rather he tacitly admits, that Abraham enjoyed some advantage on account of his external privileges. He admits the same thing expressly of the whole Jewish nation, ch. iii. 2. But, as to the great subject in question, namely, gratuitous justification, Paul avers at once that Abraham was not justified at all on the ground of his external advantages, or of any merit; for then he would have had matter of boasting. But this he

ified by works, he hath *whereof* to glory, but not before God.

has not before God, whatever may be the praise which his privileges or his conduct in general may deserve from men." ¶ *Hath found.* Rather, hath obtained. What advantage has Abraham obtained from circumcision, if it availed nothing toward his justification before God? If justification be wholly of grace, how did circumcision benefit Abraham?

2. *For if Abraham were justified by works.* This is understood by some as a continuation of the objection supposed to be urged in verse 1. "The Jew proceeds: I conclude, therefore, that Abraham was justified by works, or by his obedience to this law of circumcision; and, consequently, he has cause for glorying, to exult in something which he has done to entitle him to these blessings. Now, it is evident that he has this glorying, and consequently that he was justified by works."—*Clarke.* The more common opinion, which I prefer, is, that this language is a part of the apostle's answer to the objection. The objection was founded on the supposition that Abraham was justified by works. The apostle pointed out the absurdity of that supposition, by showing that if Abraham were justified by works, he might glory or boast of his achievement. But this no man could do before God. However much one may excel another in human judgment, and be extolled for his piety or virtue, and however much he may value the position he has thus obtained among men, before God all are helplessly guilty. None hath first given unto God, that he should claim a recompense. Chap. xi. 35. ¶ *To glory.* Rather, to boast. See chap. iii. 27, where the same word occurs in a slightly different form. The sense would be more clearly expressed by uniformity of translation. ¶ *But not before God.* No man can boast of his merits before God. His best services, his most ardent gratitude, his most careful endeavors to cultivate and cherish a pure spirit of devotion, his most perfect conformity to the rule of right, all are but an inadequate discharge of his own obligations. They are no more than his duty; though profitable, in many

3 For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was

respects, to himself, they are wholly unprofitable to God, and furnish no ground of claim against him. See Luke xvii. 10. Abraham, in this regard, was like other men. He performed no act of which he might lawfully boast before God. And in proof of this fact the apostle makes an effectual appeal to the Jewish Scriptures, whose authority was acknowledged by the Jews. *Calvin*, as quoted by *Barnes*, puts the argument thus: "If Abraham was justified by works, he might boast of his own merits. But he has no ground of boasting before God. Therefore he was not justified by works." On the same subject, *Livermore* has the following sensible remarks: "Of course, nothing that any mortal could do would merit from God any, even the least, of his favors, either temporal or spiritual. All is of pure love and grace, in this life and in the life to come. When we speak of being saved by our own merits, if any do, we use words of foolishness. We are saved, if saved at all, by the free, unpurchased mercy of God."

3. *For what saith the scripture?* The appeal is to the Old Testament; and with the Jews this appeal was final. Whatever their faults of opinion or practice, they uniformly admitted the authority of their sacred writings. When our Lord was opposed by them in regard to the resurrection, he appealed to the Scriptures, and they were "put to silence." Matt. xxii. 23—34. In like manner, the apostle, instead of using his authority to speak by immediate inspiration, or entering further into an argument to demonstrate the absurdity of the supposition that Abraham was justified by works, appealed to the Scriptures as an end of all controversy. ¶ *Abraham believed God.* See Gen. xv. 6. The particular promise of God in which Abraham believed is mentioned in verses 18—21. The blessing which God promised to bestow was altogether out of the common order of events. Yet, improbable as it might appear, and, indeed, humanly speaking, impossible, Abraham was "fully persuaded that what he had promised he was able also to perform," verse 21; and, therefore, embraced the promise

counted unto him for righteousness.

with undoubting faith. ¶ *It was counted unto him.* The Greek word used here is variously translated. A few specimens follow. *Numbered*, Mark xv. 28 ; *reckoned*, Luke xxii. 37, and ver. 9 infra ; *imputed*, verses 22, 23 ; *accounted*, Gal. iii. 6. The idea is that Abraham believed God, and his faith, the act of believing, was accounted or reckoned as righteousness. In other words, through faith in God he became a partaker of righteousness, or of salvation from the power of sin. Our Lord declares, John v. 24, "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." In like manner, Abraham passed from death unto life, or was delivered from the bondage of sin which "bringeth forth death," through faith in the divine promises. "In regard to the faith of Abraham (which, as described in Gen. xv. 6, is not appropriately faith in Christ), Heb. xi. shows that all faith, that is, all *true* faith, is of one and the same nature, and is connected with the like blessings. All true faith is *confidence in God* ; confidence in his declarations, whether they have respect to the Messiah, or to any other fact or doctrine whatever. Substantially, then, faith must always perform the same office ; for it is always *essentially* of the same nature." — *Stuart*. To become or to be made righteous is to be justified. Abraham was not justified by works, or did not become righteous by perfect obedience of law ; but he was justified by grace, through faith in the divine promise. That he became actually righteous, — not entirely free from sin, to be sure, for such perfection cannot be attained in the flesh, — but that his righteousness, or freedom from sin, was *actual*, so far as it extended, and not merely nominal or putative, is clearly asserted by the apostle. His language cannot well bear a different construction. After a careful examination of the fifty-three passages in the Old Testament where the word here rendered *counted* is found, *Barnes* declares "that there is not one in which the word is used in the sense of reckoning or imputing to a man that which does not

strictly belong to him, or of charging on him that which ought not to be charged on him as a matter of personal right. The word is never used to denote imputing in the sense of *transferring*, or of charging that on one which does not properly belong to him. The same is the case in the New Testament. The word occurs about forty times, and in a similar signification. No doctrine of transferring, or of setting over to a man what does not properly belong to him, be it sin or holiness, can be derived from this word." See note on chap. v. 19. ¶ *For righteousness.* Or, as righteousness. The note on this verse by *Whitby* deserves attention. "We learn from the author to the Hebrews that Abraham had faith before this was said to him, for 'by faith Abraham, being called, obeyed and went forth,' &c. ; and that, by a yet stronger faith, 'he offered up his son Isaac, believing that God was able to raise him up from the dead.' Heb. xi. 8—17. But neither of these instances is pitched upon by the apostle as fit for his purpose, because, in both, obedience was joined with faith ; whereas here was a pure act of faith without works ; and of this act of faith is said, what is not said of either of the others, 'it was imputed to him for righteousness.' Verse 22. God, for this act of faith, and not upon the former, dealt with him as a righteous person, by entering into covenant with him, which was a sign that He accepted him, and pardoned all his sins past ; for it is said, 'in that very day God entered into covenant with Abraham,' Gen. xv. 18, which he had not done before. Moreover, this was spoken to Abraham before his circumcision, and so is very proper to convince the Jews of the non-necessity of circumcision to justification ; but Abraham offered Isaac after his circumcision, and so the apostle could not allege that instance of his faith here, ver. 10, 11 ; he, therefore, was accounted righteous by virtue of that faith which excludes boasting, chap. iii. 27, and only justifies by grace." The force of these remarks will be appreciated by considering that one great object of the apostle in this argument was to remove the prejudices of his Jewish brethren

4 Now to him that worketh, is the reward not reckoned of grace,

but of debt.

5 But to him that worketh not,

against admitting the Gentiles into the church, unless they should first become proselytes, be circumcised, and conform to the law of Moses. The same argument is urged, for a like purpose, in the epistle to the Galatians. By the fact that Abraham was called from idolatry, and made righteous through faith in the divine promises, *before* he was circumcised, and before the ritual law was promulgated, it is manifest that God, who is no respecter of persons, might admit the Gentiles to the blessings of the gospel covenant, without circumcision, or conformity to the ritual law.

4. *To him that worketh.* The apostle here states the general principle on which his argument was founded. To every man who worketh, and thus earns a stipulated reward, that reward is due as a debt, and its bestowment cannot properly be called gratuitous, or an act of grace. Hence, if Abraham or any other person had attained righteousness, or deliverance from the power of sin, by a perfect obedience to the divine law, he would possess precisely what he had earned, and no more. The apostle does not intimate that any man had done this; for he expressly and repeatedly asserts the contrary. But he states the undeniable fact, that what is earned by works cannot be regarded as a gift of grace. The same fact is stated more fully in ch. xi. 6. "If by grace, then it is no more of works; otherwise, grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then it is no more grace; otherwise, work is no more work." This distinction between free gifts and the payment of just debts is universally acknowledged among men; and their transactions with each other are characterized accordingly. It holds equally true in regard to God's dealings with men. If he give them a stipulated reward for a given work, such reward is bestowed as a debt, or as just payment for what has been earned. But when he gives what men have not earned, and what, indeed, they have no power to earn, such gift is bestowed gratuitously, and is an act of grace. If men could and should save themselves from sin, and become righteous, by their own perfect obedience, such salvation might be "not reckoned

of grace, but of debt." There would be no opportunity for a display of grace. Man might justly glory in the deliverance he had accomplished by his own exertions. This the Jews had vainly imagined they might do; and hence they had failed to receive the blessing which could only be received as a gift. See ch. x. 3. ¶ *The reward.* The pay; what is received as a compensation for the work performed. ¶ *Reckoned.* The same word occurs here in a slightly different form, which is translated *counted*, in ver. 3, *imputeth*, in ver. 6, and *impute*, in ver. 8. "It is here used in its strict and proper sense, to *reckon* that as belonging to a man which is his own, or which is due to him." — *Barnes.* ¶ *Of grace.* As a favor; as a free gift. ¶ *Of debt.* As a reward earned, and justly due, according to the contract, express or implied.

5. *To him that worketh not.* To him that hath not yielded perfect obedience to the divine law. To him who doth not rely on his own strength for deliverance from sin. To him who acknowledges his own weakness, and his inability to make God his debtor. To him who relies on a higher power for salvation from sin. ¶ *But believeth on him.* That is, on God. To believe on God, as the phrase is here used, implies more than a simple belief in his existence. So much may be fully believed, and yet the belief in this fact be mingled with such erroneous opinions concerning his character, that the result will be hurtful rather than beneficial. To trust in God, to confide in God, would express the idea conveyed in the text. But none can unreservedly trust or confide in God, unless they believe that he is good, that he is faithful to perform what he has promised, that he regards the welfare of his children, and is willing to bless them; in short, that good is to be expected from him, and not evil. So much is accordant with universal human experience, and it is plainly intimated in what follows. ¶ *That justifieth the ungodly.* That turneth the ungodly from their ungodliness, and maketh them righteous, by the exercise of his grace. We are not to understand, as some have idly dreamed, that God regards and

but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.

treats men as godly while they remain ungodly; as righteous, while they remain sinful. God regards and treats men precisely as they are. He is not deceived nor mocked. He sees the inmost recesses of the human heart, and "will render to every man according to his deeds," as a matter of justice. But, as an act of grace, he changes the character of his children. He saves them from sin, turns them away from their iniquities, and makes them righteous. Thus does he justify the ungodly. Through the influence of divine grace, they cease from their ungodliness, and become partakers of eternal life. With many, this work is commenced in this present life; and such are styled righteous, in comparison with others, although they have not yet attained perfection. But the perfect work of grace, entire deliverance from ungodliness, may only be expected when we shall be raised from the dead, shall "bear the image of the heavenly," and shall be "the children of God, being the children of the resurrection." 1 Cor. xv. 49; Luke xx. 36. Then will the justification of the ungodly become perfect; in other words, then will those who had been ungodly become perfectly righteous. Such is the salvation which God hath promised to his children; not a salvation in sin, which is a contradiction in terms (unless salvation have respect to something besides sin), but a salvation from sin, a justification from ungodliness, a purification from iniquity, a deliverance from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. A belief in this glorious consummation of the plan of divine grace is essential to a true and perfect faith in "him that justifieth the ungodly." ¶ *His faith.* That is, the faith of him who trusts unreservedly in God, and confides in him for deliverance from ungodliness. Whether Abraham had a clear view of all the spiritual blessings which God had purposed to bestow on mankind through the promised seed, when he "believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness," may properly be doubted. But he believed with all his heart in all

6 Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man unto whom God imputeth righteousness

which God had plainly promised to him; and this was all he could do. He gave himself up to God, and trusted in him as a being of goodness and grace, who was faithful to fulfil his promises. If Christians have learned more of God, through the gospel of his Son, they are bound to believe more. But it is still the same kind of faith, a confident trust in God, that he will fully perform all which he has spoken, and will bestow every blessing which he has promised. Having such faith, Abraham thought not of making God his debtor by such works as he could perform; neither will the true Christian. On the contrary, God is regarded as the *giver* of "every good gift and every perfect gift," Jas. i. 17; and obedience is rendered as a manifestation of gratitude for favors already bestowed, and goodness already manifested.

In this argument, the apostle is not to be understood as denying the necessity or depreciating the advantage of good works, or of obedience to the divine law. He asserts both, with much earnestness, in this epistle, and uniformly in all his epistles. See, particularly, ch. vi. But he would have such obedience rendered for a proper purpose, and with a proper motive. As a price to be paid for salvation from sin, it is wholly ineffectual. As a price for salvation from punishment, it is not only useless, but it loses much of its intrinsic value, degenerating as it does into a miserable spirit of traffic, or, what is worse, into a heartless service unwillingly rendered with the hope of escaping a greater evil. In either case, there is wanting that entire trust and confidence in God which is essential to the character of a true disciple. When such confidence exists, no necessity will appear for purchasing what God has promised to bestow freely, nor for attempting to escape a chastisement which he has assured us is administered in a spirit of love, and for a beneficial purpose. Heb. xii. 10. But, though obedience be useless as a service for which a reward is to be claimed of God as a matter of debt, yet, as a manifestation of gratitude to him for his great

without works,

7 *Saying, Blessed are they whose*

goodness, it is clearly the duty of all ; and the performance of it affords constant happiness to the faithful. "Who-so looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed." Jas. i. 25. Indeed, the supposition that the doctrine of justification by grace diminishes our obligations to yield obedience to the divine law, is simply absurd. In what does justification consist? Not in treating men as righteous while they remain in bondage to sin, but in making them righteous ; in renewing within them a right spirit ; in redeeming them from iniquity. So far as this work is accomplished, obedience follows as the necessary result. As they had formerly yielded themselves servants to iniquity, so now will they yield themselves servants to righteousness. Ch. vi. 19. If any man be disinclined to obey God, if he esteem such service burdensome, if he fancy that because God is good he need not practise good works, let him know assuredly that he is not yet justified by faith, or otherwise ; for he is yet in bondage to iniquity, while justification is deliverance from such bondage.

6. *Even as David also describeth the blessedness, &c.* The passage quoted by the apostle in ver. 7, 8, is found in Ps. xxxii. 1, 2. The whole Psalm is an acknowledgment of dependence on God for deliverance from sin, and of gratitude for such deliverance. It had already been declared, ver. 2, 3, that Abraham was not justified by works, or that he did not break the yoke of sin by his own exertions ; but that the deliverance was wrought by divine grace, and enjoyed through the power of faith. The same fact is here declared concerning David, and his own acknowledgment of it is adduced from the Scriptures. As Abraham and David were regarded by the Jews as the two most eminent examples of piety in their whole race, or in the world, the argument had great force on their minds ; for if these two obtained not deliverance by their own works, but received the blessing solely as a gratuitous gift, what hope of deliverance could any

iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered.

other reasonably entertain, except through a similar exercise of grace? ¶ *Imputeth righteousness.* See note on ver. 3.

7. *Blessed are they.* Happy, or highly favored of the Lord. ¶ *Whose iniquities are forgiven.* Not whose iniquities continue, and the punishment is remitted ; but whose iniquities are forgiven. It has so long and so frequently been represented that remission of just punishment is the gift of grace which God extends to his children, that it becomes proper, if not necessary, to recur repeatedly to the true nature and extent of divine forgiveness. Salvation, which is a comprehensive term, expressive of the blessing which God bestows as the fruit of his grace, does not consist in the remission of punishment, and it is not so represented in the Scriptures. On the contrary, it is uniformly asserted that every transgression and disobedience shall receive a just recompense of reward ; that God will render to every man according to his deeds ; that he who doeth wrong shall receive for the wrong which he hath done, and there is no respect of persons. Ch. ii. 6 ; Col. iii. 25 ; Heb. ii. 2. But the salvation described in the gospel consists in deliverance from sin or sinfulness itself ; redemption from iniquity ; in short, in a change from sinfulness to holiness. Anything short of this would be imperfect. See note on Matt. i. 21. Forgiveness of sins is not precisely salvation from sin, though of a kindred nature. Salvation implies forgiveness, and something more. Forgiveness has respect to acts already performed ; but salvation extends to the future also, securing exemption from a repetition of the offence. Forgiveness needs to be frequently repeated, Matt. xviii. 22 ; but salvation is effectual, once for all. The special salvation which men enjoy on earth is not full and entire ; and consequently they are not entirely free from the power of sin ; nevertheless, it is effectual as far as it extends ; and guards against the commission of sin in proportion to its effect on the heart. Ch. vi. 14 ; vii. 11—25. But when the work of God, by his chosen means, shall have been com-

8 Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.

pleted, when his blessed Son shall have fully accomplished the salvation of his people from their sins, sin will be finished, transgression ended, and everlasting righteousness established. Forgiveness always accompanies salvation. So far as men are delivered from bondage to sin, their former transgressions are forgiven. See note on Matt. vi. 12. Thus salvation and forgiveness go hand in hand, and indeed they seem sometimes to be used as convertible terms. See Eph. i. 7; Col. i. 14; where the salvation or redemption of men is described as the "forgiveness of sins."

¶ *Whose sins are covered.* "Are concealed; or hidden from the view. On which God will no more look, and which he will no more remember. 'By these words,' says Calvin, 'we are taught that justification with Paul is nothing else but pardon of sin.' The word *cover* here has not reference to the atonement, but is expressive of hiding, or concealing, that is, of forgiving sin."

— *Barnes.* The covering of sins, in the latter clause of this verse, is equivalent to the forgiving of iniquities in the former. And the true nature of forgiveness is indicated by the latter form of expression. All past transgressions are to be covered, hidden, banished from remembrance, and the individual reinstated in his former position, as if he had never transgressed. There is a sense in which God may be said to forget the transgressions of his children, and in which men should forget the injuries which they have received from their brethren. The Lord declared, by his prophet, that, in the latter times, he would make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and convert them from the error of their ways: "I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more." Jer. xxxi. 31—34. The apostle quotes the prophecy substantially: "I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more." Heb. viii. 8—12. The manner in which God will cease to remember the sins and iniquities of his children is illustrated by the language of another prophet. When the sinner ceases from his wickedness, "all the

9 Cometh this blessedness then upon the circumcision *only*, or

transgressions that he hath committed, they shall not be mentioned unto him." Ezek. xviii. 22. They shall not be alleged as a reproach to him; they shall not be mentioned to his discredit; they shall not be remembered to his disadvantage: but they shall be *covered* or concealed from view; they shall be dismissed from remembrance; they shall be regarded as having never existed as a matter of blame. Thus God commands us to forgive each other, and to banish past transgressions from remembrance. And thus he forgives his children, and ceases to remember their sins and their iniquities. But while they remain sinful, and until they are forgiven, they must suffer the just penalty of those sins which afterwards cease to be remembered. The forgiveness of sins, let it once again be repeated, does not in the slightest degree interfere with the administration of divine justice. See note on Matt. vi. 14, 15.

8. *Will not impute sin.* Will not regard as sinful, having forgiven all past iniquities, and ceased to remember his transgressions. See note on ver. 7.

9. It is observed by *Livermore* that "the Jews had three strongholds, as they thought, for their peculiar national distinction, impregnable against the Gentile claim to the rights and privileges of the gospel, unless they first submitted to the Jewish ritual. These were Scripture, circumcision, and law." The apostle had already shown, by the example of Abraham and David, that the doctrine of salvation by grace, of justifying or making righteous through faith, and not by mere human endeavors for perfect obedience, was in accordance with the testimony of the Scriptures. He now proceeds to the subject of circumcision, which the Jews regarded as an indispensable prerequisite to holiness, and which the Jewish converts regarded as alike essential to participation in the privileges and blessings of the gospel. He now proposes and answers the question, whether the blessings of which he had spoken, or the *blessedness*, as he here calls it, came exclusively upon the circumcision, that is, upon the *circumcised*. This question was import-

upon the uncircumcision also? For we say that faith was reckoned to

Abraham for righteousness.

10 How was it then reckoned?

ant; because, if the blessings were bestowed only upon the circumcised, the Jews might have insisted that they were bestowed on account of circumcision; if the blessings were bestowed only upon them who conformed to the ritual law, it might have been urged that they were bestowed on account of such conformity. As the case of David would not settle the question, the apostle selected that of Abraham, and reminded his Jewish brethren that Abraham was justified by faith, hundreds of years before the ritual law was promulgated, and even before he was circumcised; and that circumcision was a seal or a sign to Abraham of the blessing already bestowed, instead of being the antecedent condition of that blessing. From this fact, which their own Scriptures asserted, two important consequences followed: (1) That justification was truly of grace, not of works, as the apostle had before declared; and (2) that as Abraham was thus justified without being previously circumcised, while he was in the condition of the Gentiles generally, so far as circumcision and conformity to the Jewish law were concerned, in like manner could all Gentiles be justified through faith, without first passing through the gate of Moses. The general result was, that the Gentiles had an equal interest in the gospel with the Jews, and that no valid objection existed to their admission to the Christian church, on account of their lack of circumcision. ¶ *Blessedness.* Happiness, resulting from the justification before mentioned. ¶ *Upon the circumcision only?* Upon the circumcised; or, upon the Jews, who were distinguished from other nations by this badge. Such was the vain fancy of that exclusive people. ¶ *Or upon the uncircumcision also?* Upon the uncircumcised; or, upon the Gentiles, as well as upon the Jews. This was the apostle's doctrine, and the great fact which he desired to impress on the minds and hearts of all his brethren: of the Jews, that they might be more humble, and more conscious of the divine impartiality; and of the Gentiles, for their encouragement and greater assurance of faith. ¶ *For*

we say, &c. We all agree in this; the Scriptures assert the fact, and we all admit the authority of that testimony. ¶ *Faith was reckoned to Abraham for righteousness.* This was the conceded fact. It was fair to conclude that others might be justified in like manner, or under similar circumstances.

10. *How.* In what manner, or under what circumstances. ¶ *When he was in circumcision, &c.* After he was circumcised, or before? This was the important point. On the answer to this question depended the whole controversy between the apostle and the Jews, in regard to the necessity of circumcision as a prerequisite to justification. If Abraham had been justified by faith *after* he was circumcised, the Jews might have insisted that he was thus justified because he had been circumcised; or, at least, that he had previously complied with the indispensable condition of justification. And thus his example would have been divested of all force on their minds. But if he were justified *before* he was circumcised, no pretence of this sort could be urged; but it must be admitted that circumcision was not necessary, as a condition of justification. Such being the fact, the argument of the apostle could not be evaded, that the Gentiles, though uncircumcised, were comprehended in the gracious purpose of God, and that he was ready to justify them through faith, and to save them by his grace, equally with the Jews; he being the God not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles. Ch. iii. 29, 30. As he had justified Abraham while yet uncircumcised, in like manner he could justify others who were uncircumcised. What, then, was the fact? Under what circumstances was Abraham justified? The answer follows. ¶ *Not in circumcision, but in uncircumcision.* He was justified through faith; his faith was reckoned unto him for righteousness *before* he was circumcised, while in a state of uncircumcision. Such was the testimony of Moses, whose authority no Jew ventured to dispute. See Gen. xv. 6; xvii. 9—14, 23—27. "Abraham was not circumcised till he was ninety-nine years old. Gen. xvii. 24. At that

when he was in circumcision, or in uncircumcision? Not in circumcision, but in uncircumcision.

11 And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which *he had*

time Ishmael was thirteen years old. But before Ishmael was born Abraham had his faith counted to him for righteousness. Gen. xv. 6, compared with Gen. xv. 16. It is evident, therefore, that Abraham was justified in uncircumcision, more than thirteen years before he and his family were made the visible church and people of God by circumcision. Heathens, therefore, who believe and obey the true God, as Abraham did, will, like him, have their faith counted to them for righteousness, though no members of any visible church. Praised be God for his mercy to heathens." — *Macknight*.

11. *Sign of circumcision.* Outward circumcision was a sign of that purity of heart which followed the excision of sinful desires and purposes. Thus the apostle testifies that true circumcision is not that "which is outward in the flesh," but "that of the heart in the spirit, and not in the letter." Ch. ii. 28, 29. Of this inward purification the outward rite was a sign. ¶ *A seal of the righteousness.* The apostle is generally understood to allude to the custom, of very ancient date, of authenticating important documents by a seal. "In allusion to this, circumcision is called a seal of the covenant which God had made with Abraham. That is, he appointed this as a public attestation to the fact that he had previously approved of Abraham, and had made important promises to him." — *Barnes*. Thus, when God promised Noah that the earth should not again be destroyed by a flood, he established the rainbow as a seal of his fidelity, and a perpetual memorial of his covenant. Gen. ix. 8—17. Circumcision was therefore not only a sign of inward purity, but a seal of the covenant which God had confirmed unto Abraham by an oath. Gal. iii. 17. By this was Abraham perpetually reminded that the divine promises were immutable. Bearing in his own body the sign of inward purity, and the seal of the covenant which pledged

yet being uncircumcised: that he might be the father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised; that righteousness might be imputed unto them also:

12 And the father of circum-

the final and perpetual purity of the race, he was constantly admonished that his faith was well founded, for He is faithful who hath promised. ¶ *Being uncircumcised.* The covenant of which circumcision was the seal, and the righteousness of which it was the sign, preceded the performance of the rite. Circumcision was only the sign and seal of blessings bestowed on Abraham while he was yet uncircumcised. It could not, therefore, have been the cause or the condition of their bestowment. ¶ *That he might be the father.* The pattern or example. Pupils were often styled children or sons of the masters. Paul addresses Timothy as "my own son in the faith." 1 Tim. i. 2. In like manner, the tutor or master is called father by the pupil; thus, when Elijah was taken up, Elisha exclaimed, "My father, my father! the chariot of Israel and the horsemen thereof." 2 Kings ii. 12. Jabel was called "the father of such as dwell in tents," and Jubal, "the father of all such as handle the harp and organ," in the same sense that Tubal-cain was styled "an instructor of every artificer in brass and iron." Gen. iv. 29—22. So here Abraham is called "the father of them that believe, though they be not circumcised," because he was an eminent example of unswerving faith in God, before he was circumcised. "This circumstance alone is fatal to the claims of the bigoted Jew, in respect to circumcision. But the apostle is not satisfied with repelling the enemy. He advances into his camp, and takes entire possession of it. Abraham was not only justified before he was circumcised; but this was done for the very purpose of confirming the truth which I am proclaiming. He was justified before the covenant of circumcision, in order that he might be the father of all those that believe in a state of uncircumcision, so that righteousness might be imputed to them. That is, God, in justifying Abraham before he was cir-

cision to them who are not of the circumcision only, but who also walk in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham, which *he had*

being *yet* uncircumcised.

13 For the promise that he should be the heir of the world *was* not to Abraham, or to his seed,

circumcised, did intend to make him a father, that is, an eminent pattern or example to Gentile as well as Jewish believers, and to show that righteousness might be imputed to the uncircumcised as well as to the circumcised." — *Stuart*.

12. *And the father of circumcision, &c.* Or, of those who are circumcised, that is, of the Jews, under the conditions and restrictions which follow. The idea is, that Abraham was constituted the father, or the great model or example of all believers, whether uncircumcised or circumcised. Certain privileges are conceded by the apostle to belong to the Jews, by virtue of their descent from Abraham; but he does not appear to allude to such privileges in this place.

¶ *Not of the circumcision only.* Not merely of the circumcision; not those who have imitated Abraham in this single respect. In order to become children of Abraham, in the sense here indicated, something more than outward circumcision was necessary. See ch. ii. 28, 29; ix. 6, 7; Gal. iii. 7—9. ¶ *But who also walk in the steps, &c.* Who copy the example of Abraham, by exercising faith in the divine promises, and trusting unreservedly in God. Thus doing, they might rightfully claim Abraham as their father, and not otherwise. Mere lineal descent availed nothing, neither conformity to the rite of circumcision. Unless they embraced the covenant, of which circumcision was the seal, they could claim no spiritual affinity with the father of the faithful.

¶ *Bring yet uncircumcised.* The apostle reiterates this fact, not without reason. His Jewish brethren were under the dominion of such an inveterate prejudice, that it was necessary to give them line upon line, and precept upon precept, in order to convince them that the Gentiles had a common interest with themselves in the grace of God. Accordingly, the fact is here repeated, that Abraham, the father both of the believing Gentiles and of the believing Jews, believed God and received the blessing before he was circumcised; while, in this respect, he was precisely

in the condition of the Gentile nations.

13. *For the promise.* The promise, namely, in which Abraham exercised faith; the promise, which, in human view, was altogether improbable, yet at which Abraham staggered not, "being fully persuaded that what he had promised he was able also to perform." Ver. 19—21. Abraham was stricken in years, and "childless." Gen. xv. 2. Yet God promised him a numerous posterity; and he believed him who promised. ¶ *Heir of the world.* From what follows we must understand this promise, not so much concerning Abraham personally, as concerning his seed. The promise was made to him "or to his seed." In a natural sense, his posterity became very numerous, and obtained possession of the promised land. But they never inherited the whole world; nor is there any reason to believe that they ever will obtain universal dominion. From the text, and from ver. 17, it is manifest that the apostle's mind was fixed on the promise of a numerous posterity; yet it is equally manifest, from Gal. iii. 6—18, where the same train of thought is pursued, that he understood this promise in a spiritual sense. Or, if he understood the promise, Gen. xv. 5, literally, in respect to natural posterity, and referred to that specially, because it was made before Abraham was circumcised (see note on verse 3), yet it is certain that he understood it in a spiritual and higher sense the promise recorded in Gen. xxii. 17, 18, which comprehends the former with an addition, and to which specific reference is made in Gal. iii. 6—18. It is probable, indeed, that he regarded the former promise as substantially giving assurance of spiritual blessings to the human race, so much being implied in the heirship of the world. "In regard to that *seed* of Abraham, to whom the promise was specially made, who can this be but the Messiah? Who else of Abraham's seed was to be possessor of all the earth, particularly in a spiritual sense? That Paul himself had such a view of this

through the law, but through the righteousness of faith.

14 For if they which are of the

subject is made quite certain by Gal. iii. 16. It is true, indeed, that in respect to the promises of a *temporal* nature made to Abraham, his literal descendants were the partakers and heirs of them. See Gen. xvii. 8. So, also, were they, that is, some of them, heirs of spiritual promises. But the specific promise, to which the apostle alludes in our text, seems to have been made to Christ; at least, seems to have been fulfilled only by him. Gal. iii. 16.—*Stuart.* ¶ *Through the law.* This promise was not given to Abraham in consequence of his former observance of the law, nor on condition that he should afterwards obey the law; for the law of circumcision had not yet been given; and the Mosaic law, which seems, from what follows, to be comprehended in the apostle's reference, was not promulgated for more than four hundred years afterwards, when Abraham had long slept with his fathers. The meaning extends yet further. The blessing promised was to be bestowed by the grace of God, through the medium of faith in men. Abraham believed God, was accepted, and enjoyed a foretaste of heaven, through faith. His spiritual posterity, those who cherish a *living* faith, also enjoy a special salvation on earth. 1 Tim. iv. 10. The full enjoyment of the blessing is reserved for the immortal state. Yet neither to him nor to them was the promise made through the law, or in consequence of past or prospective entire obedience to the law, but through a spirit of firm faith in the accomplishment of the divine plan of grace. ¶ *Through the righteousness of faith.* Through the righteousness communicated by the medium of faith which confides in God as unchangeably true and faithful, whose word returneth not void, but whose promises are sure of fulfillment. Isa. lv. 11.

14. *For if they which are of the law be heirs.* That is, if such only be the heirs; if the promise have respect only to those who hear and obey the divine law; if the blessing be made dependent on a perfect observance of the law; if it be the reward of works.

law *be* heirs, faith is made void, and the promise made of none effect.

15 Because the law worketh

¶ *Faith is made void.* If the blessings promised to Abraham and to his seed depend on law, or on the perfect obedience of men, it would be useless to trust in the promise; because the promise predicated the blessings of divine grace, communicated through faith. Faith in that which is not true is void. If it be not true that God is the "Saviour of all men" by grace, then faith in the promise made to Abraham is void, because such was its import. ¶ *And the promise made of none effect.* God promised to bestow blessings gratuitously, not as the reward of works, but as the fruit of his own grace. But if those blessings can only be attained by a perfect obedience of law, then is the promise without effect, because the blessings are not to be bestowed according to the nature of the promise; and, moreover, because they cannot be bestowed at all, inasmuch as none yield perfect obedience, the supposed condition of their bestowment. The Jews, therefore, by insisting that conformity to the law was an indispensable condition of inheriting the blessings promised to Abraham, were doubly excluded from all present enjoyment of them; and, according to their own theory, the promise was of none effect, and faith in it was useless.

15. *Because, &c.* The apostle here assigns an additional reason for his assertion in ver. 13. Not only was the nature of the promise, being wholly gratuitous, inconsistent with the doctrine that heirship was to be attained only through a perfect obedience to law, but the law, in fact, interposed an obstacle to such heirship, and of itself would tend rather to exclude all from enjoyment of the promised blessing, instead of assisting in its attainment. ¶ *The law worketh wrath.* Doubtless, "the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good." Chap. vii. 12. Nevertheless, as the law requires certain actions and forbids others on penalty of death, and as none do or can in this mortal estate yield perfect obedience, "the commandment which was ordained to life" proves "to be unto death." Chap.

wrath: for where no law is, there is no transgression.

16 Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed, not to that only which

vii. 10. "By the law is the knowledge of sin." Chap. iii. 20. And as "all have sinned and come short of the glory of God," chap. iii. 23, so all have endured the penalty of sin, here styled *wrath*. The effect, thus far, of the law, has been to convince men of sin, and subject them to its penalty, instead of making them partakers of the promised blessing. ¶ *For where no law is, there is no transgression.* If there were no command to be obeyed, and no prohibition binding upon us, our actions could not be denominated sinful; for "sin is the transgression of the law." 1 John iii. 4. The law, therefore, became the occasion of transgression, in so far that transgression could not exist without it. "Admitting the truth of the apostle's representation, it follows that those who have no knowledge of law, that is, no moral sense of any moral precept, cannot be transgressors. This is plainly and palpably the doctrine which he teaches; a doctrine which is sanctioned by the fundamental principles of our moral nature, and essential to the idea of right and wrong." — *Stuart*. Hence the law, instead of making men partakers of the blessing promised to Abraham and to his seed, only makes them conscious of their unworthiness of it. And this fact is urged as a reason why the promise was not made to depend on law, but on the grace of God, apprehended by men through faith. So Abraham regarded it, exercised faith in it, and received immediate advantage, inasmuch as his faith was counted unto him for righteousness. His faith was firm and steadfast, not because he regarded himself able to perform certain conditions, but because he was persuaded that He who had promised was able also to perform. Verse 21. Hence, if the Jews would be heirs of the promise, they are admonished by the apostle no longer to look for it through the law, or as a reward of their obedience to the law, but to embrace it by faith. Thus, and thus only, could they become characteristically children of faithful Abraham.

16. Therefore. Such is the conclusion from the facts before alleged.

¶ *It is of faith.* The promise becomes effectual through the medium of faith; or, adopting the phraseology which prevails in this chapter, justification is communicated through the influence of faith, for the reason immediately assigned. ¶ *That it might be of grace.* Wholly gratuitous. "A righteousness of the law being unattainable by men, the inheritance is by a righteousness of faith, and not of the law, that, being a free gift, it might be bestowed in the manner and on the persons God saw fit; namely, on believers of all nations, whether the objects of their faith be more or less extensive, and whether their good works be more or fewer. For in the faith and works of believers there must be great differences, according to the mental endowments and outward advantages bestowed on each. In this passage, by the most just reasoning, the apostle hath overthrown the narrow notion of bigots who confine the mercy of God within the pale of this or that church; and by a noble liberality of sentiment he hath declared that all who imitate that faith and piety which Abraham exercised while uncircumcised shall, like him, obtain the inheritance, through the free favor of God by Jesus Christ." — *Macknight*. Such being the principle on which special salvation is bestowed on men in this life, through the medium of faith, much more that free and perfect salvation from sin which is reserved for the children of the resurrection. When all shall know the true God, and bow the knee in the name of Jesus, confessing him to be Lord, to the glory of God the Father, Phil. ii. 11, then will they also know and acknowledge that "not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost." Tit. iii. 5. ¶ *To the end.* For the purpose. With this design. ¶ *The promise might be sure to all the seed.* "On any other ground than that of grace or gratuity, the promise could not be sure either to Abraham or to his seed; for if it were to be fulfilled only on condition of entire obedience to the law, then would it

is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all,

17 (As it is written, I have made thee a father of many na-

never have any fulfilment, inasmuch as no mere man ever did or will exhibit perfect obedience."—*Stuart*. "Instead of shaking, as he might seem to do, the structure of Judaism, by this train of argument, he put it upon a firmer foundation. He removed it from the uncertain ground of obedience, capricious and varying in each individual example, and established it upon the broad and eternal basis of the free grace and mercy of God."—*Livermore*. I am not certain that I fully comprehend what is here intended by *Judaism*; but, from what follows, I suppose it must indicate the faith of the Jews in the promise to Abraham. Whether or not this be the precise meaning, the fact is acknowledged that the promise of God rested for its fulfilment, not on the weak endeavors of men, but on his own eternal purpose and grace. On no other ground could it be sure to a single soul. No man lives or hath lived, save him who was at once man and more than man, that hath yielded perfect obedience to the divine law; and hence none could claim the blessing on the score of merit. But the grace of God aboundeth over all sin, ch. v. 20; and as his purpose changeth not, we may confidently "hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; for he is faithful that promised." Heb. x. 23. Moreover, as he is greater than all, as none can stay his hand or effectually resist his will, whatever obstacles may seem to interpose, however difficult the accomplishment of the promise may appear, we need not stagger at the promise of God through unbelief, but may cherish an unwavering belief that what he has promised he is able also to perform. Ver. 20, 21. ¶ *Which is of the law.* The Jews. ¶ *Which is of the faith, &c.* The believing Gentiles. The promise is sure not only to the natural seed of Abraham, but to his spiritual seed. And when all shall come to a knowledge of the truth, all will enter upon the actual enjoyment of the blessing. 1 Tim. ii. 4. It is equally sure to all, resting as it does, for fulfilment, not on the fee-

ble efforts of men, but on the boundless grace of God. ¶ *Who is the father of us all.* The great model or example of all believers, whether Jews or Gentiles. See note on ver. 12.

18 Who against hope believed

ble efforts of men, but on the boundless grace of God. ¶ *Who is the father of us all.* The great model or example of all believers, whether Jews or Gentiles. See note on ver. 12.

17. *As it is written, &c.* See Gen. xvii. 5. Abraham was constituted the spiritual father, so to speak, of many nations; that is, of believers throughout all the world. All who place implicit trust in the divine promises are the children of Abraham, inasmuch as they copy his illustrious example. "The quotation is taken literally from the Septuagint. The argument of the apostle is founded in part on the fact that the *past* tense is used, — *I have made thee*, — and that God spoke of a thing as already *done*, which he had promised or purposed to do. The sense is, he had, in his mind or purpose, constituted him the father of many nations; and so certain was the fulfilment of the divine purposes, that he spoke of it as already accomplished."—*Barnes*. ¶ *Before him, &c.* That is, in the sight of God; according to his purpose, Abraham is said to have been already made the father of many nations, although as yet he had no posterity, because God had purposed the event. He was already such a father in the sight of God, because the event was certain according to his purpose. The ancient Scriptures illustrate this manner of speech. "I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me; declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, my counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure." Isa. xli. 9, 10. As his purpose is unchangeable and sure of accomplishment, God speaks of things not yet done as if they actually existed; and it is probably in this sense that he "calleth those things which be not, as though they were." ¶ *Who quickeneth the dead.* To quicken the dead, or to restore life when it has become extinct, involves an exercise of divine power. That power alone which gives life can restore it. If it be exercised by agents specially

in hope, that he might become the father of many nations; according to that which was spoken, So shall thy seed be.

19 And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about a hundred

appointed, it is still the power of God. See John v. 21, 30; xi. 40—44. The phrase, to quicken the dead, literally implies the restoration of life to the physically dead, or the proper resurrection of the dead. It also figuratively denotes the change wrought in men when they are turned from darkness to light, from sinfulness to holiness. Eph. ii. 1; Col. ii. 13. In this place, however, it is used in a still different sense, with reference to the physical condition of Abraham and Sarah, ver. 19, which appeared to interpose an effectual obstruction to the fulfilment of the promise. This apparent obstruction could be removed by him who was able to restore life to the dead; and its removal was indeed figuratively a restoration of life.

18. *Who against hope believed in hope.* The bodily condition of Abraham and Sarah was such as to exclude all reasonable hope of posterity. Nevertheless, Abraham believed the promise; he believed in the power and faithfulness of God, and, against all human probabilities, indulged a confident hope that the promise would be literally and fully performed. It is easy to believe that blessings shall be enjoyed which are according to the common course of nature, and which might indeed be expected without any express promise. But much stronger faith is required to credit a promise of blessings which the ordinary course of nature would seem to render impossible. Herein consisted the excellency of Abraham's faith. He regarded not the circumstances which appeared to interfere with the blessing, ver. 19; but, looking only at the ability and faithfulness of Him who promised, he believed with all his heart, and became the father of believers, ver. 20, 21. ¶ *So shall thy seed be.* That is, as the stars of heaven. Gen. xv. 5. The promise of a numerous posterity is specially referred to, which Abraham believed notwithstanding all human

years old, neither yet the deadness of Sara's womb.

20 He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God;

21 And being fully persuaded,

probabilities were against its fulfilment.

19. *And being not weak in faith.* Being strong in faith. Having perfect confidence in the veracity and faithfulness of God. ¶ *He considered not, &c.* He was not unconscionable that he was about a hundred years old, and that his wife Sarah was ninety. Gen. xvii. 17. He was not unconscionable that the vital forces of both were benumbed, and in a very important sense dead. See Heb. xi. 11, 12. But *he considered not* these physical disabilities as an effectual hindrance to the accomplishment of God's purpose and promise. John the Baptist declared that God was "able to raise up children unto Abraham" from the very stones of the desert. Matt. iii. 9. This declaration, whether literally or figuratively understood, certainly implies the ability of God to provide children for Abraham in a manner above the ordinary course of nature. A like confidence in divine power was cherished by Abraham. It was enough for him that God had promised. He regarded no obstacles which seemed to render the fulfilment of the promise improbable.

20. *He staggered not at the promise.* He manifested no surprise or astonishment. He had no misgivings, or doubts. He did not hesitate, through unbelief. ¶ *Giving glory to God.* He acknowledged the veracity and faithfulness of God, by trusting implicitly in his promise. Men are said to glorify God, or to give glory to him, when their language and conduct manifest regard for his authority, confidence in his goodness, trust in his promises, and a general disposition to acknowledge him as the Ruler, Benefactor, Father, and Saviour, of the race.

21. *Being fully persuaded.* Substantially a repetition of being strong in faith, ver. 20. He had no troublesome doubts. Appearances, to be sure, were altogether unpromising, ver. 19; and,

that what he had promised, he was able also to perform.

22 And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness.

23 Now, it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him ;

according to the ordinary course of nature, the fulfilment of the promise was improbable and hopeless. Yet Abraham was strong in faith, and fully persuaded in his own mind that the promise would not fail of fulfilment. The reason of this full assurance of faith is given in the following words. ¶ *What he had promised, he was able also to perform.* Had the promise depended solely on human agency for fulfilment, Abraham might well have "staggered" through unbelief. No man is required to believe what is incredible. But, considering that divine power was pledged to sustain the divine veracity, that God was able to fulfil what he had promised, Abraham believed with his whole heart. Men often stagger at the divine promises, vainly imagining that their fulfilment depends on the endeavors of weak and sinful men, who are confessedly unable to accomplish the work. If they would duly consider that what is impossible with men is possible with God, they might believe, with Abraham, that what God hath promised he is able to fulfil, and assuredly will fulfil. Matt. xix. 26.

22. *And therefore.* Because he thus implicitly trusted in the divine promise. He manifested full confidence in God, and gave evidence of unwavering faith in his veracity and faithfulness. He was, therefore, accounted a friend of God, one who was willing to believe and obey.

23. *It was not written for his sake alone, &c.* The faith of Abraham and its blessed effects became a memorial to all ages, not merely for the purpose of perpetuating his fame, not merely that he might be honored by men as he was approved by God, but for a higher purpose, which is mentioned in the next verse. The example is recorded for the benefit of succeeding generations, even as other examples of an opposite character were recorded for a like purpose. See 1 Cor. x. 6, 11.

24 But for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead,

25 Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification.

24. *But for us also.* To show us, namely, the importance and happy results of faith in the divine testimony and promises. And the lesson is equally important now, and will remain so to the latest generations. "He applies this illustrious and venerated example of the father of the nation to the case in point. If they would be children of Abraham, as they boasted of being, they must vindicate their right to that title by showing the same spirit, in their altered circumstances, which the patriarch exhibited in his day. For, to follow an example is not to follow its letter, but its spirit ; not to do precisely the acts which the exemplar did, but to act as he would do if he were placed in our circumstances. Honorable mention was made of the faith of Abraham, not to glorify his name alone, but to kindle a like flame of holy love and trust in the bosom of every child of God, Jew or Gentile, and especially to direct it to that new and glorious object of faith presented in Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom was set the seal of truth that he was raised from the dead."—*Livernore.* "Abraham showed his faith in God by believing just what God revealed to him. This was his faith, and it might be as strong and implicit as could be exercised under the fullest revelation. Faith now is belief in God, just so far as he has revealed his will to us. It is, therefore, the same in principle, though it may have reference to different objects. It is confidence in the same God, according to what we know of his will."—*Barnes.*

25. *Who was delivered.* Delivered up unto death. See note on Acts ii. 23. *For our offences.* Or, on account of our offences. The sinfulness of men was the occasion of our Lord's sufferings and death. He "came into the world to save sinners," 1 Tim. i. 15 ; to call sinners to repentance, Mat. ix. 13. Had no sinfulness existed, there would have been no need of his mission. Being

CHAPTER V.

THEREFORE being justified by

sinner, men had need of relief, which Jesus came to impart. His labors, and sufferings, and death, were the consequence of his mission. Yet it by no means follows that his death was expiatory, or that it was designed to purchase the favor of God. On the contrary, it was a manifestation of love previously existing. "God commendeth his love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." Ch. v. 8. Our Lord compared his labors with those of a physician healing the sick: "They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick." Matt. ix. 12. The faithful physician endures labor, and oftentimes hardship, in his efforts to restore the sick to health. Sometimes, even life is sacrificed in this benevolent enterprise. But no one ever dreamed that the physician, suffering thus on account of our sicknesses, was thereby purchasing the favor of a higher power, or that he was enduring the pain proper to the disease which he was striving to conquer and destroy. In like manner we need not imagine that Jesus endured the punishment proper to our sins, or that he purchased the favor of God for us by his sufferings, notwithstanding he labored, and suffered, and died, on account of our sinfulness, and for the purpose of removing it. ¶ *And was raised again.* That is, from the dead; by which he was demonstrated to be the Son of God. Ch. i. 4. ¶ *For our justification.* The resurrection of Jesus was the seal by which God authenticated the divinity of his mission. It is the proper foundation of that faith, by which men are said to be justified, ch. v. 1. Faith in the resurrection of Jesus implies faith that God will bestow through him all the blessings which he promised. Such faith is accompanied by that special salvation which embraces present justification. Hence the apostle declares, "that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." Ch. x. 9. Our Lord was raised from the dead, that his living spirit, through the medium of faith in him,

faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ:

2 By whom also we have access

might purify the human soul, and justify it, or make it just and holy. Thus Peter testifies, when speaking of the same promise to Abraham, which is the theme of this chapter: "Unto you first, God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities." Acts iii. 26. And, although this work of purification be not completed while men dwell in the flesh, we have reason to bless God that it is commenced in believers, as the apostle shows in the following chapter; and still more reason to glorify his holy name for the assurance that it shall be completed in due time, through the ministry of him who died and was raised again; "for he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death. — And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all." 1 Cor. xv. 25, 26, 28.

CHAPTER V.

In the previous chapters the apostle has established certain facts of the utmost importance: (1.) That all men, Jews as well as Gentiles, are sinful; that of those who were capable of sin, "all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." (2.) That no man is able to deliver himself from bondage to sin, or to yield perfect obedience to the divine law. (3.) That God has revealed a purpose of bestowing righteousness on his children as a free gift, not in consequence of their feeble and imperfect exertions, but of his spontaneous affection and grace. (4.) That this blessing is communicated through the medium of faith in him and in his promises. (5.) That, in this manner, he had granted to Abraham and others a foretaste of the promised blessing; and that a like enjoyment of present blessedness would accompany faith under the gospel dispensation. He has thus announced doctrines of the highest interest to all men; and, at the same time, accomplished the special

purpose of teaching the Jewish converts to Christianity, that their Gentile brethren were equally dear with themselves in the sight of God, and equally the heirs of gratuitous blessings; that they had no need to conform to the Mosaic law, inasmuch as salvation was not of works, but of grace; and that as all were in equal need of the blessing, and equally unable to procure it by their own merits, they might all indulge an equal hope of receiving it as a free gift from Him, who was equally the father of Jews and of Gentiles, and who was no respecter of persons. He proceeds in this chapter to describe more fully the nature of the blessing which God has promised to bestow, and the present effect of faith in his promises.

1. *Justified by faith.* Or, through faith. Justification is properly the fruit of divine grace, chap. iii. 24; but, as men become conscious of the gift, and partakers of it, through faith, it is sometimes spoken of as the result of faith. Indeed, faith in God's veracity, an unwavering belief in his promises, may be regarded as one of the steps by which men are conducted from sin to holiness, are justified, or made just. Yet it must be remembered that the blessing itself, the object of faith, is not dependent on the faith of men, but on the promise of God. If men believe, they enjoy a foretaste of the blessing. If they remain in unbelief, they fail of present enjoyment; yet the faithfulness of God is not destroyed. Chap. iii. 3. In due time the veil of unbelief shall be removed. The promise of God stands sure. ¶ *We have peace with God.* We, Gentiles as well as Jews, who have a firm faith in the divine promises, enjoy peace. See note on John xiv. 27. "We bow to the will of God, we accept his dealings with us submissively, because we are assured that his laws and his dispensations, be they joyous or be they grievous, are well meant, and full of hidden blessings and love." — *Livermore.* We feel perfectly safe and secure in the hands of God, because we believe him to be the Father of our spirits, and our unfailling friend. We feel assured that no permanent evil can befall us, since he protects us and loves us. Chap. viii. 31—39. In another important sense we have peace with

God through faith. While we are estranged from him, and regard him merely as a governor and judge, we do not submit patiently to some of his dispensations, and are rebellious against his authority. But when, by faith in his promises, we become persuaded that all his dealings with us are designed for our good, that his whole government is pervaded by a spirit of love, all opposition to him is overcome, and we are disposed to meet with thankfulness or cheerful submission all the allotments of his providence, whether attended by present pleasure or pain. To this aspect of the case the apostle seems to refer in verses 10, 11. ¶ *Through our Lord Jesus Christ.* The gospel, in which is disclosed the method by which God will secure the holiness and happiness of mankind, was revealed through his beloved Son Jesus Christ. In the accomplishment of the work assigned to him, our Lord manifested the most fervent and unchanging affection for men; for their benefit he taught, and labored, and suffered, and died, even while they were ungodly. Ver. 6. It is natural and proper, therefore, that while we acknowledge God as the giver of spiritual blessings, we should honor and love his Son as the medium through whom they are communicated; and that while we enjoy that peace which accompanies faith in the gospel, we should not forget him who is "the author and finisher of our faith," Heb. xii. 2, but should gratefully acknowledge him as the almoner of the divine bounty.

2. *By whom also.* By whose ministry, in proclaiming the gospel, and making known the purposes and promises of God, which are the object of faith. ¶ *We have access.* "A term taken from the custom of the East, where there is an officer whose particular duty it is to introduce persons to the king in his seclusion and state. Jesus introduces us to the presence of the most high Sovereign." — *Livermore.* Whatever the special allusion may be, the general idea is manifest, namely, that the disciples obtained admission to the privileges of the gospel as the consequence or by means of what Christ had done. He taught the way. They believed him, and followed the path which he pointed out, and which had conducted them to their present posi-

by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

tion. ¶ *By faith.* That is, in the instructions of our Lord, or in the gospel which he proclaimed. ¶ *Into this grace.* The meaning may be the state or condition of believers, their peace and confidence through faith in the gospel. The word grace is used in a similar sense, Eph. iii. 8. But the more common opinion is that the apostle refers to the great blessing revealed in the gospel, which, being secured by grace, is certain to be bestowed in due time; or, as others say, that it is the gracious covenant of God which secures the final accomplishment of his declared purpose. ¶ *Wherein we stand.* "The original word signifies to stand firmly. As the apostle often compares the conflicts which the first Christians maintained against false teachers and persecutors to the Grecian combats, it is probable that by their standing firm he meant that the Gentile converts, as stout wrestlers, successfully maintained their faith in the gospel, in opposition both to the Jews and heathens, notwithstanding the evils which the profession of their faith had brought on them."—*Mac-knight.* Perhaps, however, by standing firmly, the apostle meant no more than that their faith was strong, like that of Abraham, mentioned in the previous chapter; as much as this certainly seems to be intended. They believed that he who had promised was able also to perform; hence their faith was firm and unshaken. ¶ *And rejoice.* The same word is rendered *glory*, in ver. 3, *joy*, in ver. 11; and a similar word is rendered *boasting*, in chap. iii. 27. Not merely calm and quiet happiness, but a spirit of exultation, rapture, or triumph, seems to be indicated. A deliverance from darkness into light, from heathenism to the hopes inspired by the gospel, might well fill them with rapturous delight. ¶ *In hope.* Hope is a combination of desire and expectation. A man may desire what he does not expect to obtain, or he may expect what he does not desire; in neither case does he properly hope. But, if he both desire and expect a blessing, then does he hope for it. Nothing short of this can constitute hope. There are many who

3 And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also; knowing that tribulation worketh patience;

expect the endless misery of a large portion of mankind; but they do not desire it, and very properly disclaim cherishing a hope for it. There are many who earnestly desire the final destruction of evil, and the entire purification of the human race; but, not being able to perceive sufficient ground to expect it, they remain destitute of hope in regard to many of their brethren. It would be a glorious doctrine, they say, if it were true; but it is too good to be true; it is more than we can hope for. As if anything within the compass of the human imagination were too good to flow from the Infinite Source of all goodness! On the contrary, imagination cannot grasp the blessing in its full extent. Chap. xi. 33; 1 Cor. ii. 9; 1 John iii. 2. Enough, however, is revealed to fill the heart with exultation, with triumphant joy, if we so lay hold on the promise by faith as to attain a confident hope of the blessing. See chap. xv. 13. Such hope is mentioned in the text. Happy are we if we are partakers of it. ¶ *Of the glory of God.* Of the glory which God will manifest to the world in the fulfilment of his promises, in the destruction of evil, in the purification of his children from all iniquity.

3. *Not only so.* Not only do we rejoice, under the influence of that hope which fills the soul with peace, but also in the midst of afflictions, as expressed in what follows. ¶ *But we glory in tribulations also.* We exult, we are triumphantly happy, even in tribulation. The same word occurs here which is rendered *rejoice* in ver. 2. It is generally supposed that the apostle refers to the tribulations, or trials and persecutions, which befell the early Christians, on account of their profession of faith. The unbelieving Jews persecuted all Christians indiscriminately; and the unbelieving Gentiles, by their instigation, joined in the persecution, though with less violence and malignity. The Jewish converts also manifested a spirit of persecution towards their Gentile brethren, by refusing to acknowledge their equal right to the blessings of the king-

4 And patience, experience ; and experience, hope ;

dom, unless they would be circumcised and become proselytes. To this two-fold persecution endured by the Gentile converts the apostle is generally supposed to refer, as he was speaking particularly of this branch of the Christian church. Whether or not his language had special reference to the tribulation occasioned by persecution, I apprehend it is equally true in regard to all the trials and afflictions which a merciful God requires us to endure. We cannot suppose that the ordinary trials which befall us are less mercifully designed than the chastisements which are administered on account of our sins. But these, we are assured, are designed for our spiritual improvement. Heb. xii. 9—11. Surely, then, we may believe that the trials of life are equally profitable, which come not as the consequence of our own sins, but rather according to the ordinary course of events, or as the result of enmity on the part of unbelievers. See Matt. v. 12. ¶ *Knowing.* Being fully assured. The apostle was well qualified to speak on this subject. Not only was his mind enlightened from above, in regard to spiritual things, but he had personal knowledge, by experience, of the influence of tribulation on the human heart. From the commencement of his apostleship, he had encountered opposition from adversaries. Some of his tribulations are enumerated in 2 Cor. xi. 23—27. He might well say he *knew* the effect of such afflictions. ¶ *Worketh patience.* Yields or produces patience. Patience is the result or fruit of tribulation. "This effect affliction produceth, by affording to the afflicted an opportunity of exercising patience, and by suggesting considerations which naturally lead the mind to that virtue." — *Macknight.* It is obvious that patience under affliction implies more than a mere submission to what cannot be avoided. It is a cheerful, hopeful state of mind. But this cannot exist unless there be also a belief that the affliction is designed for a beneficial purpose. No man could patiently endure afflictions, if he believed that they were designed for evil, and would result in nothing but evil. It is only because the afflicted believe that their heavenly Father will overrule their sufferings for good,

that they possess their souls in patience. This very obvious truth is confirmed by the apostle in what follows, and abundantly declared elsewhere.

4. *And patience, experience.* "Patient endurance of trial produces experience. The word rendered experience means *trial, testing*, or that thorough examination by which we ascertain the quality or nature of a thing, as when we test a metal by fire, or in any other way, to ascertain that it is genuine. It also means *approbation*, or the *result* of such a trial, the being approved and accepted, as the effect of a trying process. The meaning is, that long afflictions, borne patiently, show a Christian what he is ; they test his religion, and prove that it is genuine. Afflictions are often sent for this purpose, and patience in the midst of them shows that the religion which can sustain them is from God." — *Barnes.* Men often imagine that they love God and trust confidently in him, while health and prosperity attend them. But when adversity comes, their confidence fails, their love is chilled, they murmur and become despondent, and sometimes abandon themselves to despair. The language in Job i. 9—11, though represented as uttered by the adversary, illustrates this truth. For, although the allegation against Job was not true, yet its truth has often been verified in the case of men who "concerning faith have made shipwreck." 1 Tim. i. 19. By the manner, therefore, in which men bear tribulation, whether patiently or complainingly, whether cheerfully or despondingly, whether submissively or rebelliously, they may ascertain the true character of their faith, and their own spiritual condition. If their faith bear this test, they may safely believe it is well founded. If their hearts cleave the more closely to God in the midst of trial, they have reason to hope that their affliction is kindled by a divine fire. ¶ *And experience, hope.* The result of such trial, supposing the test to be properly borne, is to make hope more abundant and steadfast. Hope, like other affections, has its degrees. It may be like the tender herb, wavering, and readily yielding to the slightest pressure. And it may be like the giant oak,

5 And hope maketh not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts, by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.

which, having encountered the storms of a century, is only the more firmly rooted thereby. Of this kind is the hope resulting from such faith as is described in ch. viii. 35—39. And such hope is the natural result of a patient endurance of trial. The heart, which maintains its integrity under the pressure of affliction, which trusts in God while enduring the trials which he has appointed, and which ceases not to expect a happy issue, even in the darkest hour, may well abound in hope that the God who has preserved and blessed will preserve and bless, even unto the end.

5. *And hope maketh not ashamed.* Doth not deceive ; shall not disappoint. When we hope for an object which we fail to obtain, we are disappointed, and often account ourselves foolish for having cherished such vain hopes. But the apostle assures us that the Christian hope shall not be disappointed. It is well founded, because it rests on the purpose of the unchangeable God. His love prompted his purpose, and that love has been so distinctly manifested that there is no reasonable ground to doubt concerning his purpose. To this manifestation of love the apostle immediately refers, in proof of his declaration that a hope thus founded shall not be the occasion of disappointment. ¶ *Because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts.* This manifestation of love is full proof of God's gracious purpose to bestow the blessing which is the object of the Christian's hope. The idea is fully developed in the remainder of this chapter. By *love of God*, some commentators understand the love of men to God, which doubtless exists in the Christian heart, and is quickened by the divine spirit. But others, with better reason, in my judgment, understand the apostle to mean God's love to men. See ver. 8. Indeed, the whole passage which follows is designed to illustrate the great love wherewith God loves men, even sinners. "The love of God, in this place, is not our love to God, but God's love to us."—*Rosenmuller*. "We have the most solid and convincing testimony of God's love to us, by that measure of it which he has

communicated to our hearts."—*Clarke*. "Which hope, being thus grounded, will be sure never to fail us ; it is impossible that we should ever be ashamed, or repent of having thus hoped and adhered to Christ. An evidence of which we have in God's having so plentifully expressed his love to us, in testifying the truth of what we believe by sending his holy spirit to that purpose, which assures us that we can never miscarry in depending on him for the performance of his promises, that being the great fundamental one, promised before his death, on which all the others depend."—*Hammond*. ¶ *By the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.* "Holy Ghost, in our version, begins with capitals, to indicate that it is a person ; but no such idea is, we believe, intended by the original. The Holy Spirit is the spirit of God, which had in love imparted spiritual graces and gifts to the Christian apostles and believers. Such are the glorious links of the chain which draw up the soul heavenward,—trial, patience, proof, hope, possession,—but they are all melted and welded in the love of God to us, and are made pure by his spirit."—*Livermore*. See notes on Matt. iii. 11 ; John xiv. 16, 17. *Rosenmuller* understands the Holy Ghost here to mean simply the gospel, or the doctrine of Christ, which, as he says, teaches us that we are beloved of God, and that adversity cannot permanently harm us. Others suppose the apostle refers to the miraculous powers bestowed on the early disciples. Thus *Whitby* says, of the word rendered *shed abroad*, "This is the word still used in the New Testament, when speaking of the effusion of the Holy Ghost, Acts ii. 17 ; x. 45 ; Titus iii. 6 ; and it is taken from Joel ii. 28, 29 ; and so this may refer to the gifts of the Holy Ghost so liberally imparted to them." It seems more probable, however, that the ordinary operation of the divine spirit, such as is common to all Christians, is intended ; for the argument is general in its nature, and the appeal is made not to a few, but to all believers. A similar reference is found in ch. viii. 16, where the apostle, having declared that as

6 For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died

for the ungodly.

7 For scarcely for a righteous

many as are led by the spirit of God are children of God, being such by adoption, appeals for the truth of his declaration to the hearts of his brethren; — "the spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God." So here the spirit pervading our hearts assures us of God's love toward us.

6. *For when.* The apostle proceeds to another proof of divine love. Not only does the Christian feel assured, by the influence of the divine spirit on his own heart, that God loves him, he has other proof of the same fact, in what God has done for the benefit of his children. God has manifested his love by a direct influence on the human heart; and he has also made a public display of that love, in the mission of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord. From this manifestation of God's love to his children, the apostle argues the certainty that their hope shall never be disappointed. ¶ *We were yet without strength.* Utterly unable to accomplish our own deliverance from the bondage of sin. This inability is clearly demonstrated in the foregoing chapters. Sin had existed for about four thousand years, and no individual had fully succeeded in breaking its bonds; no one had yielded perfect obedience to the law of right; all had sinned, and come short of the glory of God. All human devices for the attainment of righteousness had signally failed. The plan of God for securing the righteousness of the human race was now, in due time, revealed in the gospel. What the weakness of men could not accomplish, he gave assurance should be accomplished by his grace. ¶ *In due time.* In the proper time. If all who died before the advent of Christ were irrecoverably lost, because no way of salvation had been devised, it would seem that the manifestation of divine grace in him was delayed too long. But, while we regard the universal Father as the universal friend of mankind, and believe that all shall be the children of God in the resurrection, Luke xx. 36, we need not doubt that Christ came, and taught, and died, at precisely the right time. Perhaps so long a period

was necessary, effectually to humble human pride, and to impress the conviction indelibly, by the failure of all other plans and devices, that mankind are entirely dependent on divine grace for deliverance from sin. Whether or not this was one of the purposes of so long delay, it is certain that the lesson has not been learned too thoroughly; for, even now, though men hesitate to assert their entire ability to save themselves from sin, yet many, while confessing in terms their reliance on a higher power for assistance, represent themselves as the principal actors in the work. For some reason not necessary for us fully to understand at present, God delayed the revelation of the gospel of his grace for thousands of years. But, in the proper time, proper for the full accomplishment of his gracious purpose, he sent his beloved "Son to be the Saviour of the world." 1 John iv. 14. ¶ *Christ died for the ungodly.* For the sake of the ungodly; for their benefit. "In behalf of, or for the sake of, not in the place of, or as a substitute for, the ungodly." — *Livermore.* The apostle uses four epithets in this connection, to describe the condition of mankind from which the grace of God is effectual to release them; *without strength, ungodly*, ver. 6, *sinners*, ver. 8, and *enemies*, ver. 10. All have a kindred meaning, indicating a state of estrangement from God, opposition to his righteous requirements, and inability to rescue themselves from the dominion of their evil passions and propensities. Yet God did not abandon his children because they were thus estranged, sinful, and helpless. On the contrary, he sent his Son to save them from their unhappy condition, "to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God." Acts xxvi. 18. And herein was manifested the riches of divine grace, as the apostle more fully declares in what follows. To do good to one's friends is human, but to do good to enemies is godlike.

7. In this verse the apostle illustrates the nature of divine benevolence by contrasting it with what passes for benevolence among men. He is supposed to adapt his phraseology to certain

man will one die : yet peradventure for a good man some would

forms of speech familiar to the Jews. *Lightfoot* says the Jews called a man *righteous* who had been a sinner, but had renounced his sins and accustomed himself to do right ; and that a man was called *good* who had never abandoned himself to iniquity, but had been comparatively virtuous through life. The distinction noted by *Clarke* seems more particularly in accordance with the allusion in the text. "The Jews divide men, as to their moral character, into four classes. First, those who say, 'What is mine is my own, and what is thine is thy own.' These may be considered the just, who render to every man his due ; or, rather, they who neither give nor take. The second class is made up of those who say, 'What is mine is thine, and what is thine is mine.' These are they who accommodate each other ; who borrow and lend. The third class is composed of those who say, 'What is mine is thine, and what is thine, let it be thine.' These are the pious or good, who give up all for the benefit of their neighbor. The fourth class are those who say, 'What is mine is mine, and what is thine shall be mine.' These are the impious, who take all, and give nothing. Now, for one of the first class, who would die ? There is nothing amiable in his life or conduct that would so endear him to any man as to induce him to risk his life to save such a person. *Peradventure, for a good man some would even dare to die.* That is, for one of the third class, who gives all he has for the good of others. This is the truly benevolent man, whose life is devoted to the public good ; for such a person, peradventure, some who have had their lives perhaps preserved by his bounty would even dare to die ; but such cases may be considered merely as *possible* ; they exist, it is true, in romance, and we find a few rare instances of friends exposing themselves to death for their friends. See the case of Jonathan and David, Damon and Pythias. And our Lord says, John xv. 13, 'Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.' This is the utmost we can expect among men." With this highest

even dare to die.

8 But God commendeth his love

exhibition of human love, a willingness to die, not for the merely just and upright man, but for one who has secured ardent attachment to himself by his benevolence and kindness, the apostle contrasts, in the next verse, the overflowing grace of God, manifested in the death of his Son for enemies. See note on John xv. 13.

8. *But God commendeth his love toward us.* God exhibits his love ; displays it in a signal manner. The opinion has long and extensively prevailed that God was angry with his children on account of their sins, and was prevented from inflicting endless punishment upon them only by the voluntary death of his Son in their stead ; hence a frequent repetition of proof to the contrary is demanded. Such proof is here furnished by the apostle. Instead of hating sinners, God loved them, and sent his Son to bless them. Christ came, not to reconcile God to men, but to reconcile men to God. Ver. 10. God is just ; and he will render justice to every man according to his deeds. Ch. ii. 6. But his justice does not degenerate into cruelty, nor is it administered in a spirit of wrath. On the contrary, the spiritual benefit of his children is designed, even in the sharpest afflictions to which he subjects them. Heb. xii. 10, 11. Not only so, God so loved the world that he sent his only begotten Son, that the world through him might be saved. John iii. 16, 17. This strongest proof of love was given in due time, that we might have full assurance of final and entire deliverance from the power of sin. In the gospel of Christ no hint or intimation is given that God hates a single soul which he has made, or that he designs, or ever did design, to make existence an everlasting curse to any portion, however small, of his children. But divine love is stamped on the face of the whole gospel : love to men ; love to sinners ; love to the ungodly ; love to enemies ; love, which seeks their good ; love, which will triumph over all opposition, which will melt the most stubborn and obdurate hearts, and which will finally accomplish the holiness and happiness of all. See

toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

9 Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be

1 Cor. xv. 28, and notes on John iii. 16, 17. ¶ *While we were yet sinners.* No man is entirely free from sin, in the present life. Yet the gospel recognizes a distinction between the unconverted and the converted. The former are styled, as in this place, sinners; the latter are denominated saints, ch. i. 7, not because they are perfect in holiness, but because they are comparatively pure. To the first class the apostle here refers, declaring that the crowning evidence of God's love to his children was exhibited while they were yet sinners; that is, before they were converted, while they were yet "in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity." Acts viii. 23. ¶ *Christ died for us.* See note on ver. 6. The ministry of Christ, sealed by his death, was an evidence of the Father's love, because he declared that he came by the Father's appointment, for the accomplishment of a work of mercy, and because, being the moral representative of the Father, John xiv. 9—11; Heb. i. 3, we may attribute to the Father the spirit manifested by the Son.

9. *Much more then.* "It is much more reasonable to expect it. There are fewer obstacles in the way. If, when we were enemies, he overcame all that was in the way of our salvation, much more have we reason to expect that he will afford us protection now that we are his friends. This is one ground of the hope expressed in ver. 5." — *Barnes.* ¶ *Justified.* Brought into a state of reconciliation and friendship; disposed to obedience; converted from ungodliness to a reverent spirit, from enmity to affection. *Justified*, here, has a meaning similar to *reconciled*, in ver. 10. It indicates the change wrought in the human soul, by the influence of faith in the gospel of Christ, and confidence in the God of all grace. ¶ *By his blood.* Blood is here put for the whole ministry of our Lord, which was sealed by his blood. Not that his blood was shed to appease the wrath of God, for he never was blood-thirsty; nor to purchase his love toward his children, for he always loved them. God does not love men because Christ died; but Christ died

because God already loved them, and sent his Son to manifest his love. In the figurative language of the East, the apostle expresses the whole earthly mission of Christ by the single term most likely to arrest attention; namely, the blood by which that mission was sealed. See notes on ch. iii. 24, 25. The remarks of *Livermore*, on this and the following verse, are worthy of attention. "The antithesis established in these verses is between what Christ did for them in a state of sin, and what he could do after he had by his sufferings brought them into a state of faith and prospective righteousness. In the ninth verse, the contrasted terms are *justified* and *saved*; and in the tenth, *reconciled* and *saved*. These are most important verses, as showing the particular offices of the death of our Lord, as compared with those fulfilled by his life and teachings. The precise effect of his death was to produce faith: first, in his immediate disciples and apostles, who, until that event and his resurrection, never really entered into the spiritual conception of his kingdom; and secondly in all men, Jews and Gentiles, by this luminous and impressive proof of his love, self-sacrifice, disinterestedness, and the heavenly nature of the kingdom he came to establish. That faith thus produced was the access to justification, the righteous process; therefore, to believe was to be justified, to be reconciled; and, in order to effect belief, a real, comprehensive, and spiritual faith, looking 'before and after,' the death of the founder of the system seemed to be unavoidable and essential." The general idea is this: that as God has given such convincing testimony of his love toward men, by sending his Son to labor and die for their benefit, we may with the utmost confidence expect from him all other blessings which are consistent with a spirit of love. Having commenced the work, much more will he complete it. A similar idea is expressed in ch. viii. 32. "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?" ¶ *Saved from wrath.* See note on ch. i. 18. To man, unenlight-

saved from wrath through him.

10 For if, when we were enemies,

we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son ; much more, being

ened by revelation, the punishment of iniquity seems to indicate wrath or vengeance in the being who administers it. Although the apostle had learned that God is love, and that in him dwelleth no wrath, yet he used this convenient term to indicate the evil consequences of sin. But, by being saved from wrath, or punishment, we are not to understand that we shall escape the punishment due for sins actually committed. The concurrent testimony of the Scriptures is, that God will reward every man according to his deeds, and that every transgression and disobedience shall receive a just recompense of reward. The grace of God and his justice are perfectly harmonious. There is no conflict between them. Justice has its unobstructed course ; and yet grace has room for the accomplishment of its perfect work. God has attached no penalty to sin which may not be fully executed without interfering with his gracious design to bestow final salvation upon the sinner. To suppose the contrary, is to suppose an eternal conflict between the divine attributes, inconsistent with their infinite perfection. What, then, does the apostle mean, by being saved from wrath? I apprehend the meaning to be this : When sin ceases, its unhappy consequences will also cease. If God save men from sin, and make them holy, "much more" will he save them from further suffering, and make them happy. When the "peaceable fruit of righteousness" is produced, there can be no further need that the individual be "exercised" by "chastening." Heb. xii. 11. Hence the apostle declares, in the text, that as God justifies, or turns men away from sin, by the ministry of his Son, much more will he deliver them from the misery which sin has occasioned. There is yet another sense in which the phrase *saved from wrath* has been understood. It is sometimes expressed thus : God saves men, by his grace, not from *deserved* punishment, but from *deserving* it ; that is, by releasing them from bondage to sin, he saves them from committing further crimes, which, if committed, would entail suffering. This fact is doubtless

true ; yet I prefer the former interpretation, as exhibiting the meaning of the apostle in this place. As long as men remain sinful, they must endure the penalty which a just God has attached to sin. But that penalty is of such a nature that it ceases when the sinner forsakes his sin and becomes obedient. This subject is discussed in ch. vi. 15—23, where it is shown that men had endured the penalty of sin, and afterwards attained deliverance, both from sin and its penalty : from sin, by its removal ; from the penalty, by no longer deserving it.

10. This verse is substantially a repetition of ver. 9. The general idea in both is the same ; namely, that as God has already done so much for sinners, they have much more reason to expect he will complete the work than they formerly had that he would commence it. To express this idea, different phraseology is used, exhibiting a slightly different phase of the subject. ¶ *When we were enemies.* The design was in full strength, and was made manifest for the deliverance of mankind, while they were yet sinners and enemies, or disobedient to God. "Herein is love ; not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." 1 John iv. 10. All the enmity was on one side. We were enemies ; yet God loved us, and sent his Son to save us. "The work was undertaken while we were enemies. From being enemies we were changed to friends by that work. Thus it was commenced by God ; its foundation was laid while we were still hostile to it ; it evinced, therefore, a determined purpose on the part of God to perform it ; and he has thus given a pledge that it shall be perfected." — *Barnes.* ¶ *We were reconciled to God by the death of his Son.* It has long been believed that God was reconciled to us by the death of his Son ; that the death of Christ was a propitiatory sacrifice which placated an angry God ; "that calmed his frowning face ; that sprinkled o'er the burning throne, and turned the wrath to grace." — *Watts.* Far different is the doctrine taught by the apostle. No reconciliation was needed

reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.

on the part of God. He loved his children from the beginning, and his love changeth not. Men were enemies, and they alone needed to be reconciled. This reconciliation was effected by the ministry of Jesus, sealed by his death. Love triumphed over hatred, and good overcame evil. Such an exhibition of divine love called forth a response from the human heart. Hence the apostle declares, on behalf of his brethren, that they were *reconciled to God*, and that they had full confidence in his love toward them. The doctrine of reconciliation is perfectly simple, when properly understood. Men are imperfect and changeable: they may, therefore, be converted from enemies to friends; they may cease to hate, and may cultivate a spirit of love towards the person formerly hated. But, to suppose such changes to occur in the perfect and unchangeable God, is to outrage the plainest principles of common sense, and to contradict the express and uniform testimony of the Scriptures. ¶ *Much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.* See notes on ver. 9. To be saved, here, may be understood in the special sense in which the similar phrase is used in ver. 9. But it probably has a more general and extensive signification in this place, indicating that proper salvation from sin which Jesus Christ came to accomplish. Matt. i. 21. As God has commenced the work of salvation by destroying the enmity we formerly cherished, and reconciling us to himself, much more will he complete the work, in due time, by delivering us altogether from the bondage of sin, and purifying us from all iniquity. The same spirit of love which prompted him to convert enemies into friends, would equally or more strongly prompt him to make his friends entirely pure and holy. "In the Scriptures, the enemies of God are those who do not obey him. Such were we, yet we have been reconciled to God. To reconcile one with another, is to excite friendship in the one towards the other, so that their friendship may be mutual. Since, therefore, this friendship exists in us towards God, we need fear nothing from him; we are beloved by God, and we

11 And not only so, but we also joy in God, through our Lord

reciprocate his love. He pardons our sins, and grants us eternal happiness; we are grateful for such precious gifts, we venerate him, and cultivate purity of life. The argument of the apostle is, if Christ has benefited us so much by his death, how much more will he benefit us by his life."—*Rosenmuller*. By his labors and death, he manifested the love of God, and reconciled us to him. By his resurrection to immortal life, he gave assurance of a future and endless life, in which still richer blessings may be expected. He assured his disciples, "Because I live, ye shall live also." John xiv. 19. And the beloved disciple testifies, "Now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is." 1 John iii. 2. To the same effect is the testimony of Paul: "As we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly." 1 Cor. xv. 49. This glorious change in our condition was taught by our Lord while he lived on the earth; but the promise was confirmed by his own resurrection from the dead, and ascension to endless life.

11. *And not only so.* This is not all. ¶ *We also joy in God.* The same word is rendered *boast*, in ch. ii. 17, 23; *re-joice*, in ver. 2, and *glory*, in ver. 3. "I think nobody can with the least attention read this section, without perceiving that these words join this verse to the third. The apostle in the second verse says, We the Gentiles, who believe, glory in the hopes of an eternal, splendid state of bliss. In the third verse he adds, And not only so, but our afflictions are to us matter of glorying; which he proves in the seven following verses, and then, verse 11, adds, And not only so, but we glory in God also, as our God, being reconciled to him in Jesus Christ. And thus he shows that the convert Gentiles had whereof to glory as well as the Jews, and were not inferior to them, though they had not circumcision and the law, wherein the Jews gloried so much, but with no ground, in comparison of what the Gentiles had to glory in, by faith in Je-

Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement.

sus Christ, now under the gospel." — *Locke*. This is a fit introduction to the glorious theme which follows to the end of the chapter. The blessings here unfolded are richer in their nature, more universal in extent, and consequently more glorious and worthy of admiration, than any which the Jewish mind had ever conceived. If the law by Moses secured blessings to the faithful, if the descendants of Abraham enjoyed peculiar privileges, much more the gospel gave assurance of blessings to all the children of God, as the fruit of his grace manifested in his Son. In such a God as the Son revealed, well might the apostle, well may every believer in the gospel of grace, rejoice and glory. Being fully persuaded that God is no respecter of persons, the apostle readily understood that the love which he had manifested to some of his enemies, to some sinners, was precisely the same which he cherished to all other sinners, and which he would manifest to them at the proper time; and that the blessings of which he had already given assurance to some were precisely the blessings which were in store for all. ¶ *We have now received the atonement.* The word *atonement* occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. It has long been a prominent doctrine of the church, that our Lord Jesus Christ offered his own blood as an atonement to God for our sins. From the earnestness and confidence with which this doctrine has been urged, we might suppose the sacred writers had assigned to it a prominent position. Singularly enough, however, the word occurs only this once, and here the atonement is received by men, not by God. If the original word had been translated *reconciliation*, or *reconciling*, as in ch. xi. 15, and 2 Cor. v. 18, 19, the only other places in the New Testament where it occurs, its meaning would have been apprehended without difficulty. No good reason appears for departing from the general form of translation. In every case where the corresponding verb occurs, it is translated *reconciled* or *reconciling*. Ver. 10; 1 Cor. vii. 11; 2 Cor. v. 18, 19, 20. That the word here means simply *reconciliation* is

12 Wherefore as by one man sin entered into the world, and death

now universally admitted. Indeed, such was formerly the ordinary meaning of the word atonement, as is evident from its use by ancient authors, and even from its etymology, *at-one-ment*, or being at one, or in harmony. This reconciliation was received by men, through Jesus Christ, because he so clearly exhibited the divine love as to destroy the enmity of their hearts, and to convert them from enemies into friends to God.

12—21. Although the general scope of this passage is plain, namely, that grace superabounds over sin, that it will remove all the evils occasioned by sin, and that it will bestow eternal life on mankind, yet the interpretation of some of the details is confessedly difficult. "That this is one of the most difficult passages in all the New Testament, will be conceded, I believe, by all sober and reflecting critics." — *Stuart*. "This passage has been usually regarded as the most difficult part of the New Testament." — *Barnes*. The ground of difficulty is this: that a literal interpretation of certain expressions used by the apostle involves consequences at which reason revolts, and against which the general testimony of the Scriptures is diametrically opposite. It is unquestionably a sound general rule of interpretation, that the most obvious, natural, and literal meaning of a passage is to be regarded as the true meaning. And, just as unquestionably, "where the proper signification presents a meaning that is either absurd or manifestly contrary to truth, it must necessarily be given up." — *Horne*. When the literal signification is found absurd, as in Matt. xxvi. 26, 28, or inconsistent with other scriptures, as in John x. 30 (see the note), and is therefore necessarily abandoned, it is sometimes easy to perceive in what sense the language is true; in which case, there is no real difficulty in the interpretation. In other cases, however, it may be very difficult to perceive the precise idea which was in the mind of the writer; and a consequent difficulty is found in the interpretation of his language. Precisely this difficulty is encountered in the interpretation of some portions

by sin, and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned ;

of the passage under consideration. I think I see clearly what the apostle did not mean, in ver. 19, for example ; and, in common with many judicious critics, I do not hesitate to reject the literal interpretation. At the same time, there can be no reasonable doubt that the language has a meaning to some extent analogous to the literal meaning. The precise extent of that analogy, or the precise idea designed to be conveyed, is the real point of difficulty.

12. *Wherefore.* As the following passage does not appear to be a logical inference from what precedes it, many commentators are disposed to understand the words rendered *wherefore* to be a mere "formula of transition," which might be tolerably expressed by the word *moreover*. The apostle had already insisted, and offered evidence, that both Jews and Gentiles were sinful, and equally unable to accomplish their own deliverance. He had also declared that God recognized the Gentiles as his children, ch. iii. 29, 30, and that he was as ready to justify them as to justify the Jews. Knowing the prejudices of the Jews, even of those who had embraced Christianity, and their unwillingness to admit the Gentiles to an equality with themselves, he calls their attention to the fact that sin had been equally disastrous to both ; and, by a comparison, extending through the chapter, exhibits the propriety that both should share equally in the deliverance wrought by divine grace. To this view of the subject he naturally passes, from what he had already said of the spiritual peace and joy of the Gentiles, as furnishing a sufficient reason why they should rejoice and be at peace, ch. xv. 13, and also a sufficient reason why Jewish believers should accept them as brethren. ¶ *As by one man.* Namely, Adam. Notwithstanding the apostle manifestly regarded Eve as first in the "transgression," yet he refers to Adam in preference, as he was the recognized physical head of the human race, with whom he proceeded to compare the second Adam. "The apostle cannot design that this should be strictly construed ; for he himself has told us that Adam was not deceived, but the woman, being deceived, was in the transgression ;

that is, Eve first transgressed. If, now, it was a principal object with the apostle here to point out specifically and with exactness the *first* author of transgression, how could he omit mentioning Eve ? Or, if his main design was to point out a corrupt nature propagated by ordinary generation, then why should he neglect to mention Eve along with Adam ? for *both* parents surely were concerned in this. In respect to these questions, it may be remarked further, that either the apostle, in making mention of Adam, trusted that his readers would spontaneously call to mind the primitive pair, the woman being comprehended along with the man ; or, that he designed merely to compare the origin itself and extent of sin and misery (without particularizing the manner) with the origin and extent of the deliverance from them, as wrought by Christ."—*Stuart.* ¶ *Sin entered into the world.* Sin first existed in the world. It was first manifested in this primitive transgression. The reference, doubtless, is to the transaction recorded in Gen. iii. 1—6. "This sin is not the original sin taught in the schools. The discourse is concerning Adam who first sinned, and has reference to ch. i. and ii., where Paul had shown that both Jews and Gentiles were *under sin*, and there surely he spoke of actual transgressions. Sin entered into the world, invaded the human race ; that is, began to exist among men."—*Rosenmuller.* Sin entered the world by one man, precisely as disease, or natural death, entered the human family, by the first man who was diseased, or who died. The simple idea expressed thus far is, that sin had a beginning in the world ; that it commenced with the first transgression. Previously, there was no actual sin, though there was a liability to sin. But when the divine command was disobeyed, then sin existed ; it was manifest in the world. ¶ *And death by sin.* By an established law of God, sin and misery are inseparably connected. The former is sure to be accompanied by the latter. When sin entered the world, therefore, the entrance of death was unavoidable. It followed as certainly as any effect follows its cause. The apostle has stated the regular and uni-

form sequence thus: "Every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then, when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin; and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death." Jas. i. 14, 15. Temptation, sin, and death, follow in regular succession. If the temptation be not effectually resisted, the consequences are certain. It was so from the beginning. Adam was overcome by temptation, and sinned. Thus sin commenced in the world. He immediately felt the evil consequences which in the Scriptures are denominated death. See Gen. iii. And thus death entered the world by sin, or in consequence of sin. For some remarks concerning the nature of this death, see note on ch. vi. 23. ¶ *And so*. Rather, even so, or so also. The same words, *καὶ ὡς* (*kai outōs*), are used here, which, in a transposed form, are rendered *so also*, ver. 15, and *even so*, ver. 18, 21. The former part of the verse is manifestly a part of a comparison. It is generally supposed, by commentators, that, instead of completing the comparison here, the apostle, according to his frequent custom, breaks off suddenly, and introduces certain explanations material to his subject; and then, at ver. 18, resumes and completes the comparison. I apprehend, however, that the apostle completes one comparison in this verse, and introduces another in ver. 18. The object here is to show the uniform result of sin; namely, that, as death came upon Adam because he sinned, so also it came upon all his posterity because they also have sinned. The object, in ver. 18, is to show that the remedy is abundantly sufficient to remove the disease. This interpretation has little, if any, support from commentators; yet it has the merit of giving completeness to the comparison; and, in my judgment, it exhibits the apostle's argument in a more distinct light. *Stuart* supposes the comparison is broken off, and that what follows, to ver. 18, is parenthetical. He supposes, also, that the apostle had in his mind a certain connection between the sin of Adam and the sins of his posterity. Yet his remarks on the words under consideration are more consonant with the interpretation I have given than with any other. "The meaning of *kai outōs* must be, substantially, 'as sin en-

tered the world, and death was inseparably connected with it, so death has passed through the world and come upon all men, because it was inseparably connected with their sin.' More than this cannot be looked upon as directly asserted by the latter clause of the verse." Again, "As Adam sinned and brought death upon himself, so death in all other cases is in like manner the inseparable attendant upon sin; and death is universal, because sin is so. So much, and I think no more, can be fairly made out of *kai outōs*; it must be considered as intended to designate the connection, the invariable, inseparable connection, between sin and death."—*Stuart*. If these remarks be, as they certainly appear to be, well founded, we may conclude that the comparison is completed in this verse, and not broken off, as is more generally supposed. ¶ *Death passed upon all men*. All men endured the same kind of death which had previously been endured by Adam. The language is figurative. Death is represented as a person entering the world, and passing through it with unresisted power, subjecting all men to its sway. Thus, also, in ver. 14, it is represented as reigning like a monarch. The meaning is simply that all men died in like manner with Adam; in other words, all were subjected to the same death, which is the "wages of sin." Ch. vi. 23. ¶ *For that all have sinned*. Because all have sinned. The single and sufficient cause of the death here mentioned is distinctly specified. Not because Adam sinned; not because his posterity inherited depraved natures; not because they were in any manner whatever accountable for his sin, or punishable for it; but because all have sinned; this is the reason why death has passed upon all men. If there be any other reason, it is not stated. Moreover, the statement of this excludes any other which is inconsistent with it. So much is allowed by interpreters who believe in the corruption of human nature by the sin of Adam. "To sin, is to transgress the law of God; to do wrong. The apostle, in this expression, does not say that all have sinned in Adam, or that their nature has become corrupt, which is true, but which is not affirmed here; nor that the sin of Adam is

13 For until the law, sin was in the world: but sin is not im-

puted to them; but simply affirms that all men have sinned. He speaks evidently of the great universal fact that all men are sinners. He is not settling a metaphysical difficulty; nor does he speak of the condition of man as he comes into the world. He speaks as other men would; he addresses himself to the common sense of the world; and is discoursing of universal, well-known facts. Here is the fact, that all men experience calamity, condemnation, death. How is this to be accounted for? The answer is, 'All have sinned.' This is a sufficient answer; it meets the case. And as his design cannot be shown to be to discuss a metaphysical question about the nature of man, or about the character of infants, the passage should be interpreted according to his design, and should not be pressed to bear on that of which he says nothing, and to which the passage evidently has no reference."—*Barnes*. It is thus admitted, and with good reason, that, even if it were true that human nature was corrupted by Adam's sin, or that his sin was imputed to them, it is nevertheless equally true that the apostle does not here refer to any such corruption or imputation, as the cause of death. He assigns another and an entirely different cause; namely, the fact that all have sinned. Men die for their own sins, and for no other reason, in the sense in which the apostle uses the term here. Natural death, the death of the body, may result from many causes; but that death which is "the wages of sin" results from the actual sin of individual transgressors, and from no other cause whatever.

13. What follows, to ver. 18, is generally regarded as a parenthesis; and such it doubtless is, if the comparison commenced in ver. 12 is not completed in the same verse; but if it be completed, there is no absolute necessity to regard this passage as parenthetical. This verse and the next are explanatory of the declaration in ver. 12 that death passed upon all men because all have sinned. "How is this elucidated and confirmed? By taking a case in which one might be disposed to say, it would be difficult to prove that men are sinners, since the apostle himself had

already explicitly declared that it is the law which occasions punishment; for where there is no law, there is no transgression. Ch. iv. 15. To meet this difficulty, which might easily arise, he avers that men were sinners before the giving of the Mosaic law; although they are not themselves prone to acknowledge their guilt in such circumstances, or they make but little account of it. Yet the fact was, that they were sinners, and that death, therefore, prevailed over them all, even all who had not sinned against a revealed law, as Adam did."—*Stuart*. ¶ *Until the law*. That is, the Mosaic law, as is evident from ver. 14, where it is asserted that "death reigned from Adam to Moses." Three different states or dispensations are alluded to, in which sin had existed: the time of Adam, to whom a law was given directly by the Supreme Governor; the time which intervened until the days of Moses, during which men had only the light of nature, and the natural sense of right and wrong, to guide them, aided perhaps by some vague traditions of the original law; and the period since a revealed written law was given by Moses, which was expounded to the Jews by their religious teachers. The apostle had already spoken of the first period. Notwithstanding Adam received a special command from God, he transgressed it, and incurred the penalty of death. Thus sin entered into the world, and death by sin. His posterity also incurred the same penalty, for they also sinned. ¶ *Sin was in the world*. Sin existed in the world; in other words, men were sinners, during the whole period "from Adam to Moses." For, although they had no written law, yet they were "a law unto themselves," having "the work of the law written in their hearts." Ch. ii. 14, 15. Moreover, God had so clearly manifested his existence "by the things that are made," that they were "without excuse" who failed to reverence his authority, and to accept his blessings with thankfulness. Ch. i. 19—21. They were sinners, because they disregarded the natural law, or "the law written in their hearts." The extent and the result of their criminality are

puted when there is no law.

14 Nevertheless, death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over

portrayed in glowing colors in ch. i. 18—32. Destitute as they were of a written law, such as the Jews afterwards enjoyed and abused, they were still amenable to a law, which they transgressed, and therefore incurred the invariable penalty, namely, death. Death passed upon them all, because all were sinners. ¶ *Sin is not imputed when there is no law.* See note on ch. iv. 3. As none could properly be regarded as sinners, except actual transgressors of law, ch. iv. 15, it followed that there must have been a law, before the Mosaic law, if all men had sinned. That law was the natural law, the law written in the heart, to which the apostle refers, ch. ii. 14, 15. The argument in this verse and the next is, that there must have been a law previous to that given by Moses, inasmuch as all men had endured the penalty of sin, which sin could not have existed without law. Such appears to be the most probable interpretation of the text. Some, indeed, insist that the apostle repudiated the idea of any law between the special command to Adam and the Mosaic code, and asserted that men died in consequence of Adam's sin imputed to them. But this is wholly inconsistent with the argument of ch. i. 18—32, wherein the guilt of the heathen is asserted on the ground that they violated a law which was manifest in nature and binding on them. Moreover, such an interpretation would involve the double absurdity, that the apostle declared that all men have sinned, when in fact they could not have sinned, as there was no law for them to transgress; and that he represented them as not being punished for any acts of their own, while they were punished for the act of Adam, committed ages before they were born. "The supposition of men's own personal sins not being reckoned to them, while they perish by the imputation of another's sin, is a position so revolting, with respect to the justice, goodness, and impartiality, of the Sovereign Judge, 'who will render to every man according to his works,' that it should not be made out from *constructive* evidence; it

them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression, who is the figure of him that was

requires most ample and satisfactory arguments to support it." — *Stuart.*

14. *Nevertheless.* Notwithstanding the evident fact that sin is not imputed, or that men cannot be regarded as sinners, in the absence of all law, yet death reigned over mankind through all this period. The necessary implication is, if they endured the penalty of sin, they were actual sinners; and if they were actual sinners, there must have been a law which they transgressed. ¶ *Death reigned.* The same figurative style which occurs in verse 12 is continued. Death is represented as a mighty monarch, subjecting all men to his power. The meaning is, that during this long period men were sinful, and endured the penalty of sin, namely, that death which is the wages of sin. See note at the end of this chapter.

¶ *From Adam to Moses.* Through the whole interval between that period when God is represented as conversing with Adam, as one man converses with another, communicating his law with an audible voice, Gen. chap. ii., iii., and that day when amidst the thunders of Mount Sinai "he gave unto Moses two tables of testimony, tables of stone, written with the finger of God." Exo. xxxi. 18. During all these ages, God "left not himself without witness," Acts xiv. 17, but so manifested himself in his works that men were "without excuse" for their irreverence and unthankfulness, chap. i. 20, 21, and were justly held to be sinners, and subject to the penalty of sin, because they transgressed "the law written in their hearts." Chap. ii. 15. ¶ *Even over them.* "Over all those generations. The point or emphasis of the remark here is, that it reigned over those that had sinned under a different economy from that of Adam. This was that which rendered it so remarkable, and which showed that the withering curse of sin had been felt in all dispensations, and in all times." — *Barus.* ¶ *Had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression.* That is, had not transgressed a direct, positive, personal command. Adam received a command directly from the supreme Lawgiver,

to come.

15 But not as the offence, so also is the free gift. For if through

plain, explicit, easily understood ; yet he disobeyed it, and incurred the penalty. His descendants, until the Mosaic law was given, had no positive, revealed law to guide them ; consequently, they could not sin precisely like Adam. The dissimilitude between their transgression and his consisted in the fact that he transgressed a positive, revealed law, while they transgressed only "the law written in their hearts." Hence their sin was less aggravated than his. Yet, although this difference existed, their conduct, as well as his, was sinful. This is asserted in general terms in verse 12, and more in detail, chap. i. 24—32. The law in their hearts, and what they might learn of God's nature and will from his works, were of such binding authority, that transgression became sin. Of course they incurred the penalty of sin, which is death ; and thus death reigned over them, notwithstanding they were less guilty than Adam. It may be remarked, however, that while they endured the same penalty in kind, we may believe it was less severe in degree. Adam sinned, and so did his posterity. Adam endured the penalty, and so did his posterity. Yet, as they did not sin after the similitude of his transgression, — in other words, as their sin was not precisely like his, but was less aggravated, — the same dissimilitude may have existed in the penalty ; it was the same in nature, but different in degree of severity. Such was the rule of divine justice announced by our Lord, Luke xii. 47, 48. The more clearly a man understands his duty, the more criminal is his disobedience, and of so many the more stripes is he worthy. The less clearly one understands his duty, the less criminal is his disobedience, and the penalty incurred is so much the lighter. Yet, as is manifest from the text, every transgressor is guilty and punishable, and death passes upon all, because all are guilty of sin. ¶ *Who is the figure of him that was to come.* That is, the first man, Adam, was a figure or type of the second Adam, the Lord Jesus Christ. The resemblance, however, was far from exact. The points of simi-

the offence of one many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by

larity and of difference are illustrated in the remainder of this chapter.

15. *But not as the offence.* The apostle exhibits a striking contrast between sin and grace, showing that grace is superabundant, and that it will triumph over sin, and destroy both sin and death. The offence, or sin, and the gracious gift, were not of equal magnitude or efficacy. *Offence* here means sin. ¶ *Free gift.* The gift of salvation by grace ; salvation from sin, and from death, and the bestowment of eternal life. Ver. 21. ¶ *Through the offence of one many be dead.* Or, the many, that is, all. Death hath passed upon all men. It is not to be denied that this text *appears* to teach that the sin of one, namely, Adam, occasioned the death of all his posterity. But against the doctrine involved in this interpretation there are many grave objections, some of which are stated in the note at the end of this chapter. If these objections are valid, then some other meaning of the text must be sought. If we can find the true meaning we should rejoice, as we ought always to rejoice in the truth. But, even if we fail to discover a satisfactory meaning, we are by no means to adopt one which is manifestly false and absurd. We may better confess our own ignorance, and wait for further light, than to charge contradictions upon an inspired apostle. The passage is confessed, on all hands, to be obscure. Perhaps, however, by a careful attention to the context, we may perceive the idea designed to be conveyed. The apostle declares, in verse 12, that sin entered into the world, was first exhibited, by one man ; that death was the consequence of this one sin ; that all men, in like manner, have sinned ; and that the same consequence followed their sins. Adam was the type or example of all who followed him. The idea in the text, then, may be this : Through sin, which at first was the offence of a single individual, but which subsequently became common to all by a repetition of the offence, the same death has come upon the many, that is, upon all, which originally came upon the first transgressor. The cause,

one man, Jesus Christ, hath a- bounded unto many.

which was first manifested in Adam, has produced its uniform effects on all his posterity, not merely because it then existed, but because it has continued to exist. Be this as it may, one thing is certain: the apostle explicitly asserts that death passed upon all men, or that all men died, because all have sinned. Ver. 12. It is by no means probable that he intended, in the text, to contradict what he had previously asserted, by assigning another and an entirely different reason for the execution of the penalty of sin. To say that each man dies for his own sin, is one thing; to say that all die for the sin of Adam committed thousands of years before they were born, is a very different thing. The former assertion is consistent with the uniform tenor of the Scriptures; the latter is contradicted with equal uniformity. ¶ *Much more.* "The reason of this *much more* is to be found in the abounding mercy and goodness of God. If a wise, merciful, and good being has suffered such a train of woes to be introduced by the offence of one, have we not much more reason to expect that his grace will superabound?"—*Barnes.* There is great force in this interrogative declaration. God has clearly manifested his kindness and love to mankind in the works of creation and providence. To those works the Psalmist confidently appealed in ancient times. Ps. cxlv. 7—17. Our Lord directed the attention of his disciples to the same works as conclusive evidence of God's universal and impartial goodness. Matt. v. 43—45. To shortsighted men it might seem improbable that so good a being would permit sin and all its woes to enter the world. But he has done it; and, doubtless, for wise and benevolent purposes. Much more have we reason to believe he will remove the evil in due time, and make it to result in good. This is perfectly consistent with all which we know of his character. It requires argument to reconcile the introduction of sin with divine goodness; it requires none to reconcile its removal with the same goodness. As facts demonstrate that he has permitted the one, much more may we confidently trust that he will accomplish the other.

¶ *The grace of God.* That grace or goodness which is uniformly represented as the source of present blessings, and our only reliable hope for salvation. ¶ *The gift by grace.* Namely, salvation from sin, which is the peculiar gift of God. Chap. vi. 23; Eph. ii. 8. Such was the gift which Jesus was specially sent to bestow. Matt. i. 21; 1 John iv. 14. And such is the gift which manifestly forms the theme of the chapter under consideration. The apostle has recognized the existence of sin; and he is speaking of its removal by divine grace. This is the special work of grace which he discusses; and he announces its triumphant and entire accomplishment. ¶ *Which is by one man, Jesus Christ.* A man, and more than man, being the only-begotten Son of God, and his chosen messenger of grace to mankind. Salvation, though in the strict and highest sense the gift of God, is communicated through his Son, who was divinely commissioned to save mankind in the Father's name, and by his authority. ¶ *Hath abounded unto many.* To the same many who were dead in sin, namely, to all; for death passed upon all men for their sins. In this manner only could grace superabound over sin, and destroy that death which is its appropriate penalty. The explanation of this term by *Macknight* is very distinct and positive. "The apostle, by the *many*, certainly means all mankind. Besides, Christ, in speaking of this very subject, used the word in that extensive sense, Matt. xxvi. 28, 'This is my blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many;' that is, for the collective body of mankind. And, as the *many* who died are all mankind, so the *many* in the end of the verse, to whom the gift by grace is said to have abounded, are all mankind." The commentator's argument, to prove that the gift will be without value to some, is immaterial. Our concern is with the doctrine delivered by the apostle. *Stuart* also admits that the *many* in this verse, and *all men* in ver. 18, are convertible terms, identical in meaning. So, also, most commentators of any note. In regard to individuals, the extent of sin and grace are equal; both extend to all men. In regard to

16 And not as *it was* by one that sinned, *so is* the gift. For the judgment *was* by one to condem-

their results, grace superabounds over sin. The effect of sin is temporary; the effect of grace is endless. Sin reigns unto death, or causes death; grace reigns unto eternal life, or communicates endless purity and happiness.

16. *And not, &c.* This verse is to be understood with the limitations expressed in the note on ver. 15. We must be cautious that we do not make the apostle contradict himself, by assigning the penalty of sin to different and inconsistent causes. But one thing is perfectly clear: the *gift* is represented as exceeding the offence. The two are contrasted, not as equal, but as unequal. ¶ *The judgment.* The sentence. "The original word *zōiua* (*krima*) signifies the sentence of a judge, especially a sentence of condemnation."

— *Macknight.* Legal terms are here used by the apostle to indicate in a more graphic manner the consequences of sin; as if the sinner were arraigned at the bar of a judge, and sentence of condemnation rendered against him. The meaning is simply that the penalty is incurred, and must be endured. There is no loop-hole of escape from the penalty of God's law. Adam was forbidden to transgress, on penalty of death. He did transgress; and the penalty was executed, in the very day of his transgression, according to the divine word. Thus, also, all sinners receive a like sentence, and endure a like penalty, whenever and as often as they transgress. ¶ *By one.* By one sin; or, on account of one sin or offence. That one offence, rather than one man, is intended, is manifest from the latter part of the verse, where *many offences* are contrasted with this *one*. ¶ *To condemnation.* The meaning of the whole phrase seems to be, that sentence of condemnation was passed, on account of one sin; or that, on account of one sin, man was adjudged guilty, and liable to the penalty of transgression. Or, if any insist on construing the words separately, *judgment* may be understood as the sentence, or the act of sentencing, and *condemnation* as the penalty or punishment denounced in the sentence. The leading idea, and the only idea of

nation, but the free gift *is* of many offences unto justification.

17 For if by one man's offence

practical importance, developed in this phrase, when stripped of its technical drapery, is, that a single sin, the first sin, justly incurred the penalty established by the divine law. The penalty, doubtless, became aggravated by subsequent sins; but it was incurred by a single sin at first. God said, If thou disobeyest, thou shalt surely die. If Adam had disobeyed only once, the veracity of God was pledged that he should die for that single sin. The same rule applies to all men. The first sin of each incurs the penalty; subsequent sins only aggravate it. Thus is sentence of condemnation passed, on account of one offence. ¶ *But the free gift.* See note on ver. 15. The gift by grace; the gratuitous deliverance of mankind from their sinful condition. ¶ *Many offences.* Herein is the point of the contrast. The penalty, death, is incurred by a single sin. The free gift of God has regard to *many offences*, to all the offences of men. Thus does grace superabound. Justice inflicts the penalty for a single sin, and increases its severity in proportion to the accumulation of guilt by subsequent sins. Grace triumphs over all sins, and through righteousness bestows eternal life, not only on him who has sinned once, but on him who has been guilty of many offences. Death follows a single offence; but divine grace delivers from death and bestows eternal life, notwithstanding many offences. ¶ *Unto justification.* The gift consists in justification, or the making of men just; in other words, in saving them from sin, and purifying them from iniquity; in quickening to newness of life those who had been dead in trespasses and sins. Righteousness is the proper contrast to sinfulness, and is so distinctly stated in ver. 19. Justification has a similar meaning here; and righteousness would be a more proper translation of the original word.

17. *For if by one man's offence.* See note on ver. 15. ¶ *Death reigned by one.* See note on ver. 14. ¶ *They which receive.* The apostle had already declared that all were included in the benevolent purpose of God, ver. 15.

death reigned by one ; much more they which receive abundance of grace, and of the gift of righteousness, shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.

18 Therefore, as by the offence

The gift by grace abounded to the same many who died in consequence of sin. All sinned ; all died ; the gift abounded to all. All, therefore, are included in the phrase, *they which receive*. This interpretation is confirmed by what follows. ¶ *Abundance of grace*. "The abundant favor ; the mercy that shall counterbalance and surpass the evils introduced by the sin of Adam. That favor shall be more than sufficient to counterbalance all those evils." — *Barnes*. ¶ *And of the gift of righteousness*. This was the peculiar gift bestowed by divine grace. The apostle here indicates, more distinctly than before, the most important point in which grace superabounds over sin. It not only counterbalances the effects of sin, by restoring man to his primitive condition, but its abundant superiority is manifested by bestowing the gift of perfect righteousness. ¶ *Shall reign in life*. Shall enjoy that life which results from holiness ; that is, shall be perfectly happy. "Shall be elevated to an exalted and glorious state of happiness. That *life* is the common word to indicate *happiness*, needs not to be here proved. That *to reign* means to be exalted to an elevated and glorious condition, the reader may see by comparing Rev. ii. 26, 27 ; iii. 21 ; Matt. xix. 28 ; Luke xxii. 30 ; 1 Cor. vi. 2 ; 2 Tim. ii. 11, 12 ; Rev. xx. 4 ; Dan. vii. 22 ; Ps. xlix. 14 ; Ex. xix. 6 ; comp. 1 Pet. ii. 9. Flatt, in his commentary, represents ver. 17 as an advance upon the sentiment in ver. 16, after the same manner (for substance) that I have done. This interpretation seems to me to fall in with the natural progress of thought in the apostle's mind ; for the first thing, in contemplating the remedy for the miseries which followed in the train of Adam's transgression, would naturally be deliverance from positive evil, or suffering. But this would not complete the idea of the *abounding* of gospel grace. The *reigning in life* was essential to the full completion of this ; and this

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.

19 For as by one man's disobe-

ver. 17 exhibits." — *Stuart*. ¶ *By one, Jesus Christ*. The Son is uniformly recognized as the medium through whom the Father's spiritual gifts are bestowed on mankind. Especially is such recognition proper in this place, inasmuch as the great work which he was specially commissioned to perform is the theme discussed.

18. Those who suppose the comparison commenced in ver. 12 is not there completed, but abruptly broken off, suppose also that the subject is here resumed, and the comparison fully stated. The general structure of this verse is very similar to that of ver. 19 ; and substantially the same doctrine is embraced in both. ¶ *Therefore*. The result of the whole argument is now approached. The facts already stated being true, the subsequent comparisons are seen to be also true and just. ¶ *As by the offence of one*. See note on ver. 15. ¶ *Judgment came*. There is nothing in the Greek answering to these words, nor to the words *the free gift came*, in the subsequent portion of the verse ; yet they seem properly supplied to complete the sense. See ver. 16. ¶ *Justification of life*. What is styled simply *justification*, ver. 16, and here *justification of life*, is more plainly expressed in ver. 19, by being *made righteous*. See note on ver. 16.

19. *As by one man's disobedience, &c.* Various and contradictory interpretations have been given of this passage ; none, perhaps, entirely free from difficulty. A literal interpretation places the language of the apostle in direct conflict with other doctrines taught by himself and other sacred writers. On the other hand, if the language be interpreted as figurative, it must still be regarded as having a meaning to a certain extent analogous to the literal meaning ; and it may be, and doubtless is, difficult to determine the precise degree of analogy which will meet the demands of truth. I have seen no interpretation which appears more probable

dience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many

than that which follows. "There can be no doubt that, at first view, this passage seems to teach that the disobedience of Adam has made his posterity actual sinners; and that the obedience of Christ makes the men who believe in him, or rather all men whatever, without any reference to their faith, actually righteous. Adam and Christ seem to be placed in contrast, as causing, the one our condemnation, the other our moral recovery. But, if the first view of a passage is generally the correct one, yet there are undoubtedly cases in which this remark will not hold. It may appear, on reflection, that difficulties insuperable cling to the idea which first suggests itself, and that another meaning is capable of being given to a statement, which will render its language consistent with all other portions of scripture. In a case of this nature we are evidently bound to take the construction which will harmonize the particular declaration with the general teachings of the Bible, and with the plain demands of reason and the moral sense. So we ought to proceed with the passage before us, if we can find for it a consistent sense. More exactly translated, the text would read thus: 'For as by the disobedience of one man, the many were constituted sinners; so by the obedience of one shall the many be constituted righteous.' We thus substitute the word *constituted* for *made*, — not a great alteration. Several distinguished critics have contended for another term, which might make the sense more easy. They have urged that, instead of *made*, we ought to translate *declared*. But, in this sense of the Greek word cannot be so certainly established, and as we would wish to lend no countenance to a practice of departing from the fair meaning of the passage, we content ourselves with the rendering *constituted*, which, as every Greek scholar will allow, properly belongs to the word. — Our general view of the passage is this: In the sin and consequent punishment of our first parents, there first comes forth, and is exhibited, a constitution, or state of things, henceforward to be uniform among men, through all generations.

be made righteous.

20 Moreover the law entered,

Adam and Eve sinned; and spiritual death, condemnation, followed in consequence of their sin. So their descendants have sinned; and spiritual death has followed their sin. So it will be hereafter. The universal fact, the law which is without any exception, is, that spiritual death follows transgression. Now, this law, or this constitution, was fully established and declared in the treatment of our first parents. It was set forth in the threatening: 'In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.' Under any wise government, any government proceeding on principles and laws, there is absolute uniformity of procedure. What takes place in any one case will take place in all similar cases. In the treatment, then, of Adam, for his sin, we have a disclosure and a settlement of the rule according to which all sin shall be treated. Adam, thus sinning and thus punished, becomes the type or the illustration of the way in which his descendants sin and are punished. The moral constitution of the divine government in respect to sin and punishment thus received an expression; and this constitution was to be upheld in all the future treatment of men. In thus explaining the sense of the first clause of the text, I designedly guard against the view that the sin of Adam has an immediate causal and determining influence on the sin of his posterity, that his sin directly makes them sinners. However the passage at first sight may seem to say this, I cannot believe that it was designed to teach it, in fact. All men who sin make themselves sinners. Sin is always a personal and voluntary matter. Outward influences may contribute to lead men into sin; but they can do this only by gaining the consent of the men themselves. Adam had no power to make a sinner of any human being beyond himself. He may have contributed by his example and influence to gain the consent of others to sin; but since, to use the words of Dr. Emmons, all 'sin consists in sinning,' and hence implies a personal, responsible sinner, a free moral agent acting for himself and on his own account, it is plainly in the power of no

that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much

man whatever to create sin in another mind ; just because no man has control of the volitions of another mind." — *Sheldon*.* So much for the first clause of the verse. In like manner as Adam was the type of the natural man, a sinner, and subject to the uniform penalty of sin, even so was Christ the type of the spiritual man, pure from sin, and an inheritor of eternal life. See ver. 21. The sin of Adam, and the righteousness of Christ, instead of being the causes of present universal sinfulness or future universal righteousness, of spiritual death or spiritual life, are rather to be regarded as examples, illustrations, or types, of that present and future state of mankind, which God has ordained in wisdom and mercy. This interpretation is consistent with the general testimony of the Scriptures, and is free from the fatal objection which lies against a literal interpretation of the text ; the objection, namely, that it contradicts both the divine testimony and the plainest principles of common sense. See note at the end of the chapter. If this interpretation prove unsatisfactory, other efforts may be more successful. But, whatever be the true form of interpretation, literal or otherwise, one great fact, which lies on the very face of the passage, must never be overlooked. As extensive as the evil of sin may be, however caused, so extensive is also the remedy provided. Not only so, the remedy superabounds ; it places mankind in a higher position than they occupied before sin existed. If Adam caused the many or all to be sinners, Christ will cause the same many or all to be righteous. If Adam was the type of universal sinfulness, Christ was the type of universal righteousness. If Adam, by his sin, entailed death on all men, Christ will deliver all from death, and make them partakers of eternal life. If the death which followed Adam's sin was the type of the penalty which all men endure because all are sinners, the life connected with the righteousness of Christ was the type of that life which all shall

enjoy, as the result of universal righteousness. In any case, the remedy is equally extensive with the evil, and more effectual ; for the evil is temporary, and may be destroyed, but the remedy is infinite, and its results abide forever.

20. *Moreover*. "It is very natural to suppose that the Jew, ever jealous for the honor of the Mosaic economy, would feel a strong objection to the representation which the apostle had made ; inasmuch as deliverance from evil seems to be wholly attributed by Paul to Christ and his gospel, and nothing of this great work to be attributed to the law. I regard ver. 20, 21, as designed to answer such an objection, which the apostle would very readily anticipate. The substance of the answer may be thus expressed : 'As to the Mosaic law, it was so far from delivering men from sin and its fearful consequences, that the result of it was just the contrary, namely, the abounding of sin, or at least the more conspicuous and striking exhibition of it.' Both of these sentiments, indeed, we may suppose to be included in the assertion made in ver. 20. If the reader is surprised at this, or doubts it, let him study attentively Rom. vii. 5—13, where he will find that Paul fully maintains these views, and comments at large upon them." — *Stuart*. ¶ *The law*. The reference here seems to be specially to the Jewish law, the whole law revealed in the Old Testament. ¶ *Entered*. The figurative style continues. The law is personified, and represented as a living agent, entering into the world, and in ver. 21 as exercising dominion, or reigning over men. The meaning is, simply, that the law was revealed ; that it was made known to men. ¶ *That the offence might abound*. We are not to understand that the law was given or revealed for the special purpose of making men more sinful. Such, however, was one of its results. The idea is more distinctly expressed in ch. vii. 13 : "That sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful." We may suppose the prime object of the law was to instruct men concerning their duty, and to stimulate them to its performance. In this view

* See a valuable work, entitled *Sin and Redemption* ; by D. N. Sheldon, D.D., pastor of the Elm-street Baptist Church, in Bath, Maine.

more abound :

of the case, the apostle regarded it as highly advantageous to the Jews that they possessed the "oracles of God." Ch. iii. 1, 2. They had a more favorable opportunity to know the divine will ; and so far as they obeyed they were the more virtuous and happy. But extraordinary privileges are always accompanied by extraordinary responsibilities. Disobedience is the more criminal in proportion to the increase of knowledge. This truth is recognized, and its results announced, in Luke xii. 47, 48. And thus the revelation of the law rendered the disobedient more sinful than if they had remained in darkness. Sin abounded, because, notwithstanding the accession of light, men loved darkness rather than light, and continued to practise evil. Hence, instead of being delivered by the law from the evils of sin, the Jews were even more deeply involved than the Gentiles in the apostolic age ; for they had already rejected and crucified the Lord Jesus, and they were the most violent persecutors of his disciples. It was fully as true of them as of any nation on the face of the earth, that "by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight." Ch. iii. 20. Their only hope was in the grace of God, revealed in that gospel which they despised, and by that Saviour whom they had derided, and mocked, and crucified. ¶ *But where sin abounded.* Whether in a less degree among the benighted Gentiles, or in a more aggravated form among the enlightened Jews. ¶ *Grace did much more abound.* It superabounded. "That is, the pardoning mercy of the gospel has triumphed even over the sins of the Jews, which were greatly aggravated by reason of the light they enjoyed. What the apostle means to affirm is, that, however much sin was aggravated under this new order of things, yet such was the greatness of gospel grace, that it triumphed even over this aggravated guilt. In other words, the salvation of the gospel is so ample that it may be extended to all men, however depraved and deserving of punishment they may be." — *Stuart.* The superabundance of grace, of course, cannot have respect to numbers ; for all are sinners. Sin besets all, and grace

21 That as sin hath reigned un-

delivers all. In regard to the number of subjects, therefore, they are equal. But grace is superabundant, because it destroys sin, removes the evils which it has occasioned, and bestows a higher life, a more pure moral condition, than man originally enjoyed. Although the declaration is that grace *has* thus abounded, its results are neither fully accomplished nor confined to the past. A similar form of speech occurs in Heb. ii. 8, 9. In like manner we are to understand the language used here. Grace has superabounded over sin. But we see not yet its entire results. Sin continues to exist. Nevertheless, we do see, by the light of the gospel, that divine grace is in operation, and that it will finally triumph over all sin, and make an end of transgression. That the phrase has this meaning is manifest from the next verse, which contrasts the work which sin has accomplished with the work yet to be accomplished by grace.

21. *As sin hath reigned.* Sin is personified, like death in ver. 14, where the same form of expression occurs. Its desolating power has been felt by all, as stated in the previous verses. In this verse the apostle describes the final result of sin and grace, in respect to mankind. What he says is of universal application. Although he does not in so many words declare that sin entails death on all, and that grace will confer eternal life on all, he must be understood to speak of all, both because his whole previous discourse demands it, and because so much is implied in the text itself. He asserts the reign of sin : how extensive is that reign ? He has told us, in ver. 12, that "all have sinned." The reign of sin, therefore, is universal. Much more is the reign of grace universal ; for grace is uniformly declared to superabound over sin. ¶ *Unto death.* See note on ver. 12. Spiritual death is the uniform and unavoidable penalty of sin. This has been verified in ages past. It is true now. It will remain true as long as men remain sinners. The wages of sin is death ; and every transgression and disobedience will assuredly receive a just recompense of reward. The peculiar nature of death, as the wages of

to death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto

eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord.

sin, will be considered in the note on ch. vi. 23. ¶ *Even so.* In like manner. As surely, as extensively. The one shall fully counteract the other. ¶ *Might grace reign.* As the sinful passions have influenced the human heart, grace also shall exert its influence. As all have felt the blighting power of sin, in like manner shall all feel the purifying energy of grace. As all have suffered under the dominion of sin, even so shall all experience the blessings of the kingdom of grace and righteousness. Grace shall overcome sin, and destroy its power of dominion. "The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign for ever and ever." Rev. xi. 15. ¶ *Through righteousness.* Grace bestows eternal life, or happiness, by conferring righteousness, purity of heart, without which none can be capable of enjoying happiness. The sequence of grace, righteousness, and eternal life or happiness, is as natural as that of lust, sin, and death or misery, so graphically described by the apostle, Jas. i. 14, 15. ¶ *Unto eternal life.* See note on ch. vi. 23. Life here signifies not merely existence, but happiness; it is that spiritual life which is connected with purity and holiness. Its duration is endless; because holiness is consistent with the divine nature, and its perpetual triumph over sin is secured by the divine purpose. ¶ *By Jesus Christ our Lord.* The Son, whom the Father sent to be the Saviour of the world. See note on ver. 17. Such is to be the glorious consummation of God's plan for the reconciliation of the world. His grace is sufficient to accomplish the work. Although, for wise reasons, he permits sin to exist for a time, causing death to all, yet he will destroy both sin and death by his grace, and bestow universal holiness and happiness, which shall endure forever. It is to be observed, that this life shall be bestowed on the same persons who have previously suffered that death which is the wages of sin. The gift of God abounds to the same many who were dead in consequence of sin, ver. 15. All men are under condemnation for sin; even so the free gift came

upon all men unto justification of life, ver. 18. Thus it appears, conclusively, that the death occasioned by sin is not endless in its nature; for, if it were, it could not be succeeded by life. Yet it has been supposed that, in this very passage, where the apostle portrays such a glorious superabundance of grace over sin, and its effects, he nevertheless teaches the withering doctrine of endless misery. The alleged proof is as inconclusive as the doctrine itself is inconsistent with the general theme of the discourse. It is alleged that because *death* and *life* are contrasted in this verse, they must be regarded as of equal duration. When the fact is urged that one is expressly called eternal, while the other is not, it is still contended that the contrast requires it to be equally understood in regard to both. This is stated as briefly and strongly by *Stuart* as by any other writer. "As *death* is the direct antithesis of *eternal life* here, so it must mean more than temporal death merely; nay, more than any limited term of misery in a future world; unless, indeed, it can be shown that the happiness of the righteous is limited. But this none will attempt to show. How, then, can the misery of the wicked be shown to be temporary?" That such an argument should be urged by some men, is not surprising. But it is marvellous that so clear a mind as Professor *Stuart's* should not have perceived its utter absurdity. What is the object of the contrast or "direct antithesis" in the text? To exhibit the perfect equality between sin and grace, and their respective results? By no means. On the contrary, the obvious and avowed object is, to exhibit the superabundance of grace over sin; and a like disparity in their results is the necessary consequence. *Stuart* himself admits the correctness of this principle, in his notes on ver. 14. But he fails to apply it in this place, where, if anywhere, it is peculiarly applicable; for here the whole argument is condensed into one single point. Suppose the apostle had said, As sin has reigned unto endless death, even so shall grace reign unto endless life. Regardless of

any contradiction in terms which might be involved, how would the superabundance of grace be exhibited? The structure of the phrase, and the obvious design of the antithesis, equally require that we understand the result of grace to superabound over that of sin; and, of course, that we do not regard death and life as equal in duration and effect. Death reigns while sin exists. When grace destroys sin, then men pass from death unto life. John v. 24. Thus death ends, and a life begins which endureth forever.

ADDITIONAL NOTE. — It has for ages been believed that the sin of Adam in some manner occasioned the condemnation of all his posterity. And this doctrine has been supposed to be taught in ver. 12—19, of this chapter. Various theories have been proposed to show how men become involved in the guilt and condemnation of Adam's sin; the principal of which are these: (1.) That, by virtue of their relation to Adam, as their federal head, or, as some represent, by their metaphysical identity with him, all men actually and truly sinned in him, and thus incurred condemnation and death. (2.) That the sin of Adam is imputed to his posterity, and they are reckoned to be equally guilty with him. (3.) That sinfulness, a depraved nature, has been propagated, and has descended from Adam by ordinary generation. (4.) That, because Adam sinned, all his posterity commence existence with such a moral constitution that they are certain to commit sin as soon as they become capable of moral action; but in what precise manner the result follows the cause is a mystery not to be explained. (5.) That God treats men as sinners, and makes them subject to the penalty of Adam's sin, though he does not charge the actual guilt of that sin on them. The first two theories are effectually demolished by *Whitby*, and are advocated by few respectable critics in the present day. "It cannot be truly affirmed that we all actually and formally sinned in Adam, and, upon that account, were made sinners; for then all men must have sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression; for, if we all sinned in or with him, we must sin by the same act, the same will, and in the same person, against the

same law; and surely they that thus sin must sin after the similitude of Adam's transgression; for what similitude can there be in sins committed by the same act, and the same will, of one and the same person, against the same law! But of the posterity of Adam the apostle here expressly saith, they sinned not after the similitude of Adam's transgression (ver. 14); therefore they were not sinners by the same act and will, of the same person, against the same law. Moreover, if all the posterity of Adam sinned in Adam, they sinned against some law given to them; for sin is the transgression of a law, and where there is no law there is no transgression. Now, they could sin in Adam, so as to deserve death for their sin, only by sinning against the law requiring Adam not to eat of the forbidden fruit; for Adam himself became guilty of death only by transgressing that law: but all the posterity of Adam cannot be said to have sinned against that law; for when did they sin against it? If when Adam did so, then all his posterity must be actually sinners from the beginning of the world, that is, some thousands of years before the greatest part of them had a being. Now, seeing action must be the action of some being, does it not seem absurd, at first sight, to say that so many myriads were actually sinners when they were not in being? If when they came into the world, they could not sin in Adam, or in his action, for he did not *then* eat of the forbidden fruit in the midst of paradise. Secondly, it cannot truly be affirmed that we all sinned in Adam, and by his disobedience were made sinners, because his sin and disobedience was imputed to us. — I ask whether this imputation made the posterity of Adam sinners, or whether it found them so before? If it found them so before, it was plainly needless, for they might have been condemned to death without it. If it made them so, then, since this imputation is the act of God, and not of man, it plainly follows that God must be the author of that sin, because the imputation flows directly from him, without the intervention of any action on the part of any of those men to whom it is imputed. Moreover, then the imputation must be false, as charging them with sin whom he did not find sin-

ners, but only by his arbitrary imputation made them so. Now, far be it from any Christian to affirm that God should falsely impute sin to any man. In a word, to impute is to reckon, to account a thing to any man, to charge him with it, to lay the charge of it to him. This action, therefore, on God's part, must suppose, in the very nature of it, some action done by the posterity of Adam which is blameworthy and may be justly charged upon them, before there can be any ground for imputation of it; and this shows that it is impossible that the imputation should be the very thing that renders them blameworthy, or persons worthy to be charged with guilt. And yet, if the sin of Adam becomes ours only by imputation, it must be ours only because it is by God imputed to us, and not imputed because it is ours: that is, God by this imputation must make us sinners, and not find us such; for this imputation is the action of the judge, not of the supposed criminal; remove or take away this action, and no crime can be charged upon him. In fine, if the sin of Adam becomes ours only by imputation, it deserves condemnation only by the same imputation, that is, by the action of God; that therefore we deserve condemnation for it, is to be ascribed directly to the action of God, and only by accident to that of Adam. Whence therefore is our destruction, according to this opinion, but of God, who makes us worthy of condemnation, by imputing to us that sin, which, by his imputation only, we stand guilty of?" — *Whitby*. The theory of sinning in Adam, and that of his sin being imputed to his posterity, are repudiated with equal energy by *Stuart*. Of imputation he says: "It appears to contradict the essential principles of our moral consciousness. We never did, and we never can, feel guilty of another's act, which was done without any knowledge or concurrence of our own. We may just as well say that we can appropriate to ourselves, and make our own, the righteousness of another, as his unrighteousness. But we can never, in either case, even force ourselves into a consciousness that any act is really our own, except one in which we have had a personal and voluntary concern. A transfer of moral turpitude is just as impossible as a transfer of souls; nor does it lie

within the boundaries of human effort, that we should repent of Adam's sin." The third theory, that of propagation, is thus noticed by *Shelton*: "As to the immediate transmission of sin, the propagation of it, if we may so speak, or the communication of a sinful nature from parents to children, the idea seems to us little better than monstrous. Whatever is propagated, begotten, and born, is mere being, or nature; never moral character, which results only from moral action. The being thus produced must exist, must probably live some time, and develop itself somewhat, before it can act as a subject of moral obligation, and commit sin. Hence, to speak of this being as itself sinful, before it performs any moral action, is to destroy the very idea of sin. It is to confound nature with character; a simply existing being, or constitution, with the very different matter of personal morality, or responsible action. It is to suppose sin in the absence of any of the conditions of sin. The infant child is capable in due time, how soon we know not, of growing into a moral and responsible being, and of committing known acts of sin; but certainly it does not start with a sinful nature. The idea of a sinful nature, antecedently to sinful action, is always an absurd and self-contradictory idea; because it is an ascription to a mere nature of what can be found only in the sphere of moral freedom. It is imputing to a being, who has not yet acted, that which can only be conceived of as an attribute of his actions." These remarks, as well as those already quoted from *Stuart*, are equally applicable to every form of the doctrine popularly called "original sin;" namely, that all men, from the commencement of their existence, partake of the guilt of Adam's sin, and are justly liable to its penalty. The other two theories, not yet specially noticed, are in the same category. If the former cannot be maintained, so neither can the latter; for, though differing in form, they rest on the same unsound basis, to wit, that God holds men accountable and punishable, or, at the least, punishable, if not accountable, for a sin which they never committed, neither had lot nor part in it. Against this doctrine, however explained, and in whatever form presented, the testimony

of the Scriptures is distinctly and diametrically opposed. God said, by one of his ancient prophets, "The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son: the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him." Ezek. xviii. 20. In what possible manner can this testimony be reconciled with the doctrine that all mankind are made to bear the iniquity of their common father, Adam, and to die for his sin? It would be difficult to frame a more absolute contradiction. It contradicts the whole theory in general, and it contradicts it in detail. It declares that the son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, or shall not be adjudged guilty or punishable on account of it. The soul that sinneth, it shall die: the same person, and no other. The wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him; shall be charged to him exclusively; while the righteous enjoys the fruit of his own righteousness. In short, divine justice will mete out to every individual according to his own actions, without reference to a sin committed before he was born. The same doctrine was taught by our Saviour. Uniformly he represented men as accountable for their own actions, and for those only. There cannot be produced, from his recorded teachings, a single intimation that mankind are guilty or punishable for Adam's sin; nor did he countenance the idea that human nature is depraved, or that we come into this world tainted with the original sin of Adam, descending to us by transmission, or in any mysterious, inexplicable manner whatever. On the contrary, he distinctly intimated that children are born innocent, free from all stain of guilt, and, if not positively holy, certainly not sinful, either positively or by imputation. His disciples at one time rebuked those who desired him to touch their young children, that they might be blessed; "when Jesus saw it, he was much displeased, and said unto them, Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God. Verily I say unto you, whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein. And he took them up in his arms, put his

hands upon them, and blessed them." Mark x. 13—16. See also Luke xviii. 15—17, where these "little children" are styled "infants." Would our Lord thus characterize those whom he regarded as vile and depraved, in any manner whatever, on account of Adam's sin? The supposition is preposterous. The apostles followed the instructions of their Master, and taught that men are guilty and punishable for their own sins, and for them only. Nowhere do they exhort men to repent of Adam's sin, or to seek pardon for it. Nowhere do they represent men to have become involved in one common ruin, by this first transgression. Nowhere do they assert that men shall die, or be punished, for this sin. But uniformly and earnestly do they admonish men that they must certainly answer for their own conduct, and endure the penalty of their own sins. Paul is not an exception, for he repeatedly asserts that God will render to every man according to his deeds, whether good or evil. Even in this chapter, where, through a misunderstanding of his figurative language, so many have supposed him to teach that the penalty of Adam's sin extends to all his posterity, he plainly asserts the doctrine of individual responsibility. When he declares that all men endure the same penalty of sin which was inflicted on Adam, he is careful to add the reason, namely, because all have sinned, ver. 12. He could not more plainly have asserted that men die for their own sins; nor, considering the context, could he have more effectually denied that they die as a penalty for Adam's sin.

Such are some of the reasons which seem to justify and even compel a departure from what appears to be the most literal interpretation of ver. 18, 19. The doctrine involved in such an interpretation is utterly inconsistent with the uniform testimony of the Scriptures; and all the efforts of the wisest men have hitherto failed to harmonize the one with the other. Not only so, men have found equal difficulty in reconciling this doctrine with the plain dictates of common sense, and with the obvious principles of honor and justice. This point is treated with a master's hand in the "Conflict of Ages," by Edward Beecher, D.D.; a work in

CHAPTER VI.

WHAT shall we say then? Shall

which the author utterly demolishes all previous theories of original sin and native depravity, even though he entirely fails to establish his own. A doctrine thus contradictory to reason and to revelation cannot claim belief on the authority of a single passage, expressed in figurative language, and confessedly difficult to be understood; but it has no other support whatever. Some other meaning, therefore, must be sought. In the note on ver. 19, I have given the interpretation which seems more probable than any other which I have seen. Whether this be the true one or not, of one thing we may feel certain:—the apostle did not intend, in this passage, to contradict, not only his own uniform testimony, but also that of the holy men of old, who spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost, and that of his own Master, who spake as never man spake. This he surely did not intend to do, whatever else he may have intended.

CHAPTER VI.

With this chapter the apostle begins a more elaborate answer to the objection suggested in ch. iii. 5—8. The general design of this portion of the epistle, ch. vi.—viii., is to show that the doctrine of salvation by grace has a direct tendency to lead men to holiness; and not, as the objection implied, to open the flood-gates of iniquity. By various arguments and illustrations, the writer shows that a firm belief, a living faith, in the doctrines of grace, will naturally induce the believer to renounce sin, and cleave unto holiness. These arguments and illustrations will receive notice as we proceed. The objection which they are designed to refute has always been urged very confidently by those who are unable to appreciate any motive to holiness stronger than fear of punishment. Take away all fear, and they imagine the moral universe would soon become a very pandemonium. It will be seen, however, that the apostle recognizes a wholesome fear, by reminding his brethren of their past experience. At the same time, he represents the gratitude

we continue in sin, that grace may abound?

2 God forbid: how shall we,

which is excited by a consciousness of the divine goodness as a much more reliable and effectual incentive to the love and practice of holiness.

1. *What shall we say then?* An objection is here anticipated, as arising in the mind of an opposer. It has reference to the doctrine asserted in ch. v., that grace superabounds over sin, and will destroy both sin and all its painful consequences; that divine grace will cause holiness to triumph over sin, and life over death, and that in no stinted measure: for, as widely as sin extends, so wide is the dominion of grace; however deeply sin plunges men in death, grace is abundant enough to pluck them thence, and through righteousness to bestow on them eternal life. Sin shall not hold perpetual dominion over a single soul whom God has made; for “where sin abounded, grace did much more abound,” overcoming and destroying it, and effectually resewing its unhappy subjects from bondage. Such is the doctrine announced in the former chapter; and the objection substantially is, what shall we say, in regard to this doctrine that grace superabounds over all sin? ¶ *Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?* If our sins furnish occasion for such a display of divine grace, may we not continue to commit sin, so that grace may become even more conspicuous? The same objection, in a slightly different form, is often urged, even now. Many allege that the doctrine of God’s superabounding grace is of licentious tendency, encouraging men to continue in sin; while others avow that they would indulge themselves in all manner of wickedness, if they verily believed that divine grace would certainly secure their salvation. The former class very greatly mistake the character of the doctrine; the latter as greatly mistake their own character, if they mean what they say, and yet imagine themselves to be Christians. The following verses furnish an apostolic answer to the objection.

2. *God forbid.* By no means. Let it not be. A strong form of denial. See note on ch. iii. 4. ¶ *How shall we,* &c.

that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?

3 Know ye not that so many of

Equivalent to *we cannot*. The interrogative form of denial is sometimes more effective than the direct form. An appeal is made to the consciences of the converted, that the doctrine of grace has no such effect as the objection supposed. ¶ *Dead to sin*. At least three kinds of *death* in respect to sin are mentioned in the Scriptures. (1.) That moral or spiritual deadness which is styled being "dead in trespasses and sins." Eph. ii. 1. As the natural result of this is (2) that state of misery styled *death*, which is "the wages of sin," ver. 23. And (3) the renunciation and abandonment of sin, which is here styled being "dead to sin." In regard to each, the same figure of resurrection is used, to denote subsequent purity and happiness. "To die to a thing, or person, is, to have nothing to do with it or him; to be totally separated from them."—*Clarke*. Similar phraseology is found in ancient writers, specimens of which are quoted in support of this interpretation. For example: "I have nothing to do with thee: I am dead to thee." "Thou wert dead to me, because I have not visited thee." By a similar form of speech, the apostle describes the freedom of believers from the power of the Mosaic law. Gal. ii. 19. *Macknight* gives an entirely different interpretation. He translates the phrase, "we who have died by sin;" and declares that "the common translation, 'how shall we who are dead to sin live any longer therein?' is absurd." His argument, in proof of this assertion, is very extraordinary:—"for a person's living in sin who is dead to it, is evidently a contradiction in terms." This, indeed, would show the common translation to be absurd, if the apostle was maintaining the affirmative of the proposition. But he was denying it; and he appeals to this very absurdity, or contradiction in terms, in proof that those who were truly dead to sin could not possibly continue to live therein. The fact alleged by *Macknight*, therefore, justifies the common translation, instead of proving its absurdity. ¶ *Live any longer therein*. Continue to practise **t**. We are not to understand that

us as were baptized into Jesus Christ, were baptized into his death?

Christians become so perfect in the present life, so absolutely dead to sin, as to be entirely free from transgression. Paul himself confessed and lamented the fact, that imperfection cleaves even to the truly converted, ch. vii. 14—25. The meaning is, that just so far as a man becomes dead to sin, or free from its power, he will abstain from it; in other words, the converted man renounces his allegiance to sin, and cleaves to holiness. His prevailing desire is to obey the will of Him whose grace has been manifested in the gift of his Son. And, although he sometimes stumbles, he rises again, and earnestly, and with full purpose of heart, presses forward "toward the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." Phil. iii. 14.

3. *Know ye not*. The interrogative form is preserved, but here becomes affirmative in its character. Ye know, or ye ought to know, would express the same idea. He appeals to their conscience, that indulgence in sin was inconsistent with their own professions, as well as with the doctrine professed. "The simple argument in this verse and the two following is, that by our very profession made in baptism we have renounced sin, and have pledged ourselves to live to God."—*Barvrs*. ¶ *So many of us*. Namely, all who had named the name of Christ, believed on him as the Son of God, and received baptism as a token of their faith in him. ¶ *Baptized into Jesus Christ*. The Jews were baptized *into*, or, which is the same thing, "unto Moses, in the cloud and in the sea." 1 Cor. x. 2. Certain disciples at Ephesus had been baptized into John, or "unto John's baptism." Acts xix. 3. The meaning in each case is similar. The believers in the testimony of Moses, and of John the Baptist, and of Christ, had respectively professed their faith; and the first figuratively, and the last two literally, had been baptized in token of their sincerity. ¶ *Were baptized into his death*. We were baptized not only in token of our faith in Christ, but also into a certain resemblance of his death. He died for sin; we should die to sin. A parallel is run

4 Therefore we are buried with him by baptism unto death: that like as Christ was raised up from

the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.

through several verses between the bodily death of Christ and the spiritual death, so to speak, which Christians should experience in regard to sin. They should become as dead to sin, as insensible to its influences, as he was to all outward objects, after he gave up the ghost. As he put off his mortal body by death, and arose to immortality, so should they put off the body of sin, and arise to newness of life. Of this great change in moral condition baptism was a symbol, as well as of a profession of faith in Christianity. "We have, as it were, been made partakers of his death by baptism; we have come under a special relation to his death; we have engaged to die unto sin, as he died for it; we have a communion or participation in death to sin; Romp. ver. 6; Gal. ii. 19. The being baptized into his death is, therefore, an internal, moral, spiritual thing, of which the external rite of baptism is only a symbol; for the relation symbolized by baptism is in its own nature spiritual and moral." — *Stuart*.

4. *Therefore we are buried with him by baptism.* It is probable that baptism, in the early age of the church, and in the warm latitude where Christianity then chiefly prevailed, was administered by immersion; and to this form of the rite the allusion in the text is most natural. It does not hence follow, however, that immersion is the only proper form of baptism. See *Light-foot*, quoted in note on John iii. 23. Baptism with water is symbolical of inward purity, 1 Pet. iii. 21; and for this purpose the quantity of water is not material. But the apostle employs this drapery here to make more vivid the figure by which he represents the renunciation of sin, and allegiance to God; the putting off of the body of sin, and the entrance upon a new spiritual life; or, without figure, the change wrought in the human soul, whereby it ceases to love sin, and commences to love and obey God. Death and burial naturally imply a total disruption of all former connections. So conversion to Christianity, of which baptism was considered as a profession, should dis-

connect believers from all former evil desires and practices. In this sense, they are said to become dead to sin; and burial serves to increase the impressiveness of the figure. ¶ *Unto death.* Either, into a profession of faith in the death of Christ, and in those doctrines of which his death was the seal; or, perhaps more probably, into a solemn renunciation of sin, into a solemn pledge, by the assistance of God's grace, to hold no more connection with it — to be practically dead to its influences. ¶ *That like as.* In the same manner. The parallel, however, is not exact. The resurrection of Christ was bodily; that of believers was spiritual. Yet, in some respects, the one was a figure of the other. ¶ *As Christ was raised up, &c.* The literal resurrection of our Lord is doubtless intended. ¶ *By the glory of the Father.* By the glorious power of God, by which exercise of power God confirmed the testimony of Jesus, and acknowledged him to be his Son, ch. 1. 4. ¶ *We also should walk in newness of life.* We should commence a new life; we should conduct on different and more holy principles. *To walk* is often used in the sense of *to conduct*. See ch. viii. 1; Eph. iv. 1, 17; Col. i. 10; 2 Thess. iii. 11; 2 Pet. ii. 10. *Newness of life* is a Hebraism for new life. "The similitude consists in this; that as Christ, after his return to life, lived no more as a Jew among the Jews, but enjoyed a heavenly life, so also those who embraced his religion should cease to be mere Jews or Gentiles; they should imitate Christ in his heavenly life, their former manner of thought and life having been abandoned." — *Rosenmuller*. This comparison, like the parables of our Lord, must not be construed too strictly. It is sufficient if the general resemblance hold true, and be properly appreciated. Much of the imagery or drapery serves only to make the impression more vivid; and we should be led astray from the truth by interpreting too closely and strictly. Indeed, in this case, there are many points of difference, which the apostle did not deem it necessary to specify, because they are so perfectly manifest. The comparison

5 For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also *in the likeness of his resurrection* :

is of things spiritual with things natural. On one side it is literal ; on the other, figurative. The death and burial of Jesus were bodily ; the death and burial of his disciples, a spiritual death to sin — certainly not bodily, because Paul and his brethren had thus died and been buried, and were nevertheless yet alive in the flesh. So the resurrection of Christ was a literal resurrection of the body ; that of believers was a spiritual resurrection to a more pure method of life. Moreover, the spiritual change in believers, although it resembled the bodily change wrought in Christ by death and the resurrection, had no counterpart in his spiritual nature ; for he was free from sin before he was crucified, as well as after he was raised ; in other words, he was never a sinner, and consequently was incapable of such a change as was absolutely necessary in his disciples. Hence may be perceived the propriety of resting satisfied with the general truth illustrated by the comparison, instead of attempting to find an exact correspondence on one side to every particular embraced in the other.

5. *For if we have been planted together*, &c. The word here rendered *planted together* occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. It is said to allude to the sowing of seed simultaneously, as of grain in a field, which, when it is sprung up, is of a homogeneous character, ripening and coming to maturity at the same time. Its secondary signification is, likeness of character, or intimate connection. Hence *Stuart* translates, "If we have become kindred with him ;" and says, "The meaning is, If we have become dead to sin, as he died for sin, then shall we in like manner live a new life, when risen from our moral death, as he lived a new one after his resurrection." Here, however, the same caution is to be observed as before. The cases are similar in some respects, and dissimilar in others. Christ died for sin : men should die to sin. Christ experienced a bodily change : the change here indicated in men is of a moral and spiritual character. ¶ *In the likeness of his death.*

6 Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with *him*, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.

If we die to sin, become disconnected with it, and free from its influences, as he became dead to the world. ¶ *We shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection.* We shall enter upon a new life, as he did at the resurrection. The change wrought in us will be like a resurrection from death to life. The same figure was used by our Lord to describe the change from sinfulness to holiness, declaring that the true believer "is passed from death unto life." John v. 24. See also Eph. ii. 1. In the places cited, *death* indicates sinfulness, or death *in sin*, while here it indicates the abandonment of sin, or death *to sin*. Yet the figure of the resurrection is used, in both cases, to indicate the entrance upon a more pure spiritual life. Some have understood the apostle to refer here to the literal resurrection of mankind. But, however true it may be that we shall bear the image of Christ in the literal resurrection, this fact appears entirely foreign to the scope of the apostle's argument in this place. He is here treating exclusively of the spiritual change wrought in men by divine grace, in order to show the utter absurdity of the allegation that they would desire to continue in sin that grace might abound. This change he illustrates by the death and resurrection of our Lord. And the simple meaning of this verse seems to be, if we become like Jesus, by dying to sin as he died for it, we shall also resemble him by rising to newness of life, even as he arose from the tomb.

6. *Knowing this.* The apostle assumes that what follows is known to Christians, and that it will be conceded by others. ¶ *That our old man.* Our former corrupt habits and disposition, in contrast with the more pure desires consequent on conversion, which are styled the *new man*. See Eph. iv. 22—24 ; Col. iii. 9, 10, where a similar form of speech occurs. ¶ *Is crucified with him.* The idea of dying to sin, or renouncing its dominion, overcoming the sinful passions and propensities, so that they shall no more occasion sinfulness, is here repeated in another form. Here-

before it is styled simply death, or burial; here it is called crucifixion. Some suppose this figure is used with reference to the sharp, severe, and frequently painful struggle, by which the victory is obtained over the fleshly desires and passions, whence temptations arise. So *Grotius* and others. ¶ *That the body of sin might be destroyed.* By general consent it is agreed that the *body of sin* and the *old man* express substantially the same idea; and that one phrase is substituted for the other chiefly to avoid repetition. *Stuart* suggests, however, that the apostle purposely used the phrase *body of sin* to indicate the fleshly origin of sin. He says the passage "is explained by *Hammond*, *Schotgen*, *Glass*, *Tholuck*, and others, by referring it to the Hebrew idiom, in which *substance* and *body* are often employed, either in a kind of superfluous manner, or (which is the more usual fact) in order to add intensity to the expression. This interpretation well fits the sense of the passage. Explained in this manner, the whole runs thus: 'Our old man, that is, our carnal, natural man, is crucified as Christ was, in order that the substance or essence of our sinful passions might be destroyed.' Another explanation is admissible. *Σώμα* (*soma*) in some cases has the same meaning as *σάρξ* (*sarx*); comp. Rom. vii. 24; viii. 13; and taking *αμαρτίας* (*amartias*) here as an adjective, we may translate, 'in order that our sinful desires and lusts might be destroyed.' *Tholuck* objects to this as tautology; but, if it be so, then there is an abundance of tautology in all parts of the Bible. Comp. Rom. vii. 5 and viii. 3, where is an expression exactly equivalent. See also Rom. vii. 25. The true solution of the difficulty, as it seems to me, lies in the sentiment of the apostle here in the context, with respect to the *body* or fleshly part of man. He regards it, and speaks of it, as the seat and cause of passions and desires, which war against the soul, and bring destruction upon it; for example, Rom. vi. 12, 'Let not sin reign in your mortal body, so as to obey the lusts thereof.' Here it is the lusts of the body which are represented as constituting the reign or dominion of sin. So, in Rom. vii. 24, *the body of this death* means *the body which occasions this death or condemna-*

tion. So, again, in Rom. viii. 13, we have *the deeds (sins) of which the body is the cause or occasion.* The idea is the very same which is expressed by the apostle in Rom. vii. 23, when he speaks of 'the law in our members which wars against the law of the mind.' With these ideas and phrases in view, let us observe now that the apostle has just spoken of crucifying the *old man.* And what is the object? Plainly, in order that this *old man* might be put to death; that is, mortified, subdued, rendered inactive or inefficient as to its influence over us. He means a moral crucifixion, plainly, and not a natural or physical one. Nothing seems to be plainer, then, than that the *body of sin* means the same as *the old man.* Both, of course, mean *the natural internal man*; the sinful, un sanctified, internal man, in opposition to the regenerated and holy one. 'Let us crucify the old man,' says the apostle, 'in order that he may lose all power over us,' that he may be deprived of all influence, or that he may be destroyed. But, instead of repeating the phrase *the old man* a second time, he substitutes *the body of sin* in its room, as being altogether an equivalent for it.—It is either mere circumlocution for *sin itself*, or it is the body merely as the cause or occasion of sinning; and just so far as it is so, it should be mortified and rendered inefficient. Compare, in respect to the like sentiment, 1 Cor. ix. 27; and exactly the same idea is found in Rom. viii. 13." If, as *Stuart* evidently supposes, the apostle had special reference to the fact that the body, or the fleshly nature, is "the cause or occasion of sinning," the proverbial phrase quoted in the succeeding verse is peculiarly applicable to his argument. Of course neither *Stuart* nor any other reputable critic has supposed that the body is guilty of sin, to the exclusion of the mind. The body may be an exciting cause and instrument of transgression; but guilt attaches to the mind, which consents to the sin, and which only is rebellious against the divine law. The fact which he suggests, as in the mind of the apostle, is, that temptations to sin arise from the flesh; they may be traced back to it as their source. Such also is the doctrine distinctly stated by another apostle, *Jas.* i. 14, 15. Hence arises the necessity of

7 For he that is dead is freed from sin.

keeping the body under, and bringing it into subjection. 1 Cor. ix. 27. While the mind is in bondage to the body, iniquity abounds. When the mind controls the body, purity and righteousness are the result. The struggle between the two, even after conversion, is graphically portrayed in ch. vii. 14—25. ¶ *That henceforth we should not serve sin.* Should not be slaves of sin, or should not be subject to its control. In his figurative style, the apostle personifies sin, as a master to whom men had been in bondage. But, in respect to Christians, he declares that this master is dead, crucified, deprived of power, and they who had been servants are free. This, however, is to be taken comparatively, not absolutely; or as expressing what should be, rather than what actually was. For he testifies in ch. vii. that the struggle for mastery in his own case had not wholly ceased. "It will conduce much to the understanding of St. Paul in this and the two following chapters, if it be minded that these phrases, 'to serve sin, to be servants of sin, sin to reign in our mortal bodies, to obey sin in the lusts of our bodies, to yield our members instruments of unrighteousness unto sin, or servants of uncleanness, and to iniquity unto iniquity, to be freed from righteousness, to walk, live, or be after the flesh, to be carnally minded,' all signify one and the same thing, namely, the giving ourselves up to the conduct of our sinful, carnal appetites, to allow any of them the command over us, and the conduct and prevalency in determining us. On the contrary, that 'walking after the spirit, or in newness of life, crucifixion of the old man, the destruction of the body of sin, the deliverance from the body of death, to be freed from sin, to be dead to sin, alive unto God, to yield ourselves unto God, as those who are alive from the dead, yield our members servants of righteousness unto holiness, or instruments of righteousness unto God, to be servants of obedience unto righteousness, made free from sin, servants of righteousness, to be after the spirit, to be spiritually minded, to mortify the deeds of the body,' do all signify a constant and steady purpose, and sincere endeavor to obey the law and will of

God in everything; these several expressions being used in several places, as best serves the occasion, and illustrates the sense."—*Locke*. Shades of difference in idea may doubtless be recognized, even though the leading or general idea be the same.

7. *For he that is dead.* That is, literally or physically dead. Some suppose the meaning to be, *he that is dead to sin*. But this interpretation does not correspond with the general scope of the apostle's argument. See note on ver. 4. The comparison, all along, is between things natural and things spiritual, literal things and things figurative. The change wrought in the converted soul, the renunciation of sinful desires, and the cultivation of holy affections, dying to sin and rising to newness of life, is compared with literal death and burial on the one hand, and a literal resurrection to immortality on the other. The same idea, I apprehend, pervades the text, which is understood by many as a Jewish proverb, introduced by the apostle to illustrate his subject. In ver. 6 he declares that the old man, or the body of sin, has been crucified, or put to death, in order that the Christian should not serve sin, or that he should be free from its power. He adds here that the dead are free from sin, to show the propriety of his comparison; namely, that as the literally dead are entirely free from sin, so should the figuratively dead enjoy like freedom. ¶ *Free from sin.* Literally, justified from sin. Sin is personified as a master whom men serve. It is declared, in ver. 6, that those who are dead to sin, or in whom the old man is crucified and the body of sin destroyed, ought no longer to serve sin, and should no longer be in bondage to their former master. The figuratively dead ought to be delivered from this bondage, because the literally dead are absolutely liberated from it. The comparison, however, cannot be rigorously interpreted; because absolute freedom from the power of sin is not attained in the present life, as is fully acknowledged in ch. vii. But the change wrought by this figurative death corresponds, to a certain extent, with that which ensues on the death of the body. A sufficient

8 Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall

also live with him :

9 Knowing that Christ, being

reason why the death of the body involves entire liberation from the power of sin, is suggested by *Stuart*, quoted in the note on ver. 6. If the flesh is "the seat and cause of passions and desires which war against the soul, and bring destruction upon it," which he truly alleges to be the doctrine of the apostle, it is readily seen how literal death liberates men; freedom from bondage will naturally follow the destruction of that which gave power to sin. Such, substantially, is the interpretation given of this verse by many commentators, ancient and modern. "For as a man truly dead is freed from the authority of all those that in lifetime had power over him, so he that is dead to sin, in this figurative sense wherein I now speak, is freed from the power of sin acting formerly in him." — *Hammond*. "This expression of Paul, like many others, is taken from the Rabbinical sayings. Thus we have in the Talmud, 'When one is dead, he is become free from precepts.' If free from precepts, he is also free from transgression. Paul applies this to such as are dead to sin, as in ver. 2. Those who are dead return not to their former life; so neither ought those who are truly dead to sin to return to their former life." — *Grotius*. "That henceforth we should not serve sin—which we shall not do if we be truly dead unto it; for he that is dead is freed from sin, 1 Peter iv. 1; he sins no more." — *Whitby*. "This verse may be regarded as a kind of general maxim or truth, in regard to all such as die physically or naturally. The object of the writer is to draw a comparison between the effects of natural death and those of spiritual death: the first causes men to cease from all actions, and, of course, from their transgressions; and, by analogy, we may conclude that the second, which is a death unto sin, will do as much." — *Stuart*. To the same effect, *Barnes*, and many others.

8. The apostle here exhibits his subject in a somewhat different light. Hitherto he has chiefly labored to show that those who professed Christianity, and renounced their sins, who were dead to sin, should cease from sinning;

or, as in ver. 2, they should no longer live therein. He now proceeds to speak more particularly of that spiritual life which follows death to sin. Those who die to sin are raised to newness of life, or pass from death to life. And he enforces the idea that sin is wholly inconsistent with the nature of that life which is essentially holy. Death to sin implies the cessation of sinning. The new life implies an earnest effort to cultivate holy affections, and to obey God in all things. ¶ *If we be dead with Christ*. If we be dead to sin, as he died for sin. See note on ver. 3, 4. ¶ *We believe that we shall also live with him*. The apostle probably here refers, not to the future life, but to that spiritual life in this world to which conversion introduces men. Those who believe in Christ, and imbibe his spirit, here pass from death unto life. John v. 24. Thus, as Christ was literally raised from the dead, so his disciples are figuratively raised from death unto life. The leading idea in this verse is very similar to that which is expressed in ver. 4, in different terms. There is, however, a shade of difference. This verse, in connection with what follows, intimates the perpetuity of the new spiritual life, which had not before been mentioned. The idea is, that as Christ now enjoys an immortal life, being no more subject to death, ver. 9, so his disciples should become partakers of an endless spiritual life; a life from which they should not relapse into their former state of death. This perpetuity of the spiritual life was taught by our Lord under various forms of speech. "He that believeth on me hath everlasting life." "I am the living bread which came down from heaven; if any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever." "If a man keep my sayings, he shall never see death." "I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand." "I am the resurrection and the life; he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth, and believeth in me, shall never die." John vi. 47, 51; viii. 51; x. 28; xi. 25, 26. These declarations may, and

raised from the dead, dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him.

probably do, include the idea of a resurrection from natural death to immortal life; but they manifestly include also the idea of that spiritual life which commences in the hearts of believers in the present state of existence; the same life upon which our Lord declared that believers had already entered, John v. 24.

9. *Dieth no more.* Will never die again. His present existence is immortal. "I am he that liveth, and was dead; and behold I am alive for evermore." Rev. i. 18. The immortality of Jesus is referred to by the apostle as the basis of his comparison, designed to show that the spiritual life of his disciples shall also be perpetual. ¶ *Death hath no more dominion over him.* The same idea is repeated, in different language, that the impression on the mind may be more vivid. Natural death is here intended. The natural death of Christ is all along compared with the spiritual death of his disciples; and his resurrection to immortality, with their passage from spiritual death to spiritual life.

10. *He died unto sin.* Our Lord "was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." Of course, he could not die to sin in like manner as sinful men; that is, by renouncing it, or becoming free from its baneful influence. We are constrained, therefore, to interpret the phrase, in respect to him, in a different sense. He died on account of sinfulness. The sinfulness of men was the moral malady which he came to heal, by manifesting the riches of divine grace. This manifestation did not become perfect until he yielded up his life; or, as the apostle expresses it, "suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God." 1 Pet. iii. 18. On behalf or for the advantage of sinful men, he who was "holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners," Heb. vii. 26, submitted to the death of the cross, that he might exhibit full proof of divine love. See note on ch. v. 8. In this sense, as an exhibition of divine love to sinners, God "made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the

10 For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God.

righteousness of God in him." 2 Cor. v. 21. His death, then, was on account of sin, and designed to destroy its power, or to deliver us from its influence. From what follows, the scope of the argument seems to be this: As Jesus died on account of sin, to destroy its power, so his disciples should become dead to sin, by resisting its influence to the utmost, and thus becoming co-workers with him. In this way their death to sin would, in some degree, correspond with his death on account of sin, or with reference to sin. ¶ *Once.* Once only. As we frequently say, once for all. The idea is, that no repetition is necessary. The same word occurs Heb. x. 20. ¶ *He liveth unto God.* The construction of this phrase is like that of the foregoing, and requires a similar interpretation. As in the former case we understand the meaning to be, that, in regard to sin, Christ died that he might destroy its power, we may in like manner understand this phrase to mean that, in respect to God, he lives to promote the divine glory. So that the implied argument is, that as Christ lives for the manifestation of God's glory, his disciples also, having been renewed in the spirit of their minds, should earnestly strive to glorify God, both in their bodies and in their spirits, which are God's. Eph. iv. 23; 1 Cor. vi. 20.

11. *Likewise.* In like manner. The application of the argument is here made. The disciples were to imitate their Master to the extent of their ability. ¶ *Reckon ye also yourselves.* Regard yourselves. Be conscious to yourselves. Realize your proper position. ¶ *To be dead indeed unto sin.* That you are or should be insensible to its influences, and free from its power, as the literally dead are disconnected with all that formerly affected them. See note on ver. 2. ¶ *But alive unto God.* Making it the great object of life to love and obey God, that thus ye may glorify him. ¶ *Though Jesus Christ our Lord.* As the Lord Jesus is the medium through whom divine grace is communicated to men, so all their thoughts, desires, and actions, prompted

11 Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

by that grace, may be regarded as expressed or performed through him. *Stuart* judiciously obviates the difficulty which might seem to be involved in the fact "that Christ lived to God, in the sense here supposed to be asserted, before his resurrection, as well as after it. Now, then, can the apostle be supposed to assert what would imply that it was only after his resurrection that he lived to God? The answer to this is virtually exhibited in the context. The apostle had said that Christ died to sin, once for all; death has no more dominion over him. Now, as his living to God is placed in antithesis to this, the necessary implication is, that he lives to Him in such a way as to have no more concern with suffering and sorrow on account of sin; he lives to Him in a state that is new, and the happiness of which is not interrupted by sin. In like manner believers are to become dead to sin; that is, to be unaffected by its solicitations, and alive to God; that is, devoted in heart and life to the honor and glory of God, or living in a state in which God, and not sin, shall be the chief object of their regard." It may also be observed, that the comparison between the death and resurrection of Christ, ver. 10, and the death and new life of believers, in the text, will not hold good in the same sense; the one being literal, and the other figurative. The difference is sufficiently described in the note on ver. 4.

12. *Let not sin therefore reign.* This exhortation naturally follows the preceding argument. Here, as in ch. v. 21, sin is personified as a tyrant, holding sway over men, and compelling the members of the body to iniquitous practices. ¶ *In your mortal body.* The body is represented as the assailable part of man. The apostle "here, as also in the following chapter, ver. 18 and 24, and elsewhere, placing the root of sin in the body, his sense seems to be, let not sin reign over you, by the lusts of your mortal bodies." — *Locke.* ¶ *That ye should obey it.* That ye should obey sin, here represented as a master,

12 Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof.

13 Neither yield ye your mem-

or one striving for the mastery. The idea is, let not sin, or a propensity to evil, so affect you through your mortal body as to render you disobedient to God. The epithet *mortal* is added, perhaps, to show the folly of allowing that which is weak and perishable to influence and overcome the immortal part of man. The mind should control the body, instead of being in subjection to it. ¶ *In the lusts thereof.* That is, in the lusts of the body. See James i. 14, 15. Most, if not indeed all, the temptations to sin, arise, in some form, from the body. Such is manifestly the doctrine taught by the apostle. "The flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary the one to the other." Gal. v. 17. Scarcely a form of iniquity can be named or imagined, which is not comprehended among the "works of the flesh," enumerated in Gal. v. 19—21. The connection between some sins and the lusts of the flesh, such as "drunkenness, revellings," and the like, is perfectly plain; in regard to others, such as "idolatry," "wrath," "heresies," and "envyings," the connection is less obvious. Yet Paul denominates them, indiscriminately, "the works of the flesh." Not that the flesh is in all cases the instrument of transgression; for some of these "works" are purely mental; but the temptation arises from the fleshly lusts. Nor, indeed, when the body is the agent, as in the case of "drunkenness," are we to understand that the guilt of transgression attaches to the body. The mind is the guilty agent; and the guilt consists in yielding to the solicitations of the fleshly lusts, or in being more obedient to the animal passions than to the divine law. Against the influence of these passions and lusts the apostle earnestly admonishes his brethren. The form of his admonition implies that they could not expect the entire eradication of these sinful propensities, while they continued to be clothed in mortal bodies. The same fact is plainly declared in ch. vii. 18—25. But he exhorts them to struggle manfully

bers as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive

from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God:

against all temptations arising from this source; to resist the influence of fleshly lusts; to keep the body under, and bring it into subjection, 1 Cor. ix. 27; in a word, to exercise dominion over the body, and not to be brought under its dominion, through its "lusts, which war against the soul." 1 Pet. ii. 11. In this view of the case, a peculiar force attaches to the declaration in ver. 7, "he that is dead is freed from sin:" liberated from its influence; justified, or made pure from its defilement. When the body dies, its lusts perish. No further temptation can arise from them. Unless, therefore, some other source of temptation shall be opened in the future life, it may be reasonably expected that men will not continue to sin in that life. No man sins without temptation. When temptation ceases, sin also will cease. And when the source of temptation is destroyed, it is not easily seen whence further temptation can arise. This result fully corresponds with the declaration of our Lord concerning the future life, Luke xx. 36, and of his apostle, 1 Cor. xv. 42—58.

13. *Neither yield ye your members.* That is, the members of your body. This clause is substantially a repetition of the preceding verse, in different language. There, the admonition is general, to resist the power of sin, and not to allow it to have dominion through the lusts of the body. Here, the admonition is more specific, that the members of the body be not permitted to be servants of lusts, or evil propensities, as instruments of transgression. In either case, the propensity to sin is to be restrained, resisted, and conquered, by the energy of the mind enlightened and invigorated by divine grace. ¶ *As instruments of unrighteousness.* Let them not be used for any sinful purpose whatever. ¶ *Unto sin.* Or, in the service of sin. Yield not your members unto sin, or to the service of sin, as instruments of unrighteousness, is said by some critics to be the more proper construction. "The body of itself cannot of course sin, any more than any other mass of mat-

ter; but through its senses and propensities, which are all good in themselves, and only evil when allowed to gain the ascendancy over the moral and spiritual faculties, the body can bring even the mind into subjection to the law of the members, and turn the very instruments created by God for righteous and holy purposes into weapons of moral evil. Thus hunger may lead to gluttony, thirst to drunkenness, love to lust, speech to slander, and, by this civil insurrection and war within man, the true sovereignty may be usurped by the mob of bodily passions. But it is a totally unauthorized and most pernicious error, to infer that man is born naturally and wholly depraved, because he is connected for a time with this material organization, out of whose perversion these occasions to sin arise. The mind and the members were both pronounced 'good' by the All-wise Creator, and it is only when the order of authority is reversed, and the law of the mind is subjugated to the law of the members, that we can call either mind or members evil. He, then, libels not only himself, but his Maker, who literally, and not in an impassioned and figurative sense, calls his nature totally depraved. Man can hardly sink so low, or so entirely divest himself of the spiritual attributes, that something good, some 'moral remains,' will not survive. *Chrysostom* well remarks: 'He does not say, Let not the flesh live, neither act, but, Let not sin reign. For he came not to abrogate human nature, but to rectify the will.'—*Livermore.* ¶ *But yield yourselves unto God.* Wholly and entirely. Devote yourselves altogether to his service. He is your only lawful master, and him only are you bound to obey. His dominion is absolute, whether exercised personally or by an authorized delegate. Yield your whole body, soul, and spirit, to him, as your reasonable service. ¶ *Alive from the dead.* As partakers already of spiritual life. Eph. ii. 1, 5. See also ver. 11. ¶ *And your members.* While the whole man is consecrated to God, and devoted to his service, let the several members in particular be placed at his

14 For sin shall not have dominion over you : for ye are not under

the law, but under grace.

15 What then? shall we sin,

disposal, as instruments of righteousness ; that is, as instruments of doing those things which are right. Let the members of the body, which heretofore have been used in the service of sin, be henceforth consecrated to God's service, and used in obedience to his commands.

14. *For sin.* The propensity to evil is still personified as a master, or one struggling for the mastery. ¶ *Shall not have dominion over you.* See ch. v. 21. The reign of sin shall be superseded by the dominion of grace. Ye shall be delivered from bondage to sin. Such is the gracious assurance. The full realization of the promised blessing may not be expected until we shall put on immortality. Yet it is enjoyed, in part, in the present life. So much so, that the apostle speaks of Christians as already emancipated from the power of sin, and as having become the servants of righteousness. This, however, is to be understood with the necessary qualifications and limitations. See ch. vii. ¶ *For we are not under the law, but under grace.* This declaration of the apostle has been misunderstood, and in many cases grossly abused. Some have supposed the ceremonial law is intended ; but this seems not to correspond with the apostle's argument. Others have understood the apostle to affirm an exemption from the authority of the moral law ; but the moral law is simply the eternal law of right, which a righteous God will never abrogate. On this point, *Stuart* well remarks : "What is the divine law, but a transcript of the divine will? And are not Christians to be conformed to this? Is not all the law summed up in these two declarations : 'Thou shalt love the Lord with all thine heart ; and thy neighbor as thyself?' And are Christians absolved from loving God, and their neighbor? If not, then this part of the subject stands unembarrassed by anything which the apostle has said in our text or context." Of the text itself he says : "The simple meaning seems to me plainly to be, 'Ye are not under a legal dispensation, but a gracious one.'" Other authorities deserve notice ; some of which follow. "By law, in this verse, *Locke*

understands the law of Moses ; and by *grace*, the Gospel. But the more general sense of law agrees better with the apostle's argument. From ver. 15 it appears, that his enemies, not understanding his doctrine, that men 'are not under law, but under grace,' had calumniated him as teaching that men are not under law as a rule of duty, and so may sin with perfect safety. To this calumny the apostle answered, that this not being under law as a rule of justification, which was his doctrine, instead of being an encouragement to sin, lays men under the strongest obligation to obey law and avoid sin. For the nature of grace, that is, of the gracious new covenant under which men are placed, is this : it does not require an impossible perfect obedience, but the obedience of faith ; it promises the assistance of the spirit of God, to enable men to obey law sincerely, as a rule of duty ; and it offers the pardon of sin to all, on repentance. Law, as a rule of justification, is of a quite different nature. It requires perfect obedience, under the penalty of death ; it offers no assistance for enabling those who are under it to perform its requisitions ; and it grants no pardon to any sinner on his repentance. Such being the nature of law and grace, it is evident that were law, by reducing the sinner to despair, takes from him both the inclination and the capacity of repenting. Whereas the gracious new covenant, under which all mankind are placed, by its requisitions and promises both encourages and enables sinners to repent ; which is the reason that, ever since the fall, mankind have been placed under that gracious covenant, and not under law, as the rule of their justification. In short, the apostle's doctrine, 'ye are not under law, but under grace,' is and ever hath been true of all the posterity of Adam, from the beginning ; and instead of weakening the obligation of the law of God written on the hearts of men, that doctrine establishes it in the most effectual manner."—*Macknight*. "The promise is given, that sin would be even better subdued under grace, or the gracious influence of Christianity, than under a legal system

because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid.

like the Mosaic code, or, in general, any dispensation of law. For law appeals to only a part of man's nature—his will, conscience, understanding, and fears; but grace to the higher affections and aspirations, likewise, which are far more availing and enduring. The fact, therefore, that they were under the gracious system of Christianity, with all its tender and affecting motives of Christ and him crucified, instead of relaxing their moral conduct, was even more effectual than the austere code of Moses to guard them against sin."—*Livermore*. But the subject is placed in a yet clearer light in the following very sensible remarks: "It may be asked here, what is meant by this declaration? Does it mean that Christians are absolved from all the obligations of the law? I answer: (1.) The apostle does not affirm that Christians are not bound to *obey the moral law*. The whole scope of his reasoning shows that he maintains that they are. The whole structure of Christianity supposes the same thing. Comp. Matt. v. 17—19. (2.) The apostle means to say that Christians are not under the law as *legalists*, or as attempting to be justified by it. They seek a different plan of justification altogether; and they do not attempt to be justified by their own obedience. The Jews did: they do not. (3.) It is *implied* here that the effect of an attempt to be justified by the law was, not to subdue sins, but to excite them, and to lead to indulgence in them. Justification by works would destroy no sin, would check no evil propensity, but would leave a man to all the ravages and riotings of unsubdued passion. If, therefore, the apostle had maintained that men were justified by works, he could not have consistently exhorted them to abandon their sins. He would have had no powerful motives by which to urge it. But he here says that the Christian was seeking justification on a plan which *contemplated* and which *accomplished* the destruction of sin; and he therefore infers that sin should not have dominion over them."—*Barnes*. I apprehend the declaration in the text is substantially a reiteration of what is said in ch. iii. 19—26. Through the

operation of mere law, no man could be justified; none could yield perfect obedience, nor escape the power of sin. By the gracious method revealed by God, the assurance was given that the power of sin should be destroyed, and mankind be liberated from its bondage. What man could not earn by his utmost exertions, God would bestow freely, as the fruit of his grace. Here, then, a reasonable hope was presented that sin should not have perpetual dominion over men. The grace of God was pledged for their deliverance. And, although entire deliverance may not be expected while the spirit is encumbered with the fleshly tabernacle, yet even in this life the true Christian experiences a degree of freedom from sin which is equivalent to a resurrection from death unto life. See ver. 1—11.

15. *What then?* What follows? What conclusion results from the fact that we are not under law, but under grace? ¶ *Shall we sin*, &c. Substantially the same objection which is noticed in ver. 2. There are those who love sin so intensely that they imagine nothing short of the most abject dread of torture is sufficient to induce men to abstain from it. To assert that divine grace will pardon sin, that it will supersede law, so far as to accomplish that deliverance from sin which the law was never intended to accomplish, is equivalent, in their opinion, to destroying the only effectual barrier against sin, and opening the floodgates of iniquity. Such were those to whom the apostle here refers. He supposes the objection to arise at once in their minds, If we are not under law, which forbids and punishes sin, which requires perfect obedience and is satisfied with nothing else, but under grace, which pardons sin on repentance, and which will finally destroy its power, and deliver mankind entirely from its influence, why not sin with a high hand? What is left to restrain the vicious, or to deter men from the most gross iniquity? The objection implies, at least, that the apostle's doctrine would have a demoralizing effect on believers. This objection the apostle meets with his most decisive negative, *God forbid*. See note on ch. iii. 4. And in the following

16 Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye

obey; whether of sin unto death; or of obedience unto righteousness?

verses he points out the unsubstantial nature of the objection; showing that men are not so delivered from law as to escape the just meed of their conduct; that grace does not deliver them from any penalty justly incurred; but that it so destroys the power of evil propensities, so transfers the affections from sin to holiness, so inspires a grateful desire to obey God, that believers cease to disobey the law, and of course cease to endure its penalty.

16. *Know ye not.* Do ye not already know? Has not your past experience demonstrated the fact? The apostle assumes, in this verse and those which follow, that his brethren had experienced the consequences of both sinfulness and holiness. And he appeals to the knowledge which they had thus acquired, whether there were any actual foundation for the objection in ver. 15; in other words, whether the painful consequences of sin were more desirable than the peace and joy resulting from holiness. Retaining his figure of the relation between master and servant, he proceeds to describe the results of sinfulness and holiness; and in this description is found a sufficient answer to the objection. ¶ *To whom ye yield yourselves servants, &c.* Servitude, among the ancients, was sometimes voluntary, sometimes involuntary. In either case obedience was rigidly required. The reference here is to voluntary servitude. An appeal is made to a well-known fact, that the servant became the property of his master, and must yield obedience to all his commands. If he served a good master, fortunate was his condition. If he served a bad master, he could not escape the bitterness of servitude. ¶ *His servants ye are to whom ye obey.* Ye are bound to implicit obedience. Your master has entire control over you. Such was the former character of slavery; and such it still continues to be. When will this illustration cease to be painfully realized? ¶ *Whether of sin.* The application is here made of the general truth before stated. The law of servitude holds good in morals as well as literally. He who abandons himself to sin is as truly a

slave to sin as any bond-servant to his master. It is implied, moreover, that every man must be subject to some master, either for good or for evil; that is, he must obey God, and yield true service to him, or, by disobedience to his commandments, become the servant of sin. In either case, he was a servant to that power to which he yielded obedience. So that, even under the reign of grace, if men yielded service to sin, or, in other words, abandoned themselves to sinfulness, they became the servants of sin, and must expect to reap the bitter fruits of such slavery. ¶ *Unto death.* To that death which is the proper wages of sin. See note on ver. 23. To whatever master's service they devoted themselves, they must expect such recompense for their service as that master was accustomed to give. If they served sin, they would surely receive the ordinary wages of sin. Dropping the figure used by the apostle, the sense is, that sinners will surely be punished, or will endure the penalty of sin. ¶ *Or of obedience.* That is, to God, or to his divine law. ¶ *Unto righteousness.* The contrast is between sin or disobedience, on the one hand, and obedience to the divine law, on the other; between the consequence of sin and the consequence of obedience. The consequence of sin is death. The consequence of obedience is the opposite of death; it is that happiness which is styled life and eternal life. This life is not bestowed as a reward, as if it were earned, but as a gift: it is none the less, however, the appointed result of holiness. Eternal life is the gracious gift of God; yet it is bestowed through the intervention of righteousness. See ch. v. 21. In short, God makes men happy by making them holy; he gives them eternal life, by delivering them from the bondage of sin, and making them the willing servants of righteousness. Such being the appointed consequences of obedience and disobedience, both of which had already been realized by the persons here addressed, see ver. 17, they could readily understand that the objection in ver. 15 was wholly unfounded. It is absurd to suppose that

17 But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin; but ye have obeyed from the heart that

men should desire to sin because they are not under the law, but under grace, when their whole past experience has convinced them that the way of transgressors is hard, while wisdom's ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace; when, indeed, they know that their former transgressions, whereof they are now ashamed, had resulted in moral death. And yet, in these latter days, the same objection is often heard from those of whom better things might be expected, and things which accompany salvation.

17. *But God be thanked.* By this ascription of praise to God, the apostle evidently attributes the change in the moral condition of his brethren to the divine agency. God had graciously turned them from sin to holiness. He had brought them out of the horrible pit and the miry clay, and placed their feet on a rock, and put a new song in their mouth, even praise unto God. Ps. xl. 2, 3. He had delivered them from the bondage of sin, and had filled their hearts with gratitude and a spirit of cheerful obedience. They had not wrought this change by their own exertions; but God had wrought it in them by the gracious influence of his spirit. Hence the apostle not only rejoices on their behalf, but he offers thanksgivings to God for such a manifestation of his grace. ¶ *That ye were the servants of sin.* Such is the literal translation of the passage. Yet we are not to understand the apostle to express thankfulness, only, or chiefly, that his brethren had been servants of sin. In a qualified sense, to be sure, such thankfulness might properly be expressed; for God neither does or permits anything which he will not overrule for good. The wrath of man shall praise him, and the remainder of wrath he will restrain. Ps. lxxvi. 10. But this is not the cause of thankfulness in this place. The apostle thanks God for the change wrought in his brethren; not so much that they had been servants of sin, as that they had been delivered from bondage, and had become obedient to the divine law. In other words, he thanks God for the entire fact expressed

form of doctrine which was delivered you.

18 Being then made free from

in the whole verse, and not merely for the single portion of truth embraced in this clause of it. See note on Matt. xi. 25, where the phraseology is of a similar character. ¶ *But ye have obeyed from the heart.* Ye have transferred your allegiance; ye have renounced the dominion of sin, and have become the willing subjects of God; ye have yielded cheerful obedience to his law, so far as ye have learned its requirements. "The apostle means to express his cheering confidence in the reality of their devotedness to the cause of Christ, which they professed to love; and this seems to me to be all that he here means to express. Tholuck says, however, that this phrase 'is designed to render conspicuous the idea of the free will with which the sinner first came to Jesus and received pardon.' Was it true, then, that Jesus first sought the sinner, or the sinner him? Do we 'love him because he first loved us;' or, is it the reverse? That the sinner was 'willing,' I doubt not; but that he was 'made willing in the day of God's power,' seems to be equally plain. Does not 'God work in us both to will and to do'?" — *Stuart.* ¶ *That form of doctrine.* Or *type of doctrine.* Some commentators have imagined that *form* (Greek, *typos*) is used in the sense of *mould*, and that the apostle intended to represent the disciples as "poured like melted wax or metal into this mould, taking the exact impression and stamp of Christianity." Much more simple, and more clearly expressive of the apostle's meaning, in my judgment, are the remarks of *Barnes.* "The form or type of doctrine means that shape or model of instruction which was communicated. It does not differ materially from *the doctrine itself*; 'you have obeyed that doctrine,' &c. You have yielded obedience to the instructions, the rules, the tenor, of the Christian revelation. The word *doctrine* does not refer to an abstract dogma, but means instruction, that which is taught. And the meaning of the whole expression is simply that they had yielded a cheerful and hearty obedience to that which had been communicated to them by the teachers of

sin, ye became the servants of righteousness.

19 I speak after the manner of men, because of the infirmity of

your flesh : for as ye have yielded your members servants to uncleanness and to iniquity, unto iniquity ; even so now yield your members

the Christian religion. Comp. ch. i. 8."

¶ *Which was delivered you.* Tyndale translates, "whereunto ye were delivered." This is generally regarded as the more literal and proper translation. *Stuart* renders it "in which he had been instructed ;" a form of words expressing very nearly the same sense as the common translation. If this be adopted as the true rendering of the phrase, the meaning is sufficiently evident. But if the former be preferred, the remarks of *Locke* are worthy of consideration. "Unto which you were delivered : no harsh, but an elegant expression, if we observe that St. Paul here speaks of sin and the gospel as of two masters, and that those he writes to were taken out of the hands of the one, and delivered over to the other, which they having from their hearts obeyed, were no longer the slaves of sin ; he whom they obeyed being, by the rule of the foregoing verse, truly their master." This comports well with the illustration drawn from servitude, and may be the idea intended to be conveyed. But the common translation conveys an idea more simple, more easily understood, equally consistent with the general scope of the passage, and is, I think, to be preferred.

18. *Being then made free from sin.* Delivered from bondage to it ; emancipated from servitude. This verse reiterates, in a different form, the idea embraced in ver. 17. Indeed, both verses seem designed by the apostle rather to make his brethren feel their personal interest in the truth announced in ver. 16, than to announce any new truth. He had there asserted that men were servants to the masters whom they obeyed, both literally and figuratively. He now assures his brethren that they had personally been delivered from their former master, from their bondage to sin ; or had been "made free from sin," and had entered into the service of another master, whom they could serve cheerfully, heartily, and happily ; they had become the "servants of righteousness." The same figure of speech is employed as before ; and sin

and righteousness are personified, as masters exercising power over their servants. ¶ *Ye became the servants of righteousness.* As in ver. 16, the idea is implied that men must be servants of some master, of sin or of righteousness. Freedom from the one implies allegiance to the other. The same idea is easily perceived in ver. 20, 22. The requirements of sin and of righteousness, pursuing the apostle's figure, are diametrically opposite. Hence disobedience to the one is obedience to the other ; renouncing the service of the one is equivalent to voluntarily entering the service of the other. The political maxim, that "resistance to tyrants is obedience to God," holds good in regard to the moral servitude here mentioned. Resistance against the tyranny of sin is of itself obedience to the law of righteousness. What one requires, the other forbids. Hence it is as impossible to disobey the one without obeying the other, as it is to serve two masters at the same time, whose requirements are entirely opposite to each other. The disciples became the servants of righteousness, therefore, as the natural and necessary consequence of deliverance from bondage to sin. In plain words, just so far as they ceased from being sinful, they became obedient to the divine law, or became righteous.

19. *I speak after the manner of men.* I speak as men are accustomed to speak. I adopt an illustration drawn from human customs. I use language borrowed from a state of things with which you are familiar. ¶ *Because of the infirmity of your flesh.* Because of your inability to understand an argument of a purely spiritual kind. "Because of the feebleness or imperfection of your spiritual knowledge, or of your ability to comprehend me, which is occasioned by the flesh, that is, the carnal part, having so great an influence." — *Stuart.* "The sense here is, I use an illustration drawn from common affairs, from the well-known relations of master and slave, because you will better see the force of such an illustration with which

servants to righteousness, unto holiness.

you have been familiar, than you would one that would be more abstract, and more strictly spiritual. It is a kind of apology for drawing an illustration from the relation of master and slave."—*Barnes*. "He had some reason to make some little kind of apology for a figure of speech, which he dwells upon quite down to the end of the chapter."—*Locke*. Most commentators concur in this view of the text, which is probably correct. *Whitby*, however, gives a different interpretation, which is not unworthy of attention. "The sense which the ancients put upon these words is this: 'I frame my exhortation with a due consideration of the infirmity of our flesh, requiring that only which, even to human reason, seems highly equitable; namely, that you should do that service now to God which you have formerly done to sin.' I rather think the apostle discourseth to this effect. In this discourse of your being servants formerly to sin, and your obligation now to be servants of righteousness, I speak that which all natural men must have had experience of, by reason of the infirmity of the flesh, and of which they may thence take a just idea; requiring only that as they have yielded their members instruments of sin, so they would yield them instruments of righteousness." ¶ *As ye have yielded, &c.* See note on ver. 13. ¶ *Servants to uncleanness.* To impurity. The reference seems to be to the gross vices and impure works of the flesh detailed in ch. i. ¶ *And iniquity.* Sin, in any of its forms. ¶ *Unto iniquity.* For the sake of iniquity; for the purpose of being sinful. It is implied that their former sinful condition was not an accidental result of innocent endeavors on their part; but that they had loved iniquity, and had transgressed with greediness; that they had voluntarily served sin, until they became its bond-slaves. This state of mind is described in ch. i. 32. ¶ *Servants to righteousness.* See ver. 13. ¶ *Unto holiness.* For the sake of holiness. In order to become holy. Be as active in the cause of holiness as you formerly were in the cause of iniquity. The remarks of *Livermore* on this verse,

20 For when ye were the servants of sin, ye were free from

whether or not they unfold the precise idea here expressed by the apostle, doubtless embrace an important truth: "As in one case there was a progress from step to step, a piling up of sin on sin, and your faculties, by the momentum of habit and use, acquired greater and greater proneness to evil; so now, as the process is reversed, these same members and powers of your nature gain more and more aptitude for the new service, and go on from moral righteousness to spiritual holiness, from justification to sanctification."

20. *Servants of sin.* See note on ver. 16. ¶ *Free from righteousness.* The meaning of this phrase is not perfectly obvious. Surely the apostle does not mean that while his brethren were sinners the law of righteousness had no claims or binding force on them; that they were free from the authority of this law. Indeed, their sin consisted in the transgression of this law. 1 John iii. 4. Although they did not regard its authority, it remained in full force; and while they transgressed its requirements, they endured its penalty. Some other meaning must be sought. The true solution of the difficulty is probably this: "He must mean, then, that in their own estimation, or according to the tenor of their own reasonings, they were absolved from obligation to pursue holiness. I understand him here as making an appeal *ad hominem*, as in the preceding verse, and as saying, in effect: 'Since you formerly, when in the service of sin, counted yourselves free from the dominion of holiness; so now, as the servants of righteousness, count yourselves free from obligation to obey sin.' Ver. 19 I understand as making appeal to the state of facts merely; ver. 20, as appealing to the views and feelings of Christians, in respect to their old and new condition. In this way all is apposite, and we are not forced to do violence to the laws of language."—*Stuart*. The note of *Barnes* on this verse is very remarkable: "That is, in your former state, you were not at all under the influence of righteousness. You were entirely devoted to sin; a strong expression of total depravity. It settles the question;

righteousness.

21 What fruit had ye then in

and proves that they had no native goodness." That some men should consider the question settled by such proof, would not be surprising; but *Barnes* is justly regarded as a man of sterling common sense. What is the nature of this proof of total depravity? God does not bestow existence upon beings absolutely corrupt, as they come from his hands, whom he cannot love, or even regard with complacency. This fact would require that the general declaration should be understood in a modified sense, even if it were regarded as an assertion that the servants of sin "were not at all under the influence of righteousness." But, leaving this fact out of the case, the form of the comparison between servitude to sin and servitude to righteousness, which runs through several verses, requires the same modification of general expressions. For example, the apostle just as distinctly and just as absolutely asserts, in ver. 18, 22, that his converted brethren had been "made free from sin," as he here asserts that they were formerly "free from righteousness." Does he therefore mean that they "were not at all under the influence of" sin? that they both could and did serve God with pure hearts, without the slightest degree of sinfulness? His description of his own case, in ch. vii. 14—25, furnishes a sufficient answer. That men will be entirely delivered from bondage to sin, cleansed from all iniquity, and made absolutely pure in heart, in the future life, when the work of grace is fully accomplished, is doubtless true. It is equally true that while the soul is encumbered by flesh and blood more or less of imperfection remains. The most sincere and devoted Christian has occasion to lament, as Paul did, that the law in his members wars against the law of his mind, and sometimes brings him into captivity. Ch. vii. 23. Yet of men in this condition the apostle says, they have been "made free from sin." If those who are "free from sin," in this life, are nevertheless subject to some remains of imperfection, and if this side of the comparison, though absolute in form, must be understood in such a modified sense, will not the

those things whereof ye are now ashamed? for the end of those

same rule apply to the other side, and require a similar modification of the phrase "free from righteousness"? How, then, does that phrase *prove* the doctrine of total depravity? The most, I apprehend, which can be said to be proved by the apostle's language, is this: before conversion the heart of man is in love with sin, and under its influence, to a less or greater extent. Some are more depraved than others. In some cases there appears an almost entire abandonment to evil. In all cases the influence of sin is so much greater than that of righteousness, that the sinner may be said to be "free from righteousness," not absolutely, but comparatively. After true conversion the heart is devoted to God, loves the law of righteousness, and earnestly strives to attain purity. Some make greater advances than others. In some cases, by the influence of divine grace, extraordinary purity is attained. And in all cases of true conversion, the influence of grace, or the love of righteousness, is so much stronger than that of sin, that the convert may be said to be "free from sin," not absolutely, but comparatively. Nevertheless, the sinner has some goodness in him, and God loves him, ch. v. 8; and the most pure saint on earth still feels the need of pardoning mercy, ch. vii. 24, 25.

21. *What fruit had ye then?* What reward did you receive? What were the consequences of your sinfulness? The figure is here taken from the laws of vegetation, as in Gal. vi. 7, 8. If a man sow to the flesh, he must expect to gather the fruits of the flesh. Such fruit had already been gathered by the persons here addressed, while they yielded their members servants to uncleanliness and to iniquity. Verse 19. The apostle appeals to them whether such fruit was desirable or pleasant; whether it was such as to tempt them to relapse into ungodliness, after having once been delivered from it. His argument, it should be remembered, is directed against the objection that men might be tempted to commit sin, because they were not under the law, but under grace. He urges the fact, therefore, that the former experience of

things is death.

22 But now being made free

punishment for sin, or the consequences or fruit of sin, would operate strongly to induce believers to avoid it in future. The point of the question is not unlike the declaration of another apostle: "The time past of our life may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles, when we walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries." 1 Pet. iv. 3. They had already had abundant experience of such conduct, and had tasted its bitter fruit. Their own consciences would testify that there was no sufficient inducement to repeat the experiment. ¶ *In those things whereof ye are now ashamed.* The general reference is to all kinds of iniquity, indiscriminately. There may be a special allusion to those scandalous works of the flesh charged against the Gentiles in chap. i., and equally chargeable against the Jews, who were guilty of the same or similar vices, chap. ii. 1—3. All sin, even in its less repulsive forms, appears so hateful to the true Christian, as a manifestation of ingratitude to a kind and gracious Father, that he is ashamed when he reflects that he was formerly devoted to it. "Having been made virtuous, you cannot now even remember your wickedness without shame."—*Rosenmuller.* ¶ *For the end.* The consequence; the result; or, according to the figure used in the first clause of this verse, *the fruit.* *Stuart* intimates that *τέλος* (*telos*), here rendered *the end*, is to be understood as the *final result.* Yet the apostle was addressing men who had been sinners, but were delivered from bondage. They had already tasted the bitter fruit of sin; they had endured that death which is the penalty, or fruit, or end, of sin. They had passed from death unto life. So that death was not the final result of their sinfulness: that is, if it be true that gratitude to God for redemption from iniquity will contribute anything to the happiness of the redeemed. ¶ *Of those things.* Namely, of the sins whereof they were now ashamed. ¶ *Is death.* See note on ver. 23.

22. *But now.* Since conversion. *Now* is contrasted with *then*, in ver. 21.

from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holi-

They were formerly sinners; and *then* the bitter fruits of sin were realized. But they had been delivered from the power of sin, and made loyal to God; and *now* they enjoyed a very different and more satisfactory fruit. ¶ *Made free from sin.* See note on ver. 18. ¶ *Fruit unto holiness.* Most interpreters understand the apostle to mean that holiness is the fruit of service rendered to God, or of obedience to the divine commandments. But this seems not a proper contrast with ver. 21, where the fruit of sin is declared to be death, not merely sinfulness. Hence I prefer the explanation given by *Stuart*, who translates the phrase, "Ye have fruit in respect to holiness," and justifies his translation thus: "The consequence of serving God it is not the writer's object to represent as being the attainment of holiness; for serving God implies that holiness already existed. It is the *fruits*, that is, the consequences, of serving God, which Paul here brings into view; for nothing else would make out the antithesis to the preceding verse; a circumstance overlooked by many commentators." ¶ *And the end everlasting life.* The result, or consequence, or fruit, of holiness, is happiness, here styled *life*, in opposition to death, in ver. 21. *Life*, or *eternal life*, is generally used to denote holiness, as well as the happiness which results from it. To pass from death unto life, is to be freed from the dominion of sin and to become obedient to God; or, to "be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God." Chap. viii. 21. See notes on John iii. 15; v. 24. But in this place it seems to be used in a qualified sense, to indicate the happiness which results from holiness, rather than holiness itself. The general character of the antithesis in these two verses may be thus expressed: Ye know that while ye were sinners, indulging in conduct whereof ye are now ashamed, the fruit of your sinfulness was misery or death, which is the end, the uniform result, of sin; so now, since ye have renounced the dominion of sin and become obedient to God, ye know that the fruit of your present holiness is happiness, or

ness, and the end everlasting life.

everlasting life, which is the end, the uniform result, of holiness. There is no real contradiction between this verse and the next, however it might appear at first sight. Everlasting life is here represented as the result or end of obedience to God, just as death is styled the result or end of disobedience in ver. 21. But in ver. 23 eternal life is declared to be the gift of God, not a reward to which men are entitled by their conduct. The harmony of these apparently contradictory declarations will appear, when it is considered that in ver. 21, 22, the apostle is exhibiting the consequences of sin and holiness, as they are experienced by men; and it is an undeniable fact, confirmed alike by the testimony of the Scriptures and by the universal experience of mankind, that happiness just as certainly accompanies holiness as misery accompanies sin. In this sense the one may as properly as the other be styled the fruit or result of the moral condition or conduct. But in ver. 23 the subject is exhibited in a different aspect. Eternal life, whether used in its general sense, to indicate both holiness and its accompanying happiness, or, in a modified sense, to indicate happiness alone, as the result of such holiness, is represented as the gift of God; because the change in the human heart is wrought by the grace of God, and not by the efforts of man. By grace are we saved, through faith, and that not of ourselves; it is the gift of God; not of works, lest any man should boast. Eph. ii. 8, 9. As God bestows freely the grace from which the blessing flows,—in other words, as he bestows the holiness from which happiness results,—he is truly the *giver* of both holiness and happiness. And this holiness he bestows by saving us from sin, redeeming us from iniquity, delivering us from bondage to evil; in short, by creating within us new hearts, and renewing within us right spirits, devoted to his service. Just so far as this change is wrought, men become holy and happy, and thus partakers of eternal life. And in this sense eternal life is truly and exclusively the gift of God. It is eternal, because holiness is consistent with the divine nature, and must endure without end; and because, from

23 For the wages of sin is death:

its essential nature, holiness will always produce happiness. This life the Christian enjoys on earth just in proportion to the genuineness and thoroughness of his conversion from sinfulness to holiness. He will enter into its full enjoyment when he shall be clothed upon with immortality and incorruption; when he shall no longer be subject to the law in his members, or to fleshly lusts; when he shall be equal unto the angels, and shall bear the image of the heavenly man, the Lord Jesus Christ. Such is eternal life, in its largest sense; and this life is uniformly represented as the gift of God.

23. *For the wages of sin.* Sin continues to be personified as a master, whom men serve. The word rendered *wages* denotes “properly the rations of soldiers, that is, their wages, which at first were paid in grain, meat, fruit, &c., but afterwards in money.”—*Stuart*. It here denotes the wages given by sin to its servants. Or, dropping the figure, it denotes the penalty, the inevitable consequence, of sin. ¶ *Death.* The state of condemnation and misery which results from sin. The general idea is misery. It denotes that unhappy state of mind which every sinner experiences. It may not improperly be styled spiritual death; involving, as it does, a state of estrangement from God, and a loss of full confidence in him. When Adam had disobeyed God, he hid himself, because he was afraid. Gen. iii. 10. Though some sins, which are also violations of the laws of nature, involve physical suffering as the result, nevertheless, the misery which is the proper penalty of sin is principally of a mental character. Such death Adam suffered, in the very day of his transgression, according to the word of the Lord. A spiritual death seized on his very soul, and was manifested in his conduct. On no other theory can the divine veracity be maintained. God said, “In the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die.” Gen. ii. 17. If he did not die in the day of his transgression, the word of God failed of accomplishment. But it is manifest that he endured no death on that day, except a death of a spiritual character; and such a death must therefore be regarded

but the gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

as the wages of sin. Of the same kind was the penalty which David endured for his sins; and he calls it both death and hell: "The sorrows of death compassed me, and the pains of hell gat hold upon me; I found trouble and sorrow." Ps. cxvi. 3. And when he obtained relief, he exclaimed, "Thou hast delivered my soul from death, mine eyes from tears, and my feet from falling." *Ib.*, ver. 8. Again he gratefully acknowledges, "Great is thy mercy toward me; and thou hast delivered my soul from the lowest hell." Ps. lxxxvi. 13. In short, the death which is the wages of sin, or its appointed penalty, may be regarded as that mental anguish which arises from a consciousness of guilt. Other evils often follow in the train, such as fear, distrust of God, disaffection towards holiness, and sometimes bodily pains. Yet, I apprehend, the proper penalty is mental anguish arising from a sense of guilt, or what is sometimes denominated remorse of conscience; for this is invariably produced by sin, and is never produced by any other cause. With this explanation of the term, all the scriptures which speak of death as the penalty of sin are easily harmonized. Men endure it when and as long as they are sinful; when they are turned from their sins, they are delivered also from death; they pass from death unto life. See Ezek. xviii. 19—24; ver. 22; ch. viii. 6; Eph. ii. 1; Col. ii. 13. It is certain that the apostle represents his brethren as having been already made alive from death in sin; and our Lord in like manner declares that true believers have passed from death unto life. This could not be affirmed of the living, if the death which is the wages of sin were either the death of the body, or eternal death. But it may be affirmed of them, and of them only, who have truly experienced that death which is the proper wages of sin, and have afterwards been delivered from its power. ¶ *The gift of God.* "Not the wages of man; not that which is due to him; but the mere gift and mercy of God. The apostle is careful to distinguish, and to specify that this is not what man deserves, but that which is gratuitously conferred on him."—

Barnes. The spiritual happiness connected with holiness, as well as holiness itself, may well be styled the gift of God, because that from which it results is conferred by the grace of God. Man cannot make himself holy. The nearest approach he can make to holiness, by his unaided exertions, would fall far short of the divine requirements. But God works in us, both to will and to do, Phil. ii. 13, and by the influence of his spirit purifies the heart; and thus his "grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord." Ch. v. 21. Hence, for holiness itself, and for happiness which always accompanies it, we are dependent on the divine grace; and we should regard it, and be grateful for it, as the *gift of God.* ¶ *Eternal life.* Spiritual happiness, as opposed to that spiritual death which is the *wages of sin.* See note on ver. 22. Because *life* is styled eternal, many have insisted that *death* must be eternal also. But this by no means follows. Although the verse is antithetical, the two members are not equal, and the antithesis is not perfect. On one side is placed the result of human sinfulness; on the other, the result of divine grace: on one side, what man deserves; on the other, what God gives. If it be granted that God is greater than man, that his grace superabounds over human sinfulness (ch. v. 20), and that he is both able and willing to bestow more than man can earn, then should the *gift of God* be regarded as something more than the exact counterpart of that death which is the *wages of sin.* The presumption is altogether against such equality. And this presumption is confirmed by the epithet added to the one, and not to the other. However much or little may be the intrinsic force, as to duration, of the word *eternal*, when applied to *life*, it is certain that the sacred writers never use it in connection with *death.* If both were absolutely endless in their own nature, neither could succeed the other. We are assured that life shall succeed death; indeed, all agree that it supersedes death, in regard to all the redeemed. Of course, death is not endless. But we have the promise, that when men become par-

takers of life, in its fulness, they shall not die any more. Hence we may confidently believe that the spiritual life which commences in the believer's heart in this present world shall endure without end. ¶ *Through Jesus Christ our Lord.* See note on ch. v. 17, 21. "The Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world." 1 John iv. 14. He saves men by making them holy, by turning them away from ungodliness, by redeeming them from iniquity, by sanctifying and cleansing the human race, "with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish." Eph. v. 26, 27. Of such a spiritual estate happiness is the certain result. Thus is eternal life imparted to men, through the Lord Jesus Christ, and also through righteousness, ch. v. 21; yet the whole process is the work of divine grace, and the result is the gift of God.

ADDITIONAL NOTE. — A very different interpretation of that *death*, which is the *wages of sin*, has long prevailed. By the assembled wisdom of the English Church, more than two centuries ago, this death was declared to consist in "all the miseries of this life, death itself, and the pains of hell forever;" or, as the same ideas are sometimes more briefly expressed, in "death spiritual, death temporal, and death eternal." With some modifications in phraseology, the same interpretation of *death* is given by most commentators, and is believed by a large portion of the Christian church. The importance of the subject demands careful consideration. For obvious reasons, however, I cannot here enter into a full discussion of this important subject, but must restrict myself to a brief exhibition of a few prominent points. Reversing the order, let it be inquired, then,

I. Is "eternal death," or "the pains of hell forever," in the popular sense of the terms, "the wages of sin"? Is such death the penalty of sin, either in whole or in part? Many difficulties attend an affirmative answer to this inquiry. (1.) It involves a direct impeachment of the divine veracity. "The Lord God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden

thou mayest freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die." Gen. ii. 16, 17. Such was the divine declaration to Adam. No one disputes that the *death* here mentioned is the penalty of sin. No one disputes that Adam disobeyed the divine command, sinned, and incurred the penalty. But he did not, and could not, endure endless misery, or the pains of hell forever, in the day of his transgression. To suppose that he did, is palpably absurd. This is one of those self-evident truths, which no argument can make more plain. But the denunciation is positive: "In the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die." The denunciation, therefore, and the supposed fact, are in direct opposition to each other. If it be said that Adam became subject to the penalty in the day of his transgression, that sentence of condemnation was then pronounced, and that thus the divine veracity is preserved, I remark (2) that this only removes the difficulty one step further off. Nobody pretends that Adam will endure endless misery, as the penalty of his transgression. By universal consent of the Christian church, it is admitted that Adam found grace in the sight of God, was saved from sin, and became a partaker of eternal life. How, then, did he endure the penalty? In other words, how did he die, according to God's word? The same contradiction as before is found between the divine declaration and the fact. God said, "Thou shalt surely die." If this death consisted, either wholly or in part, in endless misery, nobody believes that the penalty was inflicted. What becomes of the divine veracity, in such case? A denial that men shall endure endless misery, as the penalty of sin, has sometimes been represented as an endorsement of the serpent's doctrine — "Ye shall not surely die." It were well if those who make such "railing accusations" were more cautious. Ch. ii. 1, 3. In regard to Adam, at least, if he shall enjoy eternal life, the only escape from the serpent's doctrine is found in the fact that the death denounced as the penalty of sin was not eternal death, or endless misery. For the denunciation is positive. "Thou shalt surely die."

If Adam has obtained or shall obtain eternal life, he cannot endure endless misery. What follows? If Adam shall be saved, and if God denounced on him endless misery as a penalty of sin, he denounced not only what he did not inflict, but what he knew he should not inflict; nay, more, he denounced what he did not intend to inflict; for he could not intend that the same individual should endure endless misery and enjoy eternal life, such a result being impossible in the very nature of things. To suppose, then, that God denounced on Adam endless misery as the penalty of sin, and that such penalty was not inflicted, is a direct impeachment of the divine veracity. To avoid this difficulty, it has been said, that the penalty is truly endless death, but that Jesus Christ came to save men from that penalty, and that, for his sake, it is remitted to them who believe. But (3) the penalty was announced without any such condition. "Thou shalt *surely* die." No intimation is given of any means of escape. Nor do the Scriptures elsewhere authorize the supposition that Christ came to save men from the just penalty of sin already committed. But suppose he did; and suppose the penalty will be remitted. It follows that those who shall be saved escape the penalty of sin altogether, so far as it consists in "the pains of hell forever." In this case, if the divine veracity be saved, divine impartiality is impeached. If Adam and a portion of his posterity escape, and the remainder endure the penalty, then the impartiality of God cannot be maintained. All have sinned, and incurred the penalty. No man can save himself; "by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight." Ch. iii. 20.* All equally depend on divine grace for salvation. Eph. ii. 8. If that grace be exerted on behalf of some, to the exclusion of others, how is it impartial? But this supposition does not relieve the difficulty. It was not said to Adam, "Thou shalt die, unless saved from death by a divine interposition;" but, "Thou shalt *surely* die." After all the devices of men have been exhausted, the fact still confronts us, that if the penalty was not executed, if Adam did not *die* in the sense indicated, then the solemn declaration of God was not veri-

fied, and the divine veracity stands impeached. Either Adam must endure endless misery, or such was not the death threatened. Thus, also, in regard to mankind generally. Death is denounced as the penalty of sin, not conditionally, but absolutely. "The soul that sinneth, it shall die." Ezek. xviii. 20. God "will by no means clear the guilty." Exod. xxxiv. 7. He "will render to every man according to his works." Rom. ii. 6. No intimation of escape, by substitution or otherwise, is given. If any shall escape the penalty, if any sinner do not endure the death denounced, then the divine declaration is not verified. Either the threatened death was not endless misery, or every sinner must endure such misery. To suppose the contrary, is to impeach the divine veracity. It may be observed (4) that the Scriptures declare that the penalty has been executed on all sinners. Ch. v. 12. Such are recognized and spoken of as already in a state of death occasioned by sin; and what is this, but the penalty of sin? Nay, more, they are described as having already endured the penalty of death, and as having been restored to life. John v. 24; Eph. ii. 1, 5; Col. ii. 13; 1 John iii. 14. How could they pass from death unto life, or be made alive from death, unless they were first dead? But they surely had not endured endless misery. Yet the death which they had endured was manifestly the penalty of sin. For such and abundant other reasons, it seems evident, in my judgment, that the death denounced on Adam and others, as the penalty of sin, does not consist, either wholly or in part, in the "pains of hell forever," or in "death eternal," taking those phrases in their popular sense, as indicating endless misery.

II. Does the penalty of sin consist in the dissolution of the body, or, as it has been styled, "death itself," or "death temporal"? Such has been the opinion of many. It has been believed that not only Adam, but all his posterity, became subject to natural death, as the penalty of sin. Some of the difficulties attending this theory may be briefly stated thus: (1.) God said, "In the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt *surely* die." But Adam did not endure natural death in the *day* of

his transgression. On the contrary, he lived on the earth for some hundreds of years afterwards. Either the death denounced was not the death of the body, or the word of God was not verified. We encounter, then, at the outset, the same difficulty which has been exhibited in another place. To suppose that God denounced a penalty which he did not execute at the time and in the manner specified, is a direct impeachment of the divine veracity. Opinions must be controlled by facts. Men entertain various opinions concerning the precise character of that death which is the penalty of sin; but the facts are plain and undeniable, that the natural life of Adam continued many years after his first sin, and that his posterity in like manner do not generally endure natural death in the day of their first transgression. Unless we are prepared to admit that God failed to execute the penalty according to his word, we should not entertain the opinion that the penalty is the death of the body. (2.) To avoid this difficulty, it has been alleged, and very generally believed, that although Adam did not actually experience bodily death in the day of his transgression, he then became mortal, and transmitted mortality to all his posterity; and that the penalty was thus substantially executed in the day of transgression. To this it may be replied (*a*) that a very unusual sense is thus assigned to the word *die*; a sense in which the word is used in no other place in the Scriptures. To die, is one thing; to be liable to death, or to be mortal, is a very different thing. A theory requiring such violence to language is very suspicious, at the least. (*b*.) This theory necessarily supposes that, before transgression, Adam was not mortal, nor subject to bodily death. But all the analogies of nature contradict this supposition. The human body is subject to the same laws of growth and decay which are common to the whole animal creation. It was manifestly so in the beginning; for before Adam sinned provision was made for a supply of daily food, to repair the ordinary waste of the body. Gen. ii. 9, 15, 16. There is not the slightest ground to doubt that starvation and death would have followed a failure of this supply, just as certainly

then as now. God provided food for man and beast. Is there any reason to doubt that it was equally necessary to both for the preservation of life? If such provision was necessary to preserve the life of man, it follows that he was subject to death. (*c*.) If Adam became subject to bodily death, as the penalty of transgression, he was not previously subject to such death; in other words, if his body became mortal, as the penalty of sin, it was previously immortal. But what is the distinction between mortality and immortality? *Mortal* is defined by Johnson, "Subject to death; doomed some time to die;" and *immortal*, "Exempt from death; being never to die." Before transgression, Adam was either mortal or immortal. If immortal, he was exempt from death, and could never die. It is as absurd to speak of the death of an immortal being, as of the end of an endless duration. It is equally absurd to suppose that an immortal being can become mortal; the supposition is subversive of the essential distinction between mortality and immortality. If, then, Adam were created immortal, he could not have become mortal, as the penalty of sin or otherwise. But he did die. He was therefore mortal; for an immortal being cannot die. If he was mortal at the hour of death, he must have been created mortal; for what is immortal cannot become mortal. If he was mortal from the commencement of life, he was of necessity just as liable to death before transgression as afterwards; for all which is mortal is liable to death, and must die. It follows, that, whatever else may have been the penalty of his sin, it could not have been temporal death, or the death of the body; for, if previously mortal, he was already subject to such death, and did not become so on account of sin. (*d*.) The terms of the sentence pronounced on Adam imply that he had been mortal from his creation, and not that he had suddenly become mortal by sinning. "Unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it; cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to

thee ; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field ; in the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return to the ground ; for out of it wast thou taken : for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return." Gen. iii. 17—19. No intimation is here given that bodily death is the penalty of sin. The reason assigned why Adam should return to the ground is, not that he had sinned, but because he was originally taken from "the dust of the ground." See Gen. ii. 7. He should return to the dust, not because he had sinned, but because he was already dust. His mortality was the natural result of his origin. But, during *all the days of his life*, he should experience sorrow ; and herein, as I judge, is to be found the real penalty of his sin. On supposition that bodily death was the penalty of sin, it is remarkable that, when sentence was pronounced, this death should be so distinctly referred to a different cause, which had not the slightest connection with sin. (3.) The supposition that bodily death is the penalty of sin is inconsistent with the language of the apostle : "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin." Rom. v. 12. Unquestionably, he means that death which is the proper penalty of sin ; and he represents it as something which had not previously been known in the world. Sin entered the world for the first time when Adam disobeyed the divine command ; and the death which is the penalty of sin followed it. It is evident that neither sin nor its penalty had been known in the world until Adam transgressed. But bodily death had previously reigned for ages over the various races of animals which abounded on the earth. I am aware that many have supposed the mortality even of animals to have been occasioned by the sin of Adam. But geology has long ago dissipated that delusion. The testimony of nature, imprinted on literal "tables of stone," demonstrates the life and death of animals, for uncounted ages before man dwelt on the earth. Mortality, therefore, was no new or strange thing when the first human body returned to the dust from which it was formed. It was merely the application of a general law of animated beings to the new race. Bodily death, then, did not for the first

time enter the world by or on account of sin. But that death which is the penalty of sin did so enter. It follows that the penalty of sin is not bodily death, unless the apostle was misinformed upon the subject. (4.) There is no intimation in the Scriptures that the penalty of sin, in Adam's case, was of a different nature from that which his posterity endure for their sins. To him it was said, "Thou shalt surely die," if thou disobeyest. Of all men it is said, "The soul that sinneth, it shall die." The formula is the same, in regard to the penalty denounced on him and on them. In like manner it is said, concerning him, "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin." Of his posterity it is said, "Death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." The formula is the same, in regard to the penalty actually endured by him and by them. If bodily death was not the penalty of sin in the father's case, neither is it the penalty in the case of the children ; if not in the children's case, neither was it in the father's. (5.) The present mortality of men is indisputable. If bodily death is the true penalty of sin, in regard to mankind generally, then the penalty is that which is certain to occur, whether a man sins or not ; for all must die. Infants, of a day or an hour, are subject to the same law of mortality, and die before they know good or evil. The body of our blessed Lord, when nailed to the cross and pierced with a spear, became inanimate, like those of the malefactors who were crucified with him, notwithstanding he was "without sin," "holy, harmless, undefiled." Can that which happens alike to the evil and the good be properly regarded as the penalty of sin, in contradistinction to the consequences of righteousness? What force can the annunciation have, The soul that sinneth shall surely endure bodily death, if at the same time it is clearly seen and understood that such death is certain, whether men sin or not, and that it has, in fact, been endured by thousands who have not sinned? If it be alleged, as it has been, that the human race became mortal in consequence of Adam's sin, and that therefore bodily death is the penalty of sin, the answer is two-fold. (a.) The allegation is not sustained by

The testimony of Scripture, nor by the deductions of reason. See note at the end of ch. v. (b.) If the allegation were true, it would only complicate the difficulty. If the penalty of sin be bodily death, and if all men endure this death in consequence of Adam's sin, or as the penalty of his sin, how are they to be punished for their own sins? Surely not by bodily death; for that they endure as the penalty of their progenitor's sin, whether they become sinners or not. Some other penalty must be attached to their sins, if they are to be punished. According to this theory, Adam was the only man who incurred bodily death as the penalty of his own sin. All others endure it for *his* sin, not for their own. It follows that what is assumed to have been the universal penalty of all sin has application to one sin only. What is called a general rule may be supposed to admit of exceptions. But it is not easily seen why a rule should be regarded as universal, which applies in only a single case, and is necessarily excluded in all others. (6.) It is doubtless true that some forms of sin result in premature bodily death; as when life is shortened by gluttony, intemperance, or debauchery; or as when it is suddenly cut off by the executioner, as the legal punishment of murder, and other capital crimes. But hence to argue that bodily death is the universal penalty of sin, is absurd. The legal punishment of adultery, and of certain other offences against both civil and moral law, is confinement in the penitentiary, or state-prison; but does it hence follow that imprisonment is the universal penalty of sin? The conclusion would be as legitimate in this case as in the other. These may be the penalties respectively of physical law or civil law; but the penalty attached to the moral law is of a different character. When a physical law is violated, a strong constitution may bear, with comparative impunity, excesses which would be fatal to a person constitutionally feeble. When the civil law is transgressed, a shrewd villain will sometimes escape the prescribed punishment, while the simpleton suffers. Under the moral law no such inequality exists. The penalty of transgression is of the same nature in all cases, pro-

portioned in severity to the actual guilt of the transgressor. It cannot be evaded; but it remains true now, as in the beginning, that "the soul that sinneth, it shall die." (7.) Passing over many arguments which might be urged, I shall mention only one more. Our Lord testified that believers had already "passed from death unto life." John v. 24. Nobody pretends to doubt that he speaks of that death which is properly the penalty of sin. But men had endured that death, and had passed from it into life, or had been made alive from that death, while they yet lived in the flesh. To the same effect is the apostolic testimony. Eph. ii. 1; Col. ii. 13; 1 John iii. 14. None of these testimonies can be reconciled with the theory that bodily or physical death is the proper penalty of sin.

III. The true nature of that death which is "the wages of sin" has been indicated in the notes on this and the previous chapter. It may not be improper, however, to state once more that it is a moral or spiritual death. The subject is so well exhibited by a recent writer (see note on Rom. v. 19), that I choose to present it in his language. "In what consisted the penalty inflicted on our first parents for sin? We have no hesitation in replying, that it consisted essentially in spiritual death, or in a state of condemnation before God, with such superadded physical sufferings, corporeal death excluded, as are traceable to sin. The penalty of their transgression lay emphatically in that state of mind which is always the appointed result of transgression. Adopting this view, we have no difficulty in giving their full force to all the words in the text: 'In the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die.' The execution of the penalty thus corresponds perfectly with the threatening. The very day of the commission of the sin is the day of its righteous visitation. A spiritual punishment alights on the offenders, and enters into their very souls. They fear the presence of their Maker, and hide themselves from him amidst the trees of the garden. This view saves the divine veracity. It recommends itself to our sense of what is right and proper. It places the main punishment of sin in the fit place, in the mind and con-

science of the sinner. It maintains the supremacy of the moral, instead of half sacrificing it to the material. Men sunk in pleasure, and immersed in sense, may associate the word death with the dissolution of the body, and think of this as the king of terrors; but for all who have right views of the moral, and can estimate the evil involved in a loss of holiness, this evil must appear a thousand times more to be dreaded than any extinction of their mere animal being. — In these remarks I assume that there was nothing peculiar in the case of Adam; that his sin and punishment were not essentially different from the sin and punishment of any of his descendants. The law given to him was not unlike that which we are under. It was first a grant, and then, as to the negative part of it, a prohibition guarded by a penalty. This is the true idea of every prohibitory divine law. It is true of the law which defines our duty to our Maker, and forbids the opposite conduct. The form of the penalty against transgression in our case is substantially this: In the day that thou transgressesest thou shalt surely die. There was a general truth in the original penalty, though individual in its form and application. This truth is, that every transgressor of God's law shall die, in the day and hour of his transgression. He shall suffer a result, in his mind and character, which shall begin to go into effect from the moment of his sin. His sin at once changes his condition, and so avenges itself upon him. It is wholly a mistaken view, that in the divine government there is a long interval between the sin and its punishment. A part of the punishment may be delayed; but the beginnings of it in the soul take their date from the sin. This is the jurisprudence of heaven, and man cannot change it. To this extent God deals with all others just as he dealt with Adam. In this sense we may, if we choose, call Adam a federal head, or representative of the race. He was an illustration of God's manner of treating men, an individual specimen or sample of the way in which all his descendants should be treated. Not, of course, that we, or anybody else, suffer his death; for the soul that sinneth, it shall die; but by our own sins we

bring ourselves into death. The law of death, spiritual death as the consequence of sin, is an absolutely universal law." — *Sheldon*. This explanation will commend itself to every right-minded man as scriptural and reasonable: scriptural, because it harmonizes with the divine record; reasonable, because it corresponds with the experience of every man: for all have sinned, and found immediate trouble and sorrow as the result of transgression. With two brief remarks I will close this already very long note. (1.) *Dr. Sheldon* includes, in the penalty of sin, "such superadded physical sufferings, corporeal death excluded, as are traceable to sin." If, by this, he means more than that physical sufferings result from the violation of natural or physical laws, which may or may not involve moral guilt, I apprehend that his remark requires qualification. On account of the close connection between the mind and the body, mental anguish will sometimes prostrate the body, or cause physical suffering. In such case, however, the physical suffering should be regarded as secondary in its nature, not as the primary and specific penalty of sin. That penalty properly applies exclusively to the mind and conscience. The physical disturbances are only incidental. Those sufferings which result from the violation of natural laws may be regarded as retributive, if the violations involve moral guilt; otherwise, not. A physical law may be violated with a sinful intention: the act is then sinful, and the suffering is retributive; yet even then the principal seat of suffering is where it should be, in the mind. Again; a physical law may be violated unintentionally, or ignorantly; physical suffering follows; but it cannot properly be regarded as retributive. Again; a physical law may be violated for a generous and virtuous purpose, as when the fond mother, by excessive labor and wakefulness, injures her own health in ministering to the necessities of her sick child; or, as when a man rushes into the devouring flame, or plunges into the water, to save the life of a fellow-mortal. In such a case, though physical suffering ensue, it cannot be regarded as the penalty of sin. Instead of moral guilt, moral virtue has been exhibited, notwithstanding a phys-

CHAPTER VII.

KNOW ye not, brethren, (for I

ical law has been violated, and a physical penalty incurred. (2.) When it is said, "a part of the punishment may be delayed," if the meaning be, merely, that the whole penalty is not exhausted in a moment, but that it continues in force until its appropriate object is accomplished, then the proposition is doubtless true. But if it be intended that a portion of the penalty is inflicted immediately, and that another portion, different in nature or design, is reserved for future infliction, then I apprehend the proposition is not sustained by competent testimony. With these qualifications, the paragraph already quoted appears to exhibit clearly and accurately the character of that death which was denounced on Adam, and also on his posterity, as "the wages of sin." It affects the mind, not the body. It continues while men continue to sin, and its severity is proportionate to their guilt. When they cease to be sinners, this death ceases also, and is succeeded by that "eternal life," which is "the gift of God."

CHAPTER VII.

The first four verses of this chapter have occasioned much perplexity to commentators. Indeed, it would seem to be a hopeless task to show an exact correspondence between the figures used and the things intended to be illustrated. It is first declared, verse 2, that parties connected by marriage are bound to each other while both live; but, on the death of either, the survivor may lawfully marry another. Then, in ver. 4, the deceased party is represented as contracting a second marriage, being free from the first by reason of death. I apprehend the same rule should be applied here as in the case of parables; namely, that the general idea is the only really important thing to be ascertained, and that the drapery is of little comparative importance, serving chiefly to make the impression more vivid and lifelike. Applying this rule to the similitude used by the apostle, or short parable, as it may not improperly be termed, we shall find no real difficulty in perceiving

to speak to them that know the law,) how that the law hath dominion over a man as long as he liveth?

its import. In verse 1 he declares, substantially, that the law has authority over a man, so long as both live; and it is implied that such authority ceases when either dies. This is illustrated by the similitude of the conjugal relation, in the next two verses. The application is found in ver. 4. Whatever apparent incongruity may exist in the various portions of the drapery, the living body of the idea is sufficiently visible.

1. *Know ye not, brethren.* He appeals to his brethren, that the general proposition which he was about to advance was known and would be admitted by them to be true. ¶ *For I speak to them that know the law.* It is generally supposed that the Jewish brethren of the church at Rome are here specially addressed; those who were born under the law, and had been fully instructed in its authority and requisitions. It is not absolutely necessary, however, to restrict the apostle's address to any one portion of the church. The first apostles and preachers of the gospel were Jews; and wherever they preached, they testified concerning the law as well as the gospel. The attention of all converts was early called to it. The law had already been translated into the Greek language, which was understood by many at Rome; so that the whole church there had an opportunity to be instructed as to its character. There can be no impropriety, therefore, in supposing the apostle to address the church generally, as having a competent knowledge of the most prominent features, at least, of the law. ¶ *The law hath dominion.* Rules; exercises authority. The law is personified here, like sin in chap. v.; and is represented as a ruler having dominion over men, as its subjects. What is here said of the law is true in regard to all divine law; but the apostle is generally understood to refer to the Mosaic law, in particular. This best suits with what follows. ¶ *Over a man.* That is, over any man, or all men, to whom its authority extends. The expression is not general, but limited. The Mosaic code had authority over all Jews, but over none

2 For the woman which hath a husband, is bound by the law to her husband so long as he liveth, but if the husband be dead, she is

other, except proselytes. ¶ *As long as he liveth.* The natural implication is, that its authority does not extend beyond the period of his life. The force of the phrase is equivalent to "as long as he liveth, and no longer." This, to be sure, is not required by the form of words; because a similar form is elsewhere used, when a similar limitation is not admissible. "His name shall endure forever; his name shall be continued as long as the sun." Ps. lxxii. 17. We cannot understand that any limitation is intended of the endurance of his name. But the limitation in the text is required (1) because all laws are for the government of the living, not of the dead; the dead are freed from law as they "are freed from sin." Chap. vi. 7. (2.) Because the argument of the apostle which follows clearly shows that he designed this limitation of legal authority. The word rendered *he liveth* has no expressed nominative in the original, and may be translated *it liveth*. Some commentators have assumed that it should be so translated, and that the apostle designed to say that the law has authority over men, so long as it (the law) liveth, or continueth in force. A very plausible argument has been urged in favor of this view: that the common translation makes the apostle affirm what in fact he denied; that it makes him affirm the continuance of the law, whereas he represents it as dead, and having no longer any rightful authority over the Jews. But in verse 4 the apostle certainly represents men as "dead to the law," instead of the law as dead to them. And it is well remarked by *Stuart*, that "If the man dies, the law still lives as to others; it becomes inefficacious as to him only by means of his death. It cannot die in any other way." To translate the word "*it lives*" would make the phrase mean, "The law is in force as long as it is in force." It seems almost needless to remark that when the apostle speaks of men as dead to the law, he uses the terms in a figurative sense; because he was addressing living men. Men died to the law in a sense analogous to that in which they died to sin. Ch. vi. 2.

2. *For as the woman, &c.* This verse and the next are designed as an illustration of the fact announced in verse 1; namely, that the law remains in force while its subjects live, and no longer. The apostle names a familiar law, that of the conjugal relation, and reminds his brethren that the parties are bound by it to each other so long as both live; but that, on the death of either, the other is at perfect liberty. This law is mentioned simply as an illustration. It is a work of supererogation to go beyond this, and seek for some hidden spiritual meaning of the terms employed, or for a special application of each. Yet this has been done by some of the older commentators, as in regard to many of the parables, and with similar lack of success. ¶ *Is bound by the law to her husband.* The apostle selected the wife rather than the husband to exemplify the binding force of the conjugal law, not without sufficient reason. Among the Jews, and in the Eastern nations generally, the conjugal law was not remarkably strict in regard to the husband. He might repudiate his wife for very slight causes. The Jews indulged the practice of repudiation to such an extent that our Lord rebuked them, and showed them a more excellent way. See note on Matt. v. 31. Moreover, the husband was not bound to one wife alone; but he might marry as many as he could maintain. Polygamy was rife throughout all the East. It was practised by the Jews, from Abraham downward. Their wisest king was guilty of scandalous excess in this regard. It is written that "he had seven hundred wives and three hundred concubines;" and, as might be expected, it is added, that "his wives turned away his heart." 1 Kings xi. 3. The gospel introduced a different rule, that one husband should have but one wife. The former practice, however, had not been discontinued when this epistle was written. And if the apostle had said that the husband was bound by the law to his wife so long as she lived, and would be guilty of adultery if he married a second wife during the lifetime of the first, the force of the illustration would have been

loosed from the law of *her* husband.

3 So then, if while *her* husband liveth, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress : but if her husband be dead,

less readily appreciated by his brethren. But they could easily understand that the wife was bound to her husband while both lived. She could not desert him, much less marry another, without exposure to a grievous penalty. She was regarded as the property of her husband ; subject to his authority in all things ; in fact, nearly as much his slave as those who were taken captive or purchased with money. The law was rigid in this matter ; the practice was, probably, even more rigid. When, therefore, the apostle declared that the wife was bound by the law to her husband while he lived, he was certain that none of his brethren would contradict him. And for this reason it is probable that he selected the wife instead of the husband to illustrate the binding force of the law. I cannot forbear to add that one of the most important *social* blessings of the gospel results from the change it introduced in the conjugal law, and in the general relations between the sexes. ¶ *Loosed from the law of her husband.* No longer subject to it. He has no more authority over her. She is free from the law which formerly bound her.

3. *Called an adulteress.* Equivalent to "she is an adulteress." Although a man was not then accounted an adulterer because he had more than one wife, yet, from the beginning, no woman could have more than one husband without incurring the guilt of adultery, and generally subjecting herself to death as the penalty. The gospel applies the same rule to both parties, so far as the guilt is concerned. Neither party may contract a second marriage while the other party lives. Such is the obvious general rule of the law. Whether there be exceptions to this general rule, or whether its authority can be superseded by human enactments, is a question in casuistry which should be well considered before a violation of the rule is perpetrated. See note on Matt. v. 32. ¶ *Though*

she is free from that law ; so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man.

4 Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ ; that ye should

she be married to another man. The death of the husband liberates the wife entirely from the conjugal law. She is then free to marry again, if she please. And such second marriage, being strictly lawful, does not involve the guilt of adultery.

4. *Wherefore.* An application is here made of the general truth asserted in ver. 1, and illustrated in ver. 2, 3. In the application, the same figure is preserved, to wit, that of the conjugal relation. An apparent incongruity, in terms, between the illustration and the application, need occasion no difficulty, as it is to some extent inherent in the figure itself. In the illustration, in case of death, the survivor is free from the law. In the application, the party who dies becomes free. But it should be remembered that, if the survivor be free from the conjugal law, much more is the deceased party free. Not only is he free from all law who is dead, but, if special proof were necessary, we have the assurance of our Lord that the conjugal law has no force beyond the period of death. The Sadducees tempted him on this point ; and he "put them to silence" at once. See Matt. xxii. 23—33. But the illustration would have been less natural and applicable, if the apostle had referred to the dead instead of the living. It is sufficient for us, however, that the general idea is perfectly plain ; namely, that death dissolves the conjugal relation, and that the law of that relation thenceforth has no force whatever. No obligation to that law remains. In like manner those who were dead to the law were no longer in bondage to it ; but they were at liberty to become affianced to the gospel, from which connection better fruits might be expected. ¶ *Ye also are become dead to the law.* In a figurative sense, somewhat analogous to that in which men become dead to sin. Ch. vi. 1—11. Being thus dead to the law, its authority over them ceased, so far as the present argument is concerned.

be married to another, *even* to him who is raised from the dead, that

Of course it is not intended that they were under no obligation to obey the moral law, the requisitions of divine justice. See note on ch. vi. 14. The law itself is "holy, and just, and good," ver. 12; "spiritual," ver. 14; and the "inward man" approves it, ver. 22. As a rule of life, requiring supreme love to God and universal love to mankind (Matt. xxii. 37—40), the law is as binding on those who are "under grace" as on others. Ch. vi. 15. It is only as a ground of justification, and the means of sanctification, that the Christian becomes dead to it. He renounces his reliance on it for justification, because he is conscious that he has not yielded perfect obedience to it, and that therefore he cannot be justified by the deeds of the law. Ch. iii. 20. He renounces his reliance on it for sanctification, because, although the law requires perfect obedience, it does not furnish the ability or the disposition to render such obedience. While he acknowledges his obligation to obey the divine law, he acknowledges also his need of pardon for his offences, which the law does not promise, and of spiritual aid, which the law does not furnish, in striving to attain purity. For such pardon, and for such spiritual aid, he relies solely on divine grace, manifested in the Lord Jesus Christ. In this sense he becomes dead to the law, ceasing to depend on it for spiritual benefits; and becomes alive to Christ, or enters into a living union with him, as the representative of that divine grace which alone is sufficient to supply his needs. This inability of the law to justify or sanctify the human race is true of all law. It is generally supposed, however, and for apparently good reasons, that the apostle has special reference to the Mosaic code; and that his particular object was, to convince the Jewish converts that, as they had embraced Christianity and owned their allegiance to Christ, they were no longer to rely on the law for justification or sanctification. It could afford neither; and it was sheer folly, "having begun in the spirit," to hope for perfection "by the flesh," or by the works of the law. Gal. iii. 3.

¶ *By the body of Christ.* This phrase

we should bring forth fruit unto God.

seems equivalent to *the death of Christ, or the crucifixion of the body of Christ.* The whole mission of Christ is frequently represented by his death, which was its seal, the pledge of its genuineness and sincerity. By that mission the grace of God was manifested more clearly than before. A more convincing proof of divine love could not have been given. Ch. v. 8; viii. 32. That divine grace or love, thus manifested, was the only sure foundation for hope of pardon and moral purity, of justification and sanctification. The apostle refers to the mission of Jesus, or its crowning glory, as the event which justified men in removing their former reliance on legal righteousness, and trusting wholly and confidently in the grace of God for salvation; or, according to the figure, in becoming dead to the law, and embracing Christ as a new spouse.

¶ *Even to him who is raised from the dead.* They were not to be united to a dead Christ, but to him who had risen and ascended to glory; to him who had promised to be with his disciples, and to guide them by his spirit. Because he lived, they should live also; not only in the resurrection, but in a spiritual life on the earth. See note on ch. vi. 8. The union of Christ with his people is often represented under the figure of a marriage, probably to indicate the intimacy and mutual affection which thus exists. See 2 Cor. xi. 2; Eph. v. 22—30; Rev. xix. 7—9; xxi. 9.

¶ *That we should bring forth fruit unto God.* The apostle is careful to guard against the suspicion that sinfulness would result from this change of allegiance. He had referred to this fact before. See ch. vi. 1, 2, 14, 15. He would have his brethren understand that a renunciation of reliance on legal righteousness, and a dependence on divine grace for pardon and purification, had no tendency to licentiousness. On the contrary, it was productive of good fruits, inasmuch as it inspired a more pure principle of action, a principle of gratitude to God for his unspeakable gift. Whoso loves God from a firm conviction that God "first loved" him, and feels in his heart that "his commandments are not grievous" (1 John

5 For when we were in the flesh, the motions of sins, which were by

iv. 19 ; v. 3), inasmuch as he requires nothing inconsistent with the highest happiness of his children, will delight in his law, ch. vii. 22, and cheerfully yield himself as an obedient servant of righteousness. See ch. vi. 13. In this manner he will bring forth fruit unto God, or become fruitful in good works. "That we should live a holy life. — This is the point and scope of all this illustration. The new connection is such as will make us holy. It is also implied that the tendency of the law was only to bring forth fruit unto death, ver. 5, and that the tendency of the gospel is to make man holy and pure. Comp. Gal. v. 22, 23." — *Barnes*.

5. *For when we were in the flesh.* This is a phrase sometimes used to denote the present, in contradistinction to the future, or immortal state of existence. Such is not its meaning here. It denotes the condition of those who were under the law and unconscious of grace, servants of sin, and not servants of righteousness ; in short, of those who were unconverted from the love and practice of sin to the love and obedience of God. The manifest object of this verse and the next is, to exhibit the superiority of grace over the law, as the producing cause of true holiness and happiness. Those who rested in the law alone failed of justification and sanctification by it ; but they who rely on the grace of God, who are allied to Christ as the living representative of that grace, the brightness of the Father's glory and the express image of his person, are thereby brought under the influence of new motives to obedience, and enjoy an assurance of justification and final sanctification. Such seems to be the general idea embraced in ver. 5 and 6. By many commentators the apostle is understood, by being in the flesh, to refer especially to the Jews who continued under the law, and this view of the subject is supposed to accord more fully with the phraseology of ver. 6. Whether or not there be such special reference, I apprehend the general truth applies equally to all who are under law and not under grace. "The illustration in this verse and the following is designed to show more at length the effect of the law, whenever

and wherever applied, whether in a state of nature or of grace. It was always the same. It was the occasion of agitation and conflict in a man's own mind. This was true when a sinner was under conviction, and it was true when a man was a Christian. In all circumstances where the law was applied to the corrupt mind of man, it produced this agitation and conflict. Even in the Christian's mind it produced this agitation, ver. 14—24, as it had done and would do in the mind of a sinner under conviction ; and, consequently, there was *no* hope of release but in the delivering and sanctifying power of the gospel." — *Barnes*. ¶ *The motions of sin.* Rather the *passions of sin* ; namely, our fleshly lusts, or sinful passions. "Lusts of sin." — *Wickliffe*. "Sinful passions." — *Stuart and Mac-knight*. "Literally, passions of sin, in the Scripture Greek, wherein the genitive case of the substantive is often put for the adjective : sinful passions, or lusts." — *Locke*. ¶ *Which were by the law.* It is not to be supposed, of course, that the law implants sinful passions or propensities in men. It discloses their sinfulness, ver. 7, 13 ; and *Chrysostom*, and other ancient commentators, supposed this to be the apostle's meaning here. Others understand that the passions are "excited, called up, inflamed by the law, which forbids their indulgence." — *Barnes*. It is well known that men are naturally impatient of restraint. Let a particular action be forbidden, and an inordinate desire immediately springs up to perform it. It was so from the beginning. There is no evidence that Adam or Eve had any anxiety to eat "of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil" until they were prohibited from doing so ; but, immediately afterwards, their desires triumphed, and they violated the command. Solomon well understood this matter. He had received a charge from his father to punish Shimei for his iniquity. So long a time had elapsed, however, since he cursed David, that Solomon determined to delay the punishment yet longer, until a new offence should be committed. He prohibited Shimei, therefore, from departing out of Jerusalem, on penalty of death. The

the law, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death :

event justified his expectation. Shimei disobeyed the command, and suffered the penalty. Such has, uniformly, been the effect of prohibitory laws. Men who had previously no particular desire for the things prohibited are immediately tempted to transgress. The yoke of restraint is galling. Some are so rebellious, and, at the same time, so foolish, that they are ready to commit iniquity merely because it is prohibited; and this they vainly regard as an exhibition of a proper independence. Verily, they have their reward. In this sense, law may be said to excite the sinful passions; and, although it does not make the passions, it furnishes an occasion for their exercise. Moreover, the same action is more sinful if prohibited than it would be if no law had been enacted; because, in addition to its intrinsic evil, opposition or rebellion against the authority of the lawgiver is involved. And thus the law makes sin "exceedingly sinful." Ver. 13. In this sense, also, the sinful passions may be said to be intensified and exasperated by the law. ¶ *Did work in our members.* See *Stuart*, quoted in note on ch. vi. 6. We have here another distinct intimation that the sinful passions are connected with the mortal body; that temptations arise from the bodily appetites and propensities; that "every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust and enticed." Jas. i. 14. While man is under law, the only actual restraint on his propensities is fear of evil consequences if he indulge improperly or excessively; and this fear is often overcome by the force of temptation, and the members are yielded "as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin." Ch. vi. 13. But, under grace, when temptations assail, as they will assail all men, and as the apostle assures us in this chapter they did assail him, the question is not simply whether the proposed act is forbidden by law, under penalty, but, is it right? is it consistent with gratitude to God for his rich grace? is it consistent with the duty owed to mankind? is it consistent with the duty which man owes to himself, "to keep himself unspotted from the world"? Jas. i. 27. Under such in-

fluences, the "law of the mind" will more effectually control the "law of sin which is in the members," than when the only restraining power arises from law, against which the heart is naturally rebellious. Restrained only by law, men are too frequently disposed to assert their independence, as they vainly style it, and risk the consequences. The fact here suggested by the apostle is fully confirmed by the universal experience of mankind. ¶ *To bring forth fruit.* That is, evil fruit, sinfulness, a wicked life. To "bring forth fruit unto God," ver. 4, is to live a holy life. To "bring forth fruit unto death," is the opposite; namely, to live a sinful life. Such is the result of yielding to temptation, and obeying the sinful passions "which work in our members." The propensities, doubtless, are good and useful in themselves. Indulgence to excess, or in an improper manner, in a manner injurious to others, is a sinful abuse of them. Thus hunger degenerates into gluttony, thirst into intemperance, and so of the rest. Gal. v. 19—21. The natural fruit of the fleshly appetites and passions, when indulged to excess, or improperly indulged, is wickedness, involving disobedience and ingratitude to God, injury to men, and abuse of ourselves. "When lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin, and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death." Jas. i. 15. There is a striking similarity of idea expressed in different language by the two apostles. The same source of sin, the same process, the same result, is recognized by both. ¶ *Unto death.* Unto misery. Under this general term is comprehended the whole catalogue of ills which result from sinfulness. See note on ch. vi. 23. But, painful and severe as these ills may be, they are removable, and are succeeded by spiritual life, whenever the heart renounces sin and cleaves to righteousness.

6. *We are delivered from the law.* The sense is similar to ver. 4, which speaks of becoming dead to the law. It is observable that the apostle changes the person from the second to the first. In ver. 4 he says, "ye are become dead to the law;" but in ver. 5 and 6 he says, "we were in the flesh," "but now we

6 But now we are delivered from the law, that being dead whereir

are delivered from the law." In ver. 7 he makes a further change, and says, "I had not known sin, but by the law." See note on ver. 7. The general idea throughout is, that *all* who are under the law, and who regard it as a means of justification and sanctification, are perpetually agitated, and find no permanent rest. On the contrary, all who are delivered from the law and united to Christ, who no longer rely on legal righteousness, but trust in divine grace for pardon and purification, find rest to their souls in the full assurance of hope. Divine grace indeed produces a higher and purer degree of righteousness than could be produced by the law. ¶ *That being dead wherein we were held.* Namely, the law, which formerly had dominion over them. Ver. 1. According to the common translation, the idea is, that the law to which they were held in subjection was dead. And hence some have insisted that the phrase in verse 1 should be rendered "as long as it liveth," instead of "*he* liveth." Most critics, however, are of opinion that the marginal reading is more proper, "Being dead to that wherein we were held." "The Syrian and Arabic versions, Origen, Theodoret, Eusebium, and Theophylact, read ἀποθανόντες (*apothanontes*), we being dead to that in which we were held, which, saith Origen, is undoubtedly the best reading." — *Whitby.* To the same effect, *MacKnight, Rosenmuller, Stuart, Barnes,* and others. The figure, therefore, is not changed; but men are represented here, as in ver. 4, to be dead to the law; that is, to have renounced their reliance upon it, and to have embraced the doctrine of grace. According to the figure, it mattered not whether this figurative death were attributed to the law or to men. In either case, the connection was effectually dissolved, and the way was open for a second and more congenial alliance. ¶ *That we should serve.* In order that we might serve. The word God is necessarily understood; for the service of the Christian is rendered to him. See ch. vi. 13, 22. ¶ *In newness of spirit.* In a new spirit. In a spiritual manner. "God is a spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in

truth." John iv. 24. Hence David prayed, "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me." Ps. li. 10. Thus also the apostle exhorts, "Be ye transformed by the renewing of your minds," chap. xii. 2; and declares, "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost." Tit. iii. 5. ¶ *And not in the oldness of the letter.* Not a mere literal observance of precepts. The change wrought in the nature and motive of worship and obedience, here indicated, is too important to be overlooked. Under the law, or with regard simply to law, the utmost that men attempt is to do the things which are commanded, and to abstain from things forbidden. They do not succeed even in this, and are constantly in a state of condemnation. But they strive for nothing more than a literal compliance with the provisions of law. The service may, all the while, be rendered unwillingly; it may be rendered solely through fear of the penalty of disobedience. Men may draw nigh to God with the lips, and honor him with words, while their hearts are far from him. There is nothing in mere law which has power to win the heart. Do this, and live; avoid that, or die: such is the spirit of law. It may enforce outward obedience; but the heart may remain cold as marble, or it may be full of opposition and enmity to the lawgiver. The exhibition of divine grace excites emotion in the heart. Who can realize that God is his spiritual Father; that he has been pardoned by divine grace; that all which he suffers shall be overruled for his benefit; that all which he enjoys is the fruit of a Father's love; that God will freely bestow on him all things necessary to his highest good in this life, and in the life to come perfect purity and happiness, — who can realize all this, and not feel his heart swell with love and gratitude to the Author of all good? Who can refrain from worshipping such a God, in spirit and in truth? or from obeying his will, not as a slave obeys a cruel task-master through fear of the lash, but as a child

we were held ; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not *in* the oldness of the letter.

obeys an affectionate parent, whose commandments are not grievous? Such is one advantage resulting from becoming dead to the law and affianced to Christ : and such is one of the changes implied in ceasing to serve God according to the letter, and beginning to serve him in a new spirit. Another advantageous change, somewhat analogous to the former, is this : the law affects the outward conduct ; grace, as manifested in the gospel, reaches the thoughts and intents of the heart. The law requires the worship of God ; grace stimulates that confidence and affection of which true worship is the expression. The law commands us to do good to others ; grace inspires that love toward others which prompts to acts of kindness and benevolence. The law forbids injurious acts ; grace inspires a hatred of evil, and an unwillingness to injure others. See an illustration of this point in notes on Matt. v. 20—22. In short, those who became dead to the law, and alive to grace, who ceased from their vain attempts “to establish their own righteousness,” and “submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God,” ch. x. 3, were brought under new and purer influences, and, instead of becoming licentious, yielded a spiritual obedience, more honorable to God, and more advantageous to themselves, than the strictest possible compliance with the letter of the law. Moreover, they thus became free from the terrors of that law which condemned every offence without promise of pardon, and rejoiced continually in the assurance that divine grace was sufficient for all their wants ; that it superabounded over all sin ; and that it would finally triumph over both sin and death, and bestow everlasting life on mankind.

7. The remainder of this chapter is devoted to an illustration of the fact stated in ver. 5, showing the weakness of the law through the flesh, ch. viii. 3, and its inability to purify the heart and give peace to the soul. The subject embraced in ver. 6 is resumed in ch. viii., and the work and effect of grace is exhibited. From the whole it results, according to the argument, that

7 What shall we say then? *Is* the law sin? God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin but by the law :

while the law neither purifies nor gives assurance of pardon, grace secures comparative purity here, and fills the soul with joy and peace, by the promise of perfect purity hereafter. ¶ *What shall we say then?* The apostle anticipates an objection which would be urged by the legalists, or those entirely devoted to the law. The objection and the answer are applicable to all law. Yet it is generally supposed that special reference is had to the law of Moses, which was so highly revered by the Jews. Most of the Jewish converts insisted that it was necessary for Christians to observe that law ; that its provisions were as binding on them after conversion to Christianity as before ; indeed, that they could not be saved, except by strict obedience to the law. We find abundant evidence of this in the Acts of the Apostles, and throughout the Epistles of Paul. See Acts xv. 1—11 ; Gal. ch. ii. It is supposed that at Rome, as in all other places where a Christian church was established, were some of these Judaizing brethren ; that the objection was anticipated from them ; and that the special reference is, therefore, to the Mosaic law. ¶ *Is the law sin?* Is the law, which was given by the holy God, an unholy law? is it sinful, or a promoter of sinfulness? does the law make men sinners? To the Jewish mind, an intimation that the law was inefficient, or that it was inadequate to the production of holiness, was equivalent to a direct charge of unholiness. Hence the form of the objection. ¶ *God forbid.* By no means. See note on ch. iii. 4. Such is the apostle's prompt and decisive answer. “He means by it wholly to deny the charge involved in the previous question, in the sense in which the legalist supposed the charge might be made, namely, that the law was the efficient cause, or the sinful cause of our sin, and that our guilt might be justly put to the account of the law. So much is plain from the sequel. But he does not mean to deny that there is a sense in which the law is connected with our sins, and that it is the occasion of their being aggravated, rather than the efficient means

for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet.

of our being sanctified. The course of thought runs thus : The law is not the sinful or efficient cause of sin ; but still there is a sense in which the law is connected with sin. What this is, the writer goes on to describe." — *Stuart*. ¶ *I had not known sin, but by the law.* Probably this language of the apostle should not be understood in an absolute sense, as asserting that he would have been entirely ignorant of sin if no law had been given. The meaning seems rather to be, that without the law his knowledge of sin would have been less accurate and less extensive ; and this for a two-fold reason. (1.) Some actions appear so indifferent in themselves, that if they were not expressly commanded or forbidden, they could not easily be determined to be sinful or otherwise. When one who has before been ignorant becomes acquainted with the law, he perceives that, in many respects, he has violated its precepts more frequently than he had imagined. (2.) No man fully knows the strength of his appetites and propensities until they come in conflict with a prohibitory law. See note on ver. 5. The law, therefore, gives to man a more accurate knowledge of good and evil, enjoining the one and forbidding the other ; and also makes him more thoroughly acquainted with his own heart, the strength of his opposition against lawful authority, and the violence of his appetites and propensities, which the law requires to be kept within due bounds. So much is true concerning all divine law, that which is impressed on the heart as well as that which is engraven on stone. The apostle's language, if used in this general sense, is confessedly proper and just. But the context indicates a special reference to the Mosaic law ; for the objection is much more characteristic of a Jewish than of a Gentile believer ; and at the end of this verse is a manifest reference to that law. ¶ *I had not known lust.* "I should not have been acquainted with the nature of the sin of covetousness. The desire might have existed, but he would not have known it to be sinful, and he would not have experienced that raging, impetuous, and ungovernable propensity which he did when he found

it to be forbidden. Man without law might have the strong feeling of desire. He might covet that which others possessed. He might take property, or be disobedient to parents ; but he would not know it to be evil. The law fixes bounds to his desires, and teaches him what is right and what is wrong. It teaches him where lawful indulgence ends, and where sin begins. The word *lust* here is not limited as it is with us. It refers to *all* covetous desires ; to all wishes for that which is forbidden us." — *Barnes*. ¶ *Except the law had said.* This is an express reference to the Mosaic law ; the passage is quoted from Exod. xx. 17, being the beginning of the Tenth Commandment. ¶ *Thou shalt not covet.* Only the beginning of the commandment is quoted ; the mind of every Jew would readily supply the remainder. It has been suggested that the apostle selected this commandment because it referred to the desires of men rather than to their outward conduct, which is more specifically referred to by the others. "The writer appears to say, 'Even immoderate desire, that internal feeling which the law might not seem to modify, has been greatly excited and aggravated by its restraints.' This adds a kind of intensity to what the writer had said of *sin* in general. That the whole is here to be understood in a comparative sense, is a clear case. If no revelation had been given to the Jews, then, like the Gentiles, they would have had the law of nature to guide and check them. Ch. ii. 14, 15. In the absolute sense, then, the apostle cannot be supposed to speak. The writer means, 'I had not so known sin as I now know it, except by the law.' A complete and full illustration and vindication of such a comparative sense may be found in John xv. 22—24, which the reader is desired attentively to consult." — *Stuart*. It will be observed that in this verse the apostle changes his phraseology, and appears to speak solely of himself ; which form of speech continues through the chapter. "Mr. Loeke and Dr. Taylor have properly remarked the skill used by St. Paul in dexterously avoiding, as much as possible, the giving of offence to the Jews ; and this is par-

8 But sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me

ticularly evident in his use of the word *I*, in this place. In the beginning of the chapter, where he mentions their knowledge of the law, he says *ye*; in the fourth verse, he joins himself with them and says *we*; but here, and so to the end of the chapter, where he represents the power of sin, and the inability of the law to subdue it, he appears to leave them out, and speaks altogether in the first person, though it is plain he means all those who were under the law. So, ch. iii. 7, he uses the singular pronoun, 'why am I judged a sinner?' when he evidently means the whole body of unbelieving Jews." — *Clarke*.

8. *But sin*. We have here another instance of the apostle's fondness for figures of speech. Sin is again personified, as an individual existence, assailing and overcoming mankind. It is scarcely necessary to observe that he does not mean anything exterior to the human heart; but under this name he represents the propensities inherent in us, as at present organized, which, though useful and necessary in their proper exercise, become sinful when indulged to excess, or in an injurious manner. ¶ *Taking occasion*. I have heretofore adverted to the fact that a prohibitory law excites impatience and opposition; and that men are often so foolish as to violate its provisions, when otherwise they had no particular desire for that which is forbidden. See note on ver. 5. This trait in the human character is again referred to in this place. When any temptation is presented strongly to the mind, it may be regarded as the occasion of the sinful act which follows. To the intemperate man, the presence of his favorite beverage and of his boon companions is the occasion of his debauch. To the gluttonous man, similar circumstances furnish the occasion of a similar result. To the avaricious man, the presence of valuable treasures becomes the occasion of fraud, or theft, or robbery. To the man of violent and brutal passions, language which he construes into insult, or even of merited reproach, gives occasion for savage blows, resulting perhaps in death. So, says the apostle,

all manner of concupiscence. For without the law sin was dead.

the prohibitions of the law excited and aggravated the fleshly lusts, and became the occasion of all sorts of inordinate desire. ¶ *By the commandment*. By the law; particularly the precept or commandment specified in ver. 7. The Mosaic law is specially intended; but the same is true of all law, brought distinctly to the mind. ¶ *Wrought in me*. The word here rendered *wrought* "in many places signifies to operate in a powerful and efficacious manner (comp. 2 Cor. iv. 17; v. 5; vii. 11; xii. 12); and may well here signify a strong irritation of what might, without it, have been in some degree natural." — *Doddridge*. ¶ *All manner of concupiscence*. "All manner of inordinate desire." — *Stuart*. "All strong desire." — *MacKnight*. "Vehement desires." — *Whitby*. "The effect here noticed by the apostle is one that has been observed at all times, and by all classes of writers. Thus Cato says (Livy, xxxiv. 4), 'Do not think, Romans, that it will be hereafter as it was before the law was enacted. It is more safe that a bad man should not be accused, than that he should be absolved; and luxury not excited would be more tolerable than it will be now, by the very chains irritated and excited as a wild beast.' Thus Seneca says (de Clementia, i. 23), 'Parricides began with the law.' Thus Horace (Odes, i. 3), 'The human race, bold to endure all things, rushes through forbidden crimes.' Thus Ovid (Amor., iii. 4), 'We always endeavor to obtain that which is forbidden, and desire that which is denied.' (These passages are quoted from Tholuck.) See also Prov. ix. 17, 'Stolen waters are sweet, and bread eaten in secret is pleasant.' If such be the effect of the law, then the inference of the apostle is unavoidable, that it is not adapted to save and sanctify man." — *Barnes*. ¶ *Without the law sin was dead*. If the reference be to revealed law, or specially to the Mosaic code, then the assertion that "sin was dead" must be understood in a comparative sense, indicating that sin was, to some extent, inactive. We cannot understand the apostle to mean that those who have no revealed law for their direction are entirely free from

9 For I was alive without the law once : but when the command-

ment came, sin revived, and I died.

sin ; because he teaches precisely the contrary doctrine in ch. i., ii. In the absence of all law, or of all moral distinction in the mind between good and evil, inordinate desires might exist, and injurious actions be performed ; but such could not be styled sinful, according to the apostolic definition : "Sin is the transgression of the law." 1 John iii. 4. Probably, however, the reference is to revealed law ; and the idea is, that men were less sinful before they attained a knowledge of it, partly because they were less conscious that their thoughts and deeds were evil, and partly because the sense of restraint by the law excited and exasperated their passions, and caused them to transgress even the more. "Without the law there would be no sin, that is, the consciousness of sin would not be created ; mankind would do the same wicked acts, but they would not be aware, at least in so high a degree, how wicked they were. The absolute violation of a law is as great in the case of an ignorant as of an intentional agent, but the difference as to relative guiltiness in the two cases is world-wide. In one case man sins with his eyes wide open, and in the other with them shut, or blinded. There is no end to the multiplex forms which the seminal principle of moral evil will take on, when it is warmed into life and is exasperated by the opposition and revelation of the prohibitory law." — *Livermore*.

9. For I was alive without the law once. Paul was alive in the same sense in which sin was dead ; just as he died when sin revived. In the absence of law, man was comparatively unconscious of guilt, and was free from that sense of unworthiness and condemnation which is styled death. According to the figure, sin was powerless to inflict moral death upon him, because "the strength of sin is the law." 1 Cor. xv. 56. Such was the state of things "once." But when? When he was "without the law." But Paul was a Jew, born under the law, and early instructed in its provisions. He may mean (1) that he "was alive," unconscious of the condemning power of the law, before he fully realized his obliga-

tion to yield perfect obedience. There was a time, in childhood, when he was entirely ignorant of the law. And, after he received his first instructions, he could not at once comprehend the nature and extent of his obligations. During this interval he was free from moral death ; in other words, he was alive. Or (2) he may mean that he enjoyed comparative peace of mind while he was ignorant of the spiritual nature of the law, and while he regarded a rigid compliance with its letter as the full extent of his duty. To this period of his life he refers in the declaration, "After the most straitest sect of our religion, I lived a Pharisee." Acts xxvi. 5. Again : "If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more : circumcised the eighth day, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews ; as touching the law, a Pharisee ; concerning zeal, persecuting the church ; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless." Phil. iii. 4—6. He felt that he was living "in all good conscience," and was not aware that the law had any higher claims on him, nor conscious of his guilt when he gave his voice against such as were put to death. Acts xxvi. 10. See note on Acts xxiii. 1. ¶ *But when the commandment came.* See note on ver. 8. When the authority of the law, and its claims of perfect obedience, became distinctly impressed on his mind ; or, according to the other form of interpretation, when he perceived the spiritual significance of the law, requiring purity of heart as well as observance of outward propriety and conformity to the prescribed ritual. Although the apostle here speaks in the first person, as if he were relating merely his individual experience, he doubtless designs to describe the effect of law generally on the human heart. He illustrates a general truth by a single example. See note on ver. 7. ¶ *Sin revived.* Became active, as represented in ver. 8. ¶ *And I died.* Became involved in that moral death which is the wages of sin. "This verse describes the process from the state of careless, unobservant nature, where

10 And the commandment which was ordained to life, I found to be

man feels comparatively contented with his sins, because he is not aware of their heinousness, to the legal condition in which the prohibitions of the law set his offences in order before him, and thunder in the startled ear of conscience the penalties of disobedience. At this threatening aspect of the spiritual state, the heart of man dies within him. His hope and his courage fail, because he sees the yawning chasm between the just requirements of God, on one side, and his own shortcomings, on the other." — *Livemore*. Something more than mere discouragement and despondency, however, seems to be intended. I incline, therefore, to adopt the interpretation given by *Stuart*: "The apostle means to say, as ver. 8 shows, that sin put forth fresh vigor when the commandment came; consequently he incurred aggravated guilt; and aggravated condemnation must necessarily follow. It also lies on the face of the whole, that the writer designs to convey the idea that the law, instead of affording sanctification and deliverance from sin, is the occasion of aggravating both guilt and condemnation. So he had intimated in ch. vi. 14; and so he here proves the fact to be."

10. *The commandment.* The law, of which the apostle has been speaking. See note on ver. 8. ¶ *Which was ordained to life.* Nothing is found in the Greek answering to *was ordained*. "You may therefore paraphrase the words thus: The commandment which was given for life, that is, with this promise, Do this, and live, was found to me unto death." — *Whitby*. It were certainly better to use some word less positive and absolute than "ordained," unless we are ready to admit that a result ordained by the supreme Lawgiver has been prevented. The meaning is, that the commandment or law, which would have resulted in life had it been perfectly obeyed, actually resulted in death to the disobedient. In other words, life was promised to all who yielded perfect obedience to the law, and death was denounced on all who disobeyed. As none obeyed in all points, so no flesh could be justified by

unto death.

11 For sin, taking occasion by

the deeds of the law; but "death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." Ch. v. 12. When the apostle became acquainted with the requisitions of the law, he found himself involved in the general condemnation. That which would have been the means of life, had he fully obeyed it, became the occasion of death, because he had been disobedient. The apostle seems to have had in his mind such testimonies as these: "Ye shall therefore keep my statutes and my judgments; which if a man do, he shall live in them: I am the Lord." Lev. xviii. 5. "I gave them my statutes, and showed them my judgments, which if a man do, he shall even live in them." Ezek. xx. 11. "Of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die." Gen. ii. 17. See also Ezek. xviii. 19—32, where life is recognized as the fruit of obedience, and death, of disobedience. ¶ *I found.* So it proved, in my case. I had disobeyed, and found myself involved in the penalty of disobedience. ¶ *Death.* Condemnation; moral guilt. He experienced the death referred to in ver. 9. See note on ch. vi. 23.

11. This verse is substantially a repetition of the ideas embraced in ver. 8. "As law neither remedies the weakness of human nature nor subdues its evil appetites, sin, taking opportunity while I was under the commandment to kill me, deceived me into the commission of evil actions by its specious allurements, and through the commandment slew me." — *MacKnight*. ¶ *Deceived me.* The carnal mind, or the bodily lusts and propensities, are personified as sin, and represented as deceiving men. Thus Eve, when questioned concerning her transgression, said, "The serpent beguiled me." Gen. iii. 13. "Adam was not deceived; but the woman, being deceived, was in the transgression." 1 Tim. ii. 14. "Every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust and enticed." Jas. i. 14. Men are enticed by their passions, and deceived through hope of happiness in transgression. No man ever deliberately sinned

the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me.

for the purpose of making himself miserable. From the beginning, some advantage has been contemplated as the result of disobedience. Thus Eve partook of the forbidden fruit, because "it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise." Gen. iii. 6. Thus men defraud each other with the vain hope of happiness in their ill-gotten gains. Thus they indulge their appetites in expectation of increased enjoyment. And thus, always, when disobedient, men are deceived by the allurements of the temptation. The wise man graphically portrays the deception and the disappointment of such as seek happiness in much wine. The immediate exhilarating effects give promise of enjoyment, and many are deceived thereby; but "at the last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder." Prov. xxiii. 32. Whatever and whoever causes men to believe that happiness may be increased by disobedience to the divine law, deceives them. It has been said that a holy life is a life of painful self-denial, of abstinence from present enjoyment, and, so far as this life is concerned, less productive of happiness than a life of sinful indulgence; that if sinners escape endless punishment for their transgressions, their lot is happier than that of the saints who crucify their affections and lusts; but such a representation of the effects of vice and virtue, however honestly intended, is false, and of hurtful tendency. Those who believe it are deceived by it; and those who practise according to its suggestions receive much harm. There were those of old who thus misrepresented the dealings of God with men; and the Lord sharply rebuked them by the mouth of the prophet. "Your words have been stout against me, saith the Lord. Yet ye say, What have we spoken so much against thee? Ye have said, It is vain to serve God; and what profit is it that we have kept his ordinance, and that we have walked mournfully before the Lord of Hosts? And now we call the proud happy; yea, they that work wickedness are set up; yea, they that tempt God are even delivered." Mal. iii. 13—15. The natural effect of such

12 Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and

representations, if believed, is to discourage the transgressor from any effort for reformation. He is deceived by the idea that the service of sin is more profitable than the service of God. And if there be a danger in the distance, he expects to avoid it by a timely repentance, which he is made to believe will afford perfect security. I repeat, that in whatever manner men are persuaded that true happiness will result from disobedience of law, they are deceived. Whether thus persuaded by the violence of their own passions, by something apparently desirable in the object sought, by the language of their fellow-men in whom they confide, or by aught else, the effect is the same; they are deceived. Could they clearly see and realize the guilt and moral condemnation, the death, which is the wages of sin, they would shun it to the extent of their ability. It is because they are deceived that they continue in disobedience. ¶ *By it.* By the law, which denounces certain misery on all who disobey its requirements and its prohibitions. ¶ *Slew me.* Caused me to die. The death indicated is the same which is mentioned in ver. 9. The phrase is equivalent to "I died," in the former verse.

12. *Wherefore.* The result is here stated of the argument running through ver. 7—11, in answer to the objection mentioned at the commencement of ver. 7, "Is the law sin?" The apostle has shown that the law discloses the enormity of sin, and strictly prohibits it; that it promises life to the obedient, and denounces death as the penalty of disobedience; that the passions of men are excited by restraint; that various circumstances deceive men, inspiring a vain hope that they may violate the law with impunity, and may even secure additional happiness by sinful indulgences; and that the bitter fruit, reaped from thus "sowing to the flesh," is death, or moral condemnation. From all which it follows that the law is not sinful, nor the cause of sin; on the contrary, it strictly prohibits sin and demands obedience, enforced by suitable rewards and penalties. The law, to be sure, was not an absolutely effectual

just, and good.

13 Was then that which is good made death unto me? God forbid.

barrier against sin (chap. viii. 3), and furnished no sufficient means of purification and sanctification; and this is indeed the pervading theme of the whole chapter. But it gave no countenance to sin; and it was only by the violation of its precepts that men suffered harm. If they could and would obey all its requirements, they would enjoy life, for such was the promise. This they did not do; and, therefore, they incurred the penalty. ¶ *The law is holy.* Is not sinful, ver. 7. It is pure; it demands purity of heart and life; it requires conformity to the declared will of God, which is altogether holy. See Ps. xix. 7—11. ¶ *The commandment.* The apostle specifies one commandment of the law in ver. 7; and probably for that reason speaks here both of the law in general and a commandment in particular. What is true of one divine commandment is true of all; for all are given by the same Lawgiver; and he “is holy, and just, and good,” in all his providences. ¶ *Just.* The law is just, because it requires men to do what is right, and because its rewards and penalties are just in themselves, and are justly and impartially administered. It rewards none beyond their merits. It neither punishes the guilty more than they deserve, nor exempts them from the punishment which they do deserve. Whatever men receive more than they justly merit, is the gift of grace, not a legal reward. So, also, the pardon of sins, the purification of the heart, salvation from sin, wrought by divine grace, is not so wrought as to make the law of no effect, or to interfere with its regular administration. While men remain sinners, divine justice is administered according to the law. When they cease to be sinners, justice has no further claim against them, and of course is not frustrated by grace. Grace supersedes the law; not because the law is unjust, but because it has not the inherent power to sanctify the soul. This is the peculiar province of grace; and this work the law was never designed to accomplish. This fact is fully recognized in what is said of law and grace in this chapter and the

But sin, that it might appear sin working death in me by that which is good; that sin by the command-

next. ¶ *Good.* The law is good in itself, requiring only that men should do such things as are consistent with moral purity, and avoid those which tend to defilement and debasement. The sum of the whole law is expressed in supreme love to God, and sincere love to mankind. See Matt. xxii. 37—40. Perfect obedience to this law would result in purity of heart and life. The law does not impart the ability of perfect obedience, and herein consists its inefficiency as a saving power; the lack can only be supplied by grace. But the requisitions and prohibitions of the law are founded in goodness; and, so far as they are obeyed, they result in good.

13. *Was then that which is good made death unto me?* According to his usual custom, the apostle anticipates and answers another objection likely to arise in the mind of a legal devotee. It is substantially this: Can that which is good result in evil? Can that which is holy, just, and good, cause the guilt and moral condemnation of men? This objection the apostle answers with his customary decided negative. See chap. iii. 4. The law causes no man's death. Men die, in the sense here indicated, agreeably to the provisions of the law, or according to the principles of divine justice, on which the law is founded. But the *cause* of their guilt and condemnation is their own sinfulness, their violation of the holy precepts of the law. ¶ *But sin.* It is sin, not the law, which becomes death, or causes condemnation, to transgressors. “Here the apostle clearly distinguishes between a proper *cause* and an *occasion*, or cause by accident. The law is the occasion of death to sinners; but sin is the proper or efficient cause of that evil.” — *Mac-knight.* The meaning of this verse would be more obvious, by placing, as many critics do, a semicolon instead of a comma after the word sin. *Stuart* accomplishes the same object, in his translation, by supplying two words. “Has, then, that which is good become death to me? By no means: but sin (becomes death), in order that it might manifest itself.” Sin is still personified

ment might become exceeding sinful.

14 For we know that the law is

as an active intelligent agent, an enemy to the peace of men, leading them into disobedience and condemnation. ¶ *That it might appear sin.* That its true character might be discovered. Had no law been given, the bodily appetites, and the propensities which are hurtful when improperly indulged, would have existed, and would have prompted to action; but their moral character would not have been realized. The law defines the distinction between right and wrong, commanding the one, and prohibiting the other. By the law, therefore, sin, or the sinful passions, may be discovered in a true light. Sin is manifested, made to appear sinful. ¶ *Working death in me by that which is good.* Causing me to incur the penalty of that law which is holy, and just, and good. See notes on ver. 9, 10, 11. ¶ *Might become exceedingly sinful.* "So that sin, by abuse of the commandment which was good, and making it the occasion of death to the sinner, and by its opposition to a commandment in its own nature holy, and just, and good, might thus appear to be exceedingly aggravated and detestable." — *Stuart.* "Sin was made death unto me; that it might appear sin, might appear in its true colors, working death in me by that which is good, that is, by the law, that in this way, by the detection of the law, sin might be revealed in its real character, as exceedingly sinful." — *Livermore.* It may not be altogether impertinent to remark that, although the law provides no means for the thorough sanctification of the heart, it discloses the need of it by exhibiting the exceeding sinfulness of sin. In this sense, as well as in others, "the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ." Gal. iii. 24. By making us realize the need of purity, which neither the law nor our own exertions can accomplish, it induces us the more humbly and more unreservedly to seek relief in that divine grace which Christ came to proclaim and demonstrate to the world. No man seeks grace while he proudly thanks God that he is not as other men are. But whose views sin in its true light will humbly pray, "God be merciful to me, a sinner." See Luke xviii. 9—14.

14. Much controversy has existed

concerning the remainder of this chapter. Some commentators insist that Paul describes his own condition, as it was while he was under the law; others, that he describes the condition of all who remain under the law, and especially the Jews, before conversion to Christianity; and others, that he describes his own condition after his conversion, and that the description applies equally well to Christians in all ages of the world. The latter interpretation is to be preferred for many reasons: (1.) It is the most plain and obvious meaning of the language employed, which should always be regarded as the true meaning, unless there be some sufficient reason to the contrary. The apostle gives no intimation that he refers to a former state of things, no longer existing; but all his language is such as denotes present time and a present condition. He gives no intimation that he is personating the Jews, or any others who trusted in the law rather than in grace; but every expression used denotes a personal experience of what he describes. If he stands as a type of others in like condition, it is none the less true that he appears to speak only of himself; and, at the least, he should be regarded as one of the class described. Such is the obvious meaning of his language. To interpret it differently, is to make him say what was not true concerning himself at the time of writing, however true it may have been at some former time, or however true it may have been concerning the Jews or others, who yet trusted exclusively in the law. I apprehend there is no sufficient cause for doing such violence to his language, and for giving it a construction so entirely foreign from its natural import. (2.) The obvious design of the whole chapter is to show the inefficiency of the law as a sanctifying power. The law convicts of sin; but it does not remove the evil. Thus, at the commencement of the chapter, the apostle exhorts his brethren to renounce their reliance on the law, and to trust in divine grace for purification and sanctification. In ver. 5 he shows that the law works condemnation without remedy; and he illustrates this fact from ver. 7 to the end of the chap-

spiritual : but I am carnal, sold under sin.

ter. In ver. 6 he describes the operation of grace, which he fully illustrates in ch. viii. Thus far, in this chapter, he has described the condition of those who trust only in the law, and who rely on their own efforts to attain purity of heart and life ; showing that the effort in this direction is uniformly unsuccessful, through lack of power both in the law and in human nature. He proceeds, in what follows, to show that reliance on the law is as unavailable after conversion to Christianity as before ; that the most devoted Christian has yet remaining so much imperfection and sinfulness, that, under the operation of law alone, he stands condemned without hope. With the help of all the influences of the gospel, exciting his most ardent desires for purity, he cannot fully attain it, but is conscious of many sins, both of omission and commission, for which he is condemned by the law. His only hope of deliverance rests on that grace which superabounds over sin, and which is able to destroy both sin and death. He thus traverses the whole ground, and demonstrates the fact that law alone cannot sanctify the heart of man, whether he be Gentile or Jew, converted or unconverted. To suppose he speaks solely of the unconverted, or of those who had not embraced Christianity, is to suppose that he left it to be inferred that the law might sanctify the converted ; in other words, that the converted might attain perfect righteousness by the deeds of the law, — a conclusion which he expressly condemns, Gal. iii. 3. (3.) The change in the phraseology indicates that the writer ceases to speak of his former condition, under the law, and commences to speak of himself in his converted state. Hitherto he has spoken of what had been ; he now describes what exists at present. This change is not without meaning ; and what can it be supposed to mean, if the writer continued to speak of the same time and the same moral condition as before ? (1.) It has been urged that, if the apostle intended here to state his own condition and the conflict in his mind, after conversion, "such a statement would prove too much ; it would show that *grace* is wanting in efficacy as well as the

law." This embraces the substance of all the objections which I have seen. If the objector does not mean that by the efficacy of divine grace men become absolutely free from sin in the present life, I can see no force in the objection ; because, though under grace, and essentially benefited by it, the apostle might still bemoan the residue of sinfulness. Nothing short of entire freedom from sin would render his language inapplicable to himself. But if he does mean that divine grace makes the heart absolutely pure and holy in the present life, then he contradicts the universal experience of mankind, and the testimony of the apostles. I do not deny that some men have imagined themselves to be perfect ; but, if their own eyes were blind, others could see. The Pharisee, in the temple, congratulated himself on his purity, and his freedom from sin ; yet our Lord declared that his actual condition was less desirable than that of the despised Publican, who humbly confessed his sins, and implored mercy. See Luke xviii. 9—14. Paul certainly confesses his lack of perfection, if he here speaks of his own condition ; and in this he fully agrees with the other apostles. This confession, therefore, instead of conflicting with the opinion that he is describing his own condition, confirms it ; instead of making his statement prove too much, it makes it prove precisely what his fellow-apostles asserted, and what his fellow-Christians have experienced. As a sample of apostolic testimony, let a single passage suffice : "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." 1 John i. 8, 9. And a greater than the apostles taught all his disciples to pray, "Forgive us our sins." Luke xi. 4. The saints in glory, however grateful their thanksgivings for the deliverance from sin which divine grace has wrought, are not supposed to have occasion to use this prayer ; if they are wholly sanctified, they have no more sins to be forgiven. But I apprehend our Lord did not anticipate that his disciples on earth would ever outgrow his instructions, or

have occasion to discontinue the use of this prayer, on the ground of its inappropriateness to their spiritual condition. In perfect accordance with the Saviour's rule, Paul might confess his remaining sinfulness, give expression to his yearnings for greater purity, pray for deliverance, and thank God, with earnest exultation, that, although the law failed to remove his guilt, and to sanctify his heart, divine grace was abundantly sufficient to accomplish the work, through Jesus Christ our Lord. (5.) Another reason in favor of this interpretation is well urged by *Barnes*. "Because it accords with the experience of Christians, and not with sinners. It is just such language as plain Christians, who are acquainted with their own hearts, use to express their feelings. I admit that this last consideration is not conclusive; but, if the language did not accord with the experience of the Christian world, it would be a strong circumstance *against* any proposed interpretation." ¶ *The law is spiritual.* Spirit and flesh, spiritual and carnal, are often used in the Scriptures to denote holiness and sinfulness. The assertion here is equivalent to that in ver. 12, that the law is holy, just, and good. The law, therefore, is not to be regarded as the cause of misery; for obedience to its requirements would result in happiness. The cause of misery is to be sought elsewhere; namely, in our sinfulness. So strong is the power of temptation, that even those who are partially sanctified by grace are sometimes overcome, and through sin become liable to the penalty of the law. This the apostle confesses, on his own behalf; and a similar confession is uttered from the heart of every humble and devout Christian. ¶ *I am carnal.* "That is, under the influence of carnal desires and affections. Even such desires as do not spring directly from the flesh are sometimes named carnal; and this, it would seem, because most of our sinful propensities are directly connected with the flesh, and those which are not are similar in regard to their character." — *Stuart*. "The sense is, that these corrupt passions still retained a strong, and withering, and distressing influence over the mind. The renewed man is exposed to temptations from his strong native appetites; and the power of

these passions, strengthened by long habit before he was converted, has travelled over into religion, and they continue still to influence and distress him. It does not mean that he is wholly under their influence; but that the tendency of his natural inclinations is to indulgence." — *Barnes*. ¶ *Sold under sin.* Subject to its power. The figure is taken from the custom of selling slaves, which, like many other sinful customs, is of ancient date. The manifest import of the phrase, taken in connection with the context, is, that although the law required purity of heart and life, yet the apostle was conscious of his inability to yield perfect obedience, in consequence of his carnal appetites and passions. These were not wholly eradicated even by the influence of divine grace; and, while they remained, they sometimes led him into sin, notwithstanding his prevailing inclination to the contrary. He desired to serve God, by obeying the divine law; but he had not attained perfection, and the law in his members, or his carnal passions, sometimes betrayed him into sin. See ver. 22, 23. This description is designed to apply, not only to himself, but to all other converted men. He speaks in the name of those who are under grace, but yet not wholly emancipated from sin. Such must be the condition of all while they dwell in the flesh. The interpretation of the whole verse in the *Assembly's Annotations* is worthy of notice, and, for the most part, judicious. "Hitherto the apostle spake of the power of law and sin in corrupt and unregenerate man, as he also himself found it by his own experience in his former state, ver. 9. But now he proceedeth and speaketh of himself as he was since his conversion, and declareth what power the remainder of sin had over him still, after that now he was delivered from the dominion thereof. *The law is spiritual*; given by the spirit, and requiring a spiritual and heavenly life and disposition; but men, such as they be born, are bond-slaves of corruption. *But I am carnal*; in part, in regard to the remainders of the flesh that are in me; for that the regenerate, also, in respect of some weakness that is yet remaining in them may be called carnal, is evident, 1 Cor. iii. 4. *Sold under sin*: not as a willing slave, to

15 For that which I do, I allow not: for what I would, that do

obey and follow the desire of sin in all things, as it is said of Ahab, 1 Kings, xxi. 20, but as a captive yet detained, though his ransom be paid; as one that against his will and purpose is yet subject to the assaults and lusts of sin, not being able wholly and entirely to rid himself of them, although he do vehemently resist them, and often subdue them by the Spirit of God that is within him. Gal. v. 17, 18." My only apology, if any be needed, for devoting to this verse a note which may seem immoderately long, is this: On the interpretation of this verse confessedly depends the interpretation of the remainder of the chapter; it is practically important to know whether the apostle describes his condition after conversion, or not; and, as interpreters have been so much divided in opinion on this question, a proper deference to others requires a somewhat extended statement of reasons for adopting the interpretation proposed, rather than the contrary.

15. *That which I do, I allow not.* Literally, *I know not.* But the word is not unfrequently used in the sense of approving. See note on Matt. vii. 23. This clause has generally been interpreted as identical in meaning with the last clause of the same verse. There is no obvious reason for such a repetition; and it seems more probable that the idea here expressed is different from the other. Perhaps we shall not err by supposing the apostle to mean here, I do not approve that which I do; referring both to his doing that which he hated, and his omission to do that which he approved, and desired to do; in other words, he did not approve his own conduct in both particulars immediately specified. "My actions answer not every way, nay, they are contrary to my will."—*Assembly's Annot.* If this be the true interpretation, the appearance of repetition is avoided. But, if the meaning here be identical with that expressed in the last clause of the verse, the remarks on that may serve as an illustration of both. It has been suggested, to avoid the repetition, that the apostle intended here to say that he did not understand or comprehend his conduct; that he was perplexed

by it; that he could not perceive the reason of the inconsistency between his desires and his actions. But this involves a very unusual sense of the word rendered *allow*. Besides, the apostle does not otherwise manifest any perplexity. On the contrary, he distinctly states the conflict in his mind, the inconsistency between his prevailing desire and his occasional conduct, and as distinctly states the cause of that conflict and inconsistency. ¶ *What I would, that do I not.* The things which I habitually desire to do, I fail to perform. The apostle does not intend that he wholly failed in the accomplishment of his desires, but only that his success was not perfect. By the help of divine grace he had attained comparative purity; yet he still lacked somewhat of perfection. He desired to yield perfect obedience to the divine law, but fell short in the performance. Or, if we understand him to speak of the divine requirements in detail, the result is the same. In regard to any particular act of devotion, or holiness, he desired to perform it without the slightest imperfection, yet he often failed to do so. ¶ *What I hate, that do I.* What I disapprove, and would gladly avoid altogether, I sometimes do, under the pressure of temptation. *Macknight* well observes that the desire, of which the apostle here speaks, "cannot signify the last determination of the will; for action always follows that determination." He means that his prevailing desire is sometimes counteracted by a temporary desire excited by the carnal passions and propensities. The inconsistency between the prevailing habitual desires of men and their occasional conduct was long ago observed, and mentioned even by heathen writers. A passage is quoted by *Tholuck* from *Epictetus* (*Enchirid.*, ii. 26), strikingly similar to the text: "Whoever sins, does not what he would, but what he would not, that he does." And another is quoted from *Xenophon* (*Cyrop.*, vi. 1), which bears a strong resemblance to ver. 20 and 23. I follow *Stuart's* translation. "Certainly, I must have two souls;—for plainly, it is not one and the same which is both evil and good, nor which loves honorable and base conduct, and at the same time wishes to do

I not; but what I hate, that do I.

16 If then I do that which I

a thing and not to do it. Plainly, then, there are two souls; and when the good one prevails, then it does good; and when the evil one predominates, then it does evil." Such is the conflict between evil and good, in the mind of every man, from the hour when he becomes an accountable being until he puts off mortality. As every indulgence of the sinful propensities increases their power, and gives them additional influence over men, so every victory obtained over them diminishes their energy, and renders the next struggle less severe. Under the influence of divine grace, the Christian gains the mastery over his corrupt passions, in a less or greater degree, commensurate with the sincerity of his trust in God, and the earnestness of his efforts, compared with the natural strength of his passions. But, while he lives in the flesh, perfect victory, or the entire annihilation of his carnal propensities and passions, is a matter of hope, rather than of actual enjoyment.

16. *If then I do that, &c.* That is, if the evil which I do is condemned by my own conscience, and is contrary to my habitual choice and desire. ¶ *I consent unto the law that it is good.* In proof that the law is holy, and just, and good, and spiritual (ver. 12, 14), the apostle alleges the conflict which existed in his own heart between the desire of obedience and the temptations to disobedience. The desire to obey implied a confidence in the justice and holiness of the law. He expresses his approbation of the law yet more strongly in ver. 22. If he had believed the law to be unjust, or impure, he could have had no reasonable motive to contend with his appetites and passions, for the sake of obeying it. The fact, therefore, that he struggled against those passions whose indulgence was prohibited by the law, afforded evidence of his belief that the law was good, and worthy to be obeyed. Better evidence can no man have, or give to others, that he truly loves the law of right and holiness, than that he constantly and earnestly endeavors to resist all temptations to disobedience. And although he occa-

would not, I consent unto the law that it is good.

17 Now then it is no more I

sionally fail, through the weakness of the flesh, yet if he persist in his efforts he thereby testifies his approval of the law.

17. *It is no more I that do it.* The apostle distinguishes between his proper self, characterized by his desire to live a holy life agreeably to the divine commandments, and those "fleshy lusts which war against the soul," and which sometimes overcame him. "The distinction here made, between the higher moral self of reason and conscience and the lower one of carnal passions and appetites, is very striking. In like manner *Seneca* says, 'The mind of man is himself, not that part which may be pointed out with one's finger;' that is, not the body."—*Stuart*. See also the quotation from *Xenophon*, in note on ver. 15. "Though I do what is wicked, yet if I do it against my better convictions on account of the urgency of temptation, I virtually approve of the law as excellent, notwithstanding my inconsistent conduct, because in my heart of hearts I reverence its sanctity. I will therefore divide my personality, and say it is no more I proper who do the evil deed, but indwelling sin, an unlawful settler upon my premises, a tenant whose behavior I do not like, and whom I should be glad to evict from my property."—*Livermore*. The language here used is of course figurative; the apostle does not intend to represent that he did not himself commit sin; that it was committed by some other person or thing dwelling in him; nor does he intend to deny his individual responsibility for all his actions, whether good or bad. But he figuratively suggests a principle by which the judicious are always guided in estimating the characters of others, and which they may rightfully apply to their own; namely, that the rule, not the exception, is to be regarded as the true criterion. In other words, that a man's character should be adjudged good or bad, according to his general habit of life, not merely according to a few acts which are inconsistent with that general habit. For example, among the apostles, our Lord had not a more bold or a

that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.

more faithful adherent than Peter. He was ready to peril his life, and resist even unto blood, in his Master's defence. After the descent of the Holy Spirit, on the day of Pentecost, he braved the fury of the Jews, and faithfully rebuked their unrighteousness; and during the remainder of his life, no peril could turn him aside from his duty; he openly and fearlessly proclaimed the truth, until his lips were closed in death. Such was his general character. Yet the rule had its exception. On one occasion, disheartened at his Master's quiet submission to his enemies, and apparently apprehensive that, after all, he might not be the Messiah so long expected, being overcome by mortal terror, he denied his Lord, with much violence of language. But who ever thought of denouncing Peter as a coward, or traitor, or even as an unfaithful disciple, because he was thus overcome by sudden and powerful temptation? Adopting the figure used in the text, by universal consent of Christians, it was not Peter that denied his Master, but the fear which was in him, and which overcame his better nature. Thus, also, when a man of general correct habits of life falls into scandalous sin, we instantly and involuntarily look for some overpowering temptation which has turned him aside from his accustomed course; and we are ready to believe that he has not sinned with "purpose of heart," but that he has been overcome by sudden and powerful temptation, and that, like Peter, he has already "wept bitterly." We judge of a man, in short, by his general conduct, not by here and there a single act of his life. Whatever is consistent with his general character, we regard as belonging to him; the exceptions are attributed to influences which he is supposed to disapprove and resist. And so of ourselves: if we are conscious of an earnest habitual desire to obey the divine law, we need not doubt our own sincerity, because we sometimes fail to accomplish our desire; but we may rightfully attribute our imperfections to the natural strength of passions which we cannot annihilate, nor always effectually restrain and control. And such I understand to be the meaning

of the figure used by the apostle. It should be observed, however, (1.) That Paul does not hold himself guiltless because "it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me." Neither should we. On the contrary, our responsibility is increased by every accession of light and knowledge; and if the spirit of grace has enkindled in our hearts a pure desire for holiness, so much the more guilty are we, if we practise unrighteousness. Luke xii. 47, 48. (2.) A consciousness of our remaining imperfections should fill us with humility. The apostle did not hesitate to acknowledge that his better purposes were sometimes frustrated by the power of temptation. Ver. 23, 24. A false pride should not prevent us from acknowledging to our own souls, and to the world, if need be, that we have not yet attained perfection. Instead of boasting our ability to yield perfect obedience in all things, it will be more wise and profitable to give earnest heed to the apostolic exhortation: "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." 1 Cor. x. 12. (3.) This humility of spirit will naturally lead us to look for deliverance, as Paul did, to the grace of God, manifested in the Lord Jesus Christ. We shall cease to rely on our own exertions to break the yoke of bondage, but shall trust with all our heart in that divine grace which superabounds over sin, and which in due time will accomplish an absolute victory. To that grace, and to that alone, can we look with confidence for entire salvation from sin in the future life. And if it please God that we obtain a portion of that blessing here, and enjoy a "special salvation" through faith (1 Tim. iv. 10), instead of claiming honor to ourselves, as though by our own power or strength we had acquired an elevated position among men, or merited a reward from the Most High, it would indicate more Christian humility to confess, with Paul, "not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost, which he shed on us abundantly, through Jesus Christ our Saviour." Tit. iii. 5, 6. ¶

18 For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good

But sin that dwelleth in me. Sin is still personified as an individual tempting men to transgress, and as having taken up his abode within us, having possession of the very citadel. The writer doubtless refers to the fleshly appetites and passions, elsewhere called the "law in the members," and the "lusts which war in the members." Ver. 23; Jas. iv. 1. "That dwelleth in me: that is, as yet remaineth in me, but disarmed of that mortal sting of condemnation, by Christ, as also of its power and dominion, by his spirit; being now no more but a trouble to the faithful. Heb. xii. 1. Therefore, these three things ought to be well distinguished: the *dominion* of sin, the *habitation*, and the *combat*. The first is abolished in true believers; the other two remain yet for their exercise and humiliation." *Assemb. Annot.* This important distinction should not be overlooked. The dominion of sin is abolished, when it ceases to have a general controlling influence. The same idea is expressed in ch. vi., by becoming dead to sin, and in ch. viii., by being made "free from the law of sin and death." When this deliverance from bondage is effected, men are said to "walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit," because their habitual desires and conduct are agreeable to "the law of the spirit of life." Ch. viii. 1, 2. Nevertheless, there remains in the human heart a residue of sinfulness, until this corruptible shall put on incorruption, requiring constant watchfulness and struggle; and the effect of this struggle, not uniformly and always victorious, is to keep alive a consciousness of human weakness, and of dependence on divine grace.

18. *In me (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing.* It has been observed by an eminent commentator, "There could not be possibly a stronger expression of belief of the doctrine of *total depravity*. It is Paul's own representation of himself. It proves that his heart was wholly evil; and if this was true of him, it is true of all others." Another affirms, with equal confidence, "No stronger testimony against the innate depravity of mankind can be adduced than that of Paul, the very teacher who is generally supposed to

teach this and the other Augustinian and Calvinistic doctrines in the most decisive manner. If language has any meaning, sin in the soul is not predicated by him as any more inborn or natural than disease in the body, or as constituting the inmost self, and usurping the central seat of personality, but as an excrescence, a law of the outward members, not of the mind, the inner and immortal selfhood." It is manifest, on the face of the text, that the apostle designed to apply his description to only a part of himself, and that the inferior. For the purpose of this argument, he divided his personality, so to speak. He disclaimed the actions prompted by the inferior nature, variously denominated the flesh, the law in the members, the carnal mind, and sin dwelling in him. To these actions he gave no consent; that is, his habitual desire and intention was opposed to them. Of course, the will consented to all voluntary actions; but the consent to evil was prompted by sudden or powerful temptation, overcoming the fixed and habitual purpose. With the mind he served the law of God with full intention of heart, notwithstanding the lusts of the flesh sometimes betrayed him into the service of sin. Ver. 25. It is a forced interpretation, then, to suppose he intended to describe himself as altogether corrupt, entirely destitute of moral goodness. What he says relates exclusively to those carnal passions and lusts which were the source of temptation. And even of these we should understand his language in a qualified sense. He, surely, did not intend to deny that the body, the flesh, with all its natural appetites and propensities, was precisely such as God had provided for the present habitation of the human soul; nor did he intend to say that the work of God was corrupt, especially when God himself had pronounced his work to be "very good." Gen. i. 31. It is well known that many things which are good and beneficial in themselves become injurious by excessive use. Fire and water, for example, are among the most indispensable means of human comfort. We could not exist without them. Yet how easily do they become means of destruction, when im-

thing: for to will is present with me; but *how* to perform that which is good, I find not.

19 For the good that I would, I do not; but the evil which I would not, that I do.

properly used. So the bodily appetites and propensities are useful, necessary to the preservation of life, and conducive to happiness. But, when improperly indulged, they become the source of guilt and pain. These appetites and passions are blind; but, for their guidance and control, the mind, a rational soul, is bestowed on man. So long as the mind, under the influence of the spirit of truth and of grace, controls the passions, they are harmless, and man is innocent. But when the mind is controlled by the passions, they become hurtful, and moral guilt ensues. A mind thus in bondage is styled the carnal mind. And this condition of the mind, overpowered and led captive by fleshly lusts, is what is here denominated the flesh, in which dwells no good thing. Or, if the reference be understood as made more directly to the body, the meaning will be that the fleshly appetites, tending to excess when not restrained, do not promote, but rather hinder, the attainment of true holiness; and in this regard they are not good. In short, the apostle is describing a conflict between his better purposes and the temptations arising from his fleshly propensities. He desires to serve God constantly, but is sometimes hindered by some besetting sin. Heb. xii. 1. He pronounces this hindrance not good. And, as the hindrance arises from the flesh, directly or indirectly, he declares that no good thing dwells in the flesh; not intending, however, that his language should be understood in an absolutely literal sense. The same idea occurs in Gal. v. 17. "The flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary the one to the other; so that ye cannot do the things that ye would." ¶ *For to will is present with me.* I can cherish the desire, and form the purpose, to do that which is good, and that only. Such, the apostle declares, was the habitual state of his mind. Ver. 16, 22. ¶ *But how to per-*

20 Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.

21 I find then a law, that when I would do good, evil is present with me.

form that which is good, I find not. That is, I find myself unable to carry my good intentions into complete effect. The sense would be quite as clear without the word *how*, supplied by the translators; the real difficulty consisted, not in the manner of obedience, but in obedience itself. The desire to obey was prevalent; but it was often frustrated by the influence of carnal passions. And of this hindrance to perfect obedience all men have been partakers; and to all good men it has been a source of humiliation and regret. This state of things results from the intimate connection between the soul and its earthly tabernacle; and it must continue, in a less or greater degree, while that connection subsists. Let the passions be curbed and restrained with the utmost diligence, nevertheless, in some unguarded moment, they will insidiously or violently obtain a momentary control, and disobedience and guilt ensue.

19. *For the good, &c.* This verse is substantially a repetition of ver. 15. Yet this is somewhat more definite. The apostle distinctly asserts here, what is implied in the former verse, that what he desires to do is *good*, and what he desires to avoid is *evil*. His declaration may be regarded as a confirmation of what he had said in ver. 18. The fact that he actually did not do the good which he would, and that he did do the evil which he would not, in connection with the sincerity of his desire, is offered as sufficient evidence of his practical inability "to perform that which is good;" that is, to perform that and that only, uniformly and constantly.

20. *Now if I do, &c.* This verse is almost a literal repetition of ver. 16, 17, with the omission of a single clause.

21. *I find then a law.* "Or rule. Our experience shows it to be a rule that, while we are conscious of our obligation to do good, evil tendencies within us interfere."—*H. Balou, 2d.* The word law is used here in a somewhat unusual

22 For I delight in the law of God, after the inward man :

sense, corresponding rather with what is called natural law than with moral law. Moral law consists of requirements and prohibitions, with rewards and penalties attached. Natural law indicates a fixed disposition of things, which nothing, except the Power which ordained it, can change. The law mentioned by the apostle was that rule, or established fact, of which all men are conscious, that evil tendencies interfere with holy desires, and prevent their entire accomplishment. ¶ *When I would do good.* When I would yield perfect obedience to that law which is "holy, and just, and good." Ver. 12. It has often been observed that the last decision of the will governs the action; and, therefore, that no man voluntarily does that which, at the time, he does not choose to do. The apostle must be understood to speak of his general desire to do good, which was occasionally frustrated by the evil influences within him. Or, if he speak of particular acts, we should understand him to mean that his desire to obey, in the special case under consideration, was thwarted, and the decision of his mind controlled, by the evil influence. Doubtless, both these effects of the law referred to have been exemplified by universal experience. Whether the desire to yield perfect obedience be general or special in its exercise, evil influences sometimes interpose and counteract it. ¶ *Evil is present with me.* It is near at hand. "I take the meaning of the writer to be, that he finds it to be a *custom* or *law* with him, resulting from his carnal nature, that when his reason and conscience decide in favor of doing good, evil comes in and prevents it; that is, his carnal affections and desires interpose, and hinder his doing good."—*Stuart*. It must be remembered, however, that the apostle does not assert that his reason and conscience were always overruled by his carnal appetites and desires. Such was not the operation of the *law*. He was conscious of a perpetual conflict between the two: his carnal appetites interfered with his holy desires and resolutions; this interference sometimes prevailed, so as to prevent his accomplishment of the desired good; but not always. He no-

where intimates his general and universal failure to obey, through the power of temptation. On the contrary, so far as modesty would permit, he claims to have generally conducted in a manner becoming a Christian. And, in ver. 25, in spite of all hindrances, he declares that habitually he served God sincerely and conscientiously.

22. In this verse and the next, the writer repeats, in different phraseology, and in a more intense form, his previous description of the conflict between flesh and spirit, and its results. ¶ *For I delight.* The word rendered *delight* does not elsewhere occur in the New Testament. It indicates not merely approval by the intellect, but a pleasurable emotion. The writer describes the condition of himself and others, after conversion; for the unconverted soul finds no pleasure in contemplating the divine law, even though constrained to consent that it is worthy of approval. By those who understand the apostle to speak here of the unrenewed man, of man under the law and not under grace, it is urged, that he uses language with great latitude of meaning; that his words are not to be interpreted too strictly; and that, in fact, he means no more by *delighting* in the law of God here, than by *consenting* to it that it is good. Ver. 16. The glowing style of Paul is manifest; that some of his expressions ought to be interpreted in a qualified sense, is universally admitted; nevertheless, we have no good reason to believe that he used words at random, or without regard to their proper meaning. Unquestionably, when the natural and most obvious meaning of his language is consistent with his general course of thought, with his evident design in the present discussion, and with facts familiar by universal experience, it is to be taken as its true meaning. Under this rule, I see no sufficient reason for supposing, when he says he *delights* in the law of God, he means merely that his judgment consents that the law is good, while his heart is in rebellion against its provisions, which is represented as the condition of the unrenewed heart. Either he means that, as a pious man, he loves the law or that, as unrenewed, he loves it, or

23 But I see another law in my members warring against the law

that he does not love it at all. If he means that he does not love the law of God, then his meaning is precisely opposite to the natural import of his language; but before this interpretation is adopted, very decisive proof of its propriety may justly be demanded. If he means that, as an unrenewed man, he loves the law, he gives a more favorable representation of that class of men than is generally acknowledged. If he means that, as a Christian, under the influence of divine grace, he loves the law, then he means precisely what he says, and what is accordant with the universal experience of Christians. Moreover, this interpretation is consistent with his general theme of discourse; namely, the inefficiency of the law as a means for the removal of sin and guilt. The law alone is inefficient, as is shown in ver. 5—13. And even when enforced by the influence of grace, it remains inefficient, while men dwell in the flesh. Although Paul shared so largely in the gracious influences of the spirit that he delighted in the law, and habitually desired to obey it, he found himself unable to yield perfect obedience, in consequence of the temptations which assailed him; he was sometimes "drawn away of his own lust, and enticed," Jas. i. 14; the law in his members, or his carnal propensities, occasionally brought him into captivity. Ver. 23. From this condition the law gave no relief. It neither prevented him from sinning, nor pardoned him when he sinned. His only hope of perfect deliverance, therefore, was in divine grace, not in the law. Ver. 24, 25. This conflict between good and evil, which he had experienced, and its result, he urges as a reason why his Christian brethren should abandon reliance on the law for justification and sanctification, and trust entirely and unreservedly in divine grace; as a reason, in short, why they should not expect to become "perfect by the flesh," after they had "begun in the spirit." Gal. iii. 3. For this purpose, it was not enough to show that the law failed to purify him, while he trusted in that alone: it was necessary to add, as he did, that it had no power to make him perfect, even after he

embraced the gospel. If it be objected, that he is thus made to say that grace also fails to make men perfect in this life, I reply, that if he is only made to say what is universally conceded to be a fact, the objection is not very formidable. At the same time, it should be remembered that he attributes to the influence of grace all the moral improvement which Christians experience, — their love of the law, their habitual desire to obey it, and their partial success in their virtuous efforts. To the same grace he ascribes the work of entire deliverance from sinfulness, in due time. Thus he asserts the superiority of grace over law. ¶ *After the inward man.* His better nature; himself emphatically, as in ver. 17, 20. The inclination of his heart, comparatively purified by grace. Such was the prevailing, habitual spirit which he cherished. And because it was his general spirit, he claims this as the proper characteristic of himself. See note on ver. 17. So long as this spirit fully controlled his thoughts and actions, he yielded perfect obedience. But whenever and as often as he was turned aside by the influence of temptation, he transgressed, as in ver. 23. What he here calls the "inward man" is styled the "new man," in opposition to the "old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts;" and the change from the one to the other results from being "renewed in the spirit of the mind." Eph. iv. 22—24. The "old man" denotes that condition in which the mind is habitually controlled by the bodily appetites and passions: the "new man" denotes that condition in which the mind habitually controls those appetites and passions. As Paul had been thus renewed in the spirit of his mind, he declares that, in the inward man, in himself proper, in his general spirit and desire, he delighted in the divine law, and endeavored to restrain all his passions which interfered with perfect obedience.

23. *But I see another law in my members.* I perceive another tendency within me. I perceive the influence of my bodily passions and propensities. See note on ch. vi. 6. "In my body: in my flesh: in my corrupt and

of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.

sinful propensities. Comp. 1 Cor. vi. 15; Col. iii. 5. The body is composed of many members; and as the flesh is regarded as the source of sin, ver. 18, the law of sin is said to be in the members, that is, in the body itself." — *Barnes*. It is scarcely necessary to observe, that when the body or the flesh is referred to as the source of sin, it is not intended that the body, as a physical organization, commits sin; sinfulness can only be predicated of the mind which yields to the power of temptations; but, as most temptations, not to say all, arise directly or indirectly from the bodily propensities, it is not improper to speak of the body as the source of sin, being the source of temptations which result in sin. ¶ *Warring against*. Conflicting with; opposing; exerting an influence in an opposite direction. ¶ *The law of my mind*. My fixed and settled purpose; my habitual desire and intention; my prevailing disposition. The conflict here mentioned and its result the apostle repeatedly describes, in this chapter and elsewhere, in various phraseology. See Eph. v. 17. ¶ *Bringing me into captivity*. Overcoming my better judgment and disposition; obtaining a temporary mastery; causing me to yield to the power of temptation. Although the ultimate triumph of love or of divine grace is certain, yet the victory becomes not complete, and absolute, while men dwell in the flesh. Paul cherished faith, hope, and charity, in an eminent degree; and his victory over evil propensities was correspondingly perfect. Yet he confesses that the power of the adversary was not wholly annihilated. On the contrary, in unguarded moments, he himself was overcome. It would be arrogant in us to claim higher perfection and a more perfect victory than he attained. "The saints of God do sin, Jas. iii. 2; 1 Kings viii. 46; and cannot do otherwise, Rom. vii. 15, 17, 18." — *Lightfoot*, on John iii. 21. "The apostle ranketh himself among them that groan under the yoke of sinful corruption; for, as St. Jerome and St. Augustine doth testify against the Pelagian heretics, this

24 O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?

is the true perfection of them that are born anew, that they are sensible of their infirmities and corruptions, and confess, as well in truth as humility, that they are imperfect." — *Assemb. Annot.*

24. *O wretched man that I am!* This exclamation indicates the grief of the apostle that, notwithstanding his general desire to live a holy life, he was sometimes overcome by temptation. It is humiliating to a good man to realize the power of his sensual propensities. When overcome by them, he experiences an aggravated form of that death which is the wages of sin; and deservedly, for he both knows the law and recognizes his duty to obey it. Luke xii. 47, 48. "In such circumstances the mind is overwhelmed with wretchedness, and instinctively sighs for relief. Can the law aid? Can man aid? Can the native strength of conscience or of reason aid? In vain all these are tried, and the Christian then calmly and thankfully acquiesces in the consolations of the apostle, that aid can be obtained only through Jesus Christ." — *Barnes*. ¶ *The body of this death*. Tyn-dale translates, "this body of death." The phrase is generally understood as a Hebraism, denoting a body having a tendency to death. The reference is, unquestionably, to the sensual passions and propensities which occasion moral death in the manner so graphically described in Jas. i. 14, 15. Death is the wages of sin; sin results from temptation; temptation arises, directly or indirectly, from the sensual appetites of the body, or of the flesh; hence the apostle calls those appetites and propensities the *body of death*, or the source of that disobedience which occasions death. The inquiry, therefore, who shall deliver me from this body of death, from the flesh whose works result in death? is to be understood as referring not literally to the body as a physical organization, but to the "lusts of the flesh," Eph. ii. 3, or to the sensual appetites and passions.

25. *I thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord*. This sentence is elliptical. The meaning seems to be, I thank God

25 I thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then, with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin.

that deliverance will be wrought by his grace through Jesus Christ. The law did not save from sin, nor remove its temptations. The exertions of men were ineffectual to withstand evil influences uniformly, and were utterly powerless to destroy those influences. Yet the case was not utterly hopeless. The grace of God was sufficient to accomplish the work thoroughly, as is more fully set forth in the succeeding chapter. And the apostle could not refrain from this ejaculatory expression of thankfulness, in connection with the picture of human helplessness which he was portraying. "As much as to say, Jesus Christ delivers me from this wretchedness and moral death. This was the logical conclusion of the whole chapter. Jesus could do what the law could not accomplish, put an end to the internal insurrection." — *Livermore*. ¶ *So then*. Such is the result. ¶ *With the mind, &c.* In this concluding phrase the apostle recapitulates what he has previously expressed in a variety of forms. He had faith in perfect deliverance from sin, by the power of divine grace. He enjoyed such a degree of deliverance that his habitual desire, his general disposition, what he styles *I myself*, was already on the side of holiness, and generally obedience was rendered; nevertheless, he was not yet entirely free from fleshly influences, which were sufficient to remind him of imperfection, to humiliate him, and to make him subject to sorrow and shame. "I myself, with full purpose and sincere endeavors of mind, give up myself to obey the law of God, though my carnal inclinations are enslaved, and have a constant tendency to sin. This is all I can do, and this is all, I being under grace, that is required of me, and through Christ will be accepted." — *Locke*. To the objection, that such a state of imperfection and comparative sinfulness implies that grace is no more effectual than the law in sanctifying men, whereas Christians can and should become perfectly free from sin in the

CHAPTER VIII.

THERE is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after

present life, a reply has already been given, founded on the undeniable fact that no man ever has attained such perfection, and that the Scriptures uniformly recognize imperfection in all Christians, as well as in others. Grace does much in this life, but its full display and its perfect work are reserved for the next.

CHAPTER VIII.

This chapter is closely connected with the foregoing, and fully illustrates the fact announced in ch. vii. 6. Before proceeding further, it may be useful to review very briefly the apostle's argument thus far. He declares in the outset the vast superiority of the gospel over law, ch. i. 16—18, which superiority consisted chiefly in the fact that, while the law gave no intimation of pardon for sin, and afforded no means of deliverance from temptation, the gospel revealed that divine grace which both pardons sin and purifies the heart. The inefficacy of the law is proved by the fact that the Gentiles, having the law of nature, were universally guilty of sin, ch. i.; that the Jews, having a written law, were equally guilty, ch. iii.; and that all, both Jews and Gentiles, are under sin, ch. iii. That divine grace is effectual to turn men away from ungodliness, and to justify them, or make them just, is declared in ch. iii. 24, and illustrated in ch. iv., where its present effect is shown to be produced through a spirit of faith. In ch. v. the peaceful and hopeful results of grace operating through faith are more fully exhibited; and the ultimate thorough regeneration of the human race is exhibited as the perfect work of superabounding grace. Ch. vi. is chiefly devoted to the objection supposed to be urged by an unbeliever, that if grace is to triumph over sin, and the divine glory thus to be made manifest, then we should "continue in sin, that grace may abound." Having disposed of this objection, the apostle declares that believers in Jesus are re-

leased from their subjection to law as a means of justification and sanctification, and that by embracing the gospel of Christ they have secured a more sure hope, and become subject to a more purifying influence, ch. vii. 1—5; and in ver. 6 he more distinctly announces both their deliverance and its fruits. Here he encounters another objection. His Jewish brethren, though converted to Christianity, retained much of their devotion to law, especially to the Mosaic code. Many of them insisted that none could be saved unless they complied with its provisions, and obeyed all its precepts. See Acts xv. 1, 24. Knowing the strength of their legal prejudices, the apostle anticipated their objection; namely, that his description of the inefficacy of the law, as a justifying and sanctifying power, implied that the law itself was evil. Ch. vii. 7. The remainder of the chapter contains his reply. He asserts the justice and holiness of the law, ver. 12, and declares that it was approved by his conscience, both while he relied on it for justification, ver. 16, and after he trusted exclusively in divine grace, ver. 22. Nevertheless, he declares, and their own hearts would bear witness that the declaration was true, that the law had never given him the power of perfect obedience, nor had it given him hope of pardon. Its condemning sentence was not reversed. Although, under the purifying influence of grace, he had been able to obey more perfectly than before, yet while he regarded the law alone as the means of deliverance from sin, the case appeared hopeless. Having begun in the spirit, he found himself utterly unable to become perfect by the flesh. Gal. iii. 3. While, therefore, he utterly denied the charge that he represented the law to be evil, he insisted on its utter inability to deliver from sin, or to give a satisfactory hope of future deliverance. If we carefully observe that, in ch. vii. 14—25, he represents himself as striving to attain perfection, his inability to yield perfect obedience to the law, and his despair of deliverance by such means, while in ch. viii. he represents himself as relying solely on divine grace for pardon and sanctification, we can easily understand why his feelings appear so suddenly to change from despondency to exultation.

1. *There is therefore now.* This is a continuation of the subject discussed in the previous chapter. The apostle had shown the utter hopelessness of reliance on the law for justification and sanctification, ver. 24. Yet he had declared that Christians had attained a more sure ground of reliance, ver. 6, 25; so that, although still surrounded and sometimes overcome by temptation, they might confidently hope for entire deliverance “from the body of this death,” from the influence of the “fleshly lusts which war against the soul,” 1 Pet. ii. 11; in short, from all sinfulness. ¶ *No condemnation.* “This does not mean that sin in believers is not to be condemned as much as anywhere, for the contrary is taught everywhere in the Scriptures; but it means, (1) That the gospel does not pronounce condemnation like the law. Its office is to pardon; the office of the law, to condemn. The one never affords deliverance, but always condemns; the object of the other is to free from condemnation, and to set the soul at liberty. (2.) There is no *final* condemnation under the gospel. The office, design, and tendency, of the gospel, is to free from the condemning sentence of law.”—*Barnes.* The believer in Jesus who is “overtaken in a fault,” Gal. vi. 1, acknowledges the justice of the penalty, which is inseparably connected with sin; yet he despairs not; he does not consider himself condemned beyond hope of relief; his faith in divine grace enables him to see a bright prospect of deliverance, not only from present distress, but from future occasions of distress. Indeed, his faith, having wrought by love, and comparatively purified his heart, Gal. v. 6, has already enabled him to pass from death unto life, John v. 24; and thus has he become free from that which is emphatically the condemnation of the law. ¶ *Who are in Christ Jesus.* United with him; his true disciples. Our Lord frequently used the same figure, to denote the spiritual union between himself and those who truly believed on him and imbibed his spirit. “Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine, no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches; he that abideth in me, and

the flesh, but after the Spirit.

2 For the law of the Spirit of

I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit; for without me ye can do nothing." John xv. 4, 5. To be in Christ is a common expression of the apostle, to denote genuine discipleship. ¶ *Who walk*, &c. This phrase is omitted in the best MSS. The words are supposed to have been inserted in this place from ver. 4, where they again occur. The sense remains the same, however, whether they be admitted or rejected.

2. *For the law.* "The word *law* here means that rule, command, or influence, which the spirit of life produces. That exerts a control which is here called a law, for a law often means anything by which we are ruled or governed." — *Barnes*. ¶ *Of the spirit of life.* Or, of spiritual life; the life into which we enter through faith in Christ, and spiritual union with him. Through the influence of divine grace, the believer's heart becomes subject to a new rule of action. It is no longer chiefly desirous to fulfil the lusts of the flesh, ch. xiii. 14, but rather to obey the pure and holy precepts of Christ. In other words, the habitual desire of Christians is to attain purity of heart and life; this desire is a law to them, or exerts an influence over them, restraining them from sin, and encouraging a continual struggle against its power. Or, if we do not regard the phrase "spirit of life" as a Hebraism for spiritual life, we may accept the interpretation of *Locke*: "Why it is called the law of the spirit of life has a reason, in that the gospel, which contains this doctrine of grace, is dictated by the same spirit that raised Christ from the dead, and that quickens us to newness of life, and has, for its end, the conferring of eternal life." ¶ *Hath made me free.* "That is, has delivered me from the predominating influence and control of sin. He cannot mean that he was perfect, for the whole tenor of his reasoning is opposed to that." — *Barnes*. "The spiritual laws of the Christian faith had not only released men from the bondage of the Mosaic institutions, but they had also emancipated the believing soul from the more terrible laws of moral transgression and death. Rom. vii. 25. The main

life, in Christ Jesus, hath made me free from the law of sin and death.

stress of the apostle's discourse is to show that the gospel is good, not so much to acquit its receivers and justify them, as to spiritualize them, and raise them out of the bondage of the appetites and passions." — *Levermore*. This fully accords with the scriptural testimony concerning salvation, under which general appellation are included all the special blessings communicated by divine grace through our Lord Jesus Christ. It consists, not in screening men from the just penalty of their transgressions, not in accounting them just while they remain unjust, not in saving them in sin, as has been "slanderosly reported, and as some affirm that we say," ch. iii. 8; but in saving them from sin, turning them away from their iniquities, and cleansing them from all unrighteousness. Matt. i. 21; Acts iii. 26; 1 John i. 9. This work is commenced here by enabling them to resist and restrain those appetites and propensities which tempt to the commission of sin, by inspiring a love of holiness, by turning their hearts from fleshly lusts to the love and service of God; it is completed, hereafter, by entire deliverance from temptation, by eradication of all improper desires, and by such a manifestation of grace as shall excite supreme gratitude and love to the just and holy and merciful Father of the spirits of all flesh. To the commencement of this glorious work the apostle refers in this place. Those who were in Christ, who had embraced his gospel, imbibed his spirit, and trusted in divine grace, already felt the regenerating power, by which their love of sin was weakened, and their love of virtue increased; by which, also, the influence of their appetites and passions was diminished, and their thoughts and conduct were brought under the purifying influence of the spirit of holiness. ¶ *From the law of sin and death.* That is, from the influence and control of those passions and lusts which prompt to sin, and result in death. James i. 14, 15. Not that believers are entirely exempt from such influences while they remain on earth; but the bondage is broken, and the predominating influence which guides them is that of the

3 For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through

spirit of life, or of spiritual life, or of the life-giving, quickening spirit.

3. *For what the law could not do.* The word law is here used in its more ordinary sense, indicating the Mosaic law, or, more probably, both that and the law of nature, or of natural conscience, by which the Gentiles were guided. The thing which the law could not do was the purification of the human race from sinfulness. This inability of all law, merely as law, had been demonstrated in the previous chapters. But what the law could not do was within the proper scope of divine grace, which both could and would accomplish it. To express the sense more clearly, *Stuart* supplies a word: "For what the law could not accomplish, in that it was weak through the flesh, God, sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, accomplished," &c. *Conybeare* transposes: "For God (which was impossible to the law, because through the weakness of our flesh it had no power), by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and on behalf of sin, overcame sin in the flesh." *Macknight* adopts a similar transposition. The idea is sufficiently manifest: that God, by the exercise of grace, had accomplished and would accomplish what the law had not done nor could do. ¶ *In that.* Because; inasmuch as; a form of expression nearly obsolete. ¶ *It was weak.* Inefficacious. ¶ *Through the flesh.* The fault was not in the law, but in the carnal propensities of men, as the apostle declares, ch. vii. 10—14. By flesh we are to understand the appetites and propensities, or the body, as the seat of those passions. "Because, through the strength of our carnal inclinations and desires, it was unable to regulate our lives so that we should be perfect or entirely free from sin; comp. ch. vii. 14—25. *The flesh* here, as often elsewhere, designates carnal appetites or inclinations." — *Stuart*. The law, indeed, strictly prohibited the improper indulgence of such appetites or inclinations. But mere prohibition, however strict, and enforced by however severe penalties, has no power to compel more than an outward form of obedience. A

the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and

cheerful and hearty obedience results only from confidence in the Lawgiver; from such an apprehension of his character as excites both trust and affection. Such trust and affection are excited by the manifestation of divine grace; but never by mere prohibitory law. ¶ *In the likeness of sinful flesh.* Clothed with a human body. A similar idea is expressed in Heb. ii. 14—16; where the manner and the purpose of his earthly mission are described in corresponding terms. To save mankind from sin, and to fill their hearts with a spirit of holiness, he appeared in human form, endured the imperfections of humanity, sin only excepted, and died on the cross in attestation of the blessed truths he had revealed. It has been supposed that, although he bore the "likeness of sinful flesh," or was clothed in a human body, yet he was not subject to the propensities and desires of the flesh, which have a tendency to sin. This view of the case, in my judgment, is untenable. He was certainly subject to hunger, thirst, and the other human appetites. He was subject to weariness, and the other human infirmities. He was subject to pleasure, sympathy, grief, and other human emotions. But from some or all of these arise temptations to sin. Why, then, deny that he had those propensities which become sinful by improper indulgence? Human nature, as it came originally, and continues to come, from the hand of the Maker, is not sinful. The natural propensities are good in themselves, and become sinful only by improper predominance and indulgence. It does not detract, therefore, from the dignity and purity of our Saviour's character, to suppose that his body was truly a human body, with all the appetites and propensities properly belonging to it. Moreover, he was tempted, and through the weakness of the body. See notes on Matt. iv. 1—11. The apostle is even more explicit: "In that he himself has suffered, being tempted, he is able to succor them that are tempted." "For we have not a high-priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without

for sin, condemned sin in the flesh :

sin." Heb. ii. 18 ; iv. 15. Although it might be highly improper to interpret this language in a strictly literal sense, yet it cannot be supposed to mean less than that he endured temptations. And another apostle tells us whence temptations arise. Jas. i. 14. Yet as he uniformly resisted all irregular desires, he was "without sin," spotless and blameless. Does it detract from the purity of any being that he successfully resists all temptations? It is certainly difficult to perceive the force or propriety of the language used by the apostle to the Hebrews, if we deny that our Lord was subject to the ordinary propensities of humanity, and by experience of their influence could fully sympathize in the infirmities of mankind, and succor them when tempted. ¶ *And for sin.* On account of sin. Because sin was in the world, Jesus came to destroy it. Because men were sinners, he came to save them from sin. He came to call, not the righteous, but sinners, to repentance. If sin had not existed, redeeming grace could not have been manifested, nor could God have commended his love to us by sending his Son to die for us, while we were yet sinners. Ch. v. 8. The mission and death of Christ had relation to sin, and were designed for its removal. But it by no means follows, as many suppose, that he endured the punishment of sin, instead of the guilty. Indeed, it is not conceivable that a pure and holy being could endure that which is the distinguishing characteristic of punishment for sin, namely, remorse of conscience. He labored and died for the spiritual benefit of sinners, but not in their stead. He saves them from spiritual death, but does not himself endure it. ¶ *Condemned sin in the flesh.* Or, overcame and destroyed it. The word here rendered condemned is used in a similar sense, 2 Pet. ii. 6. "*In the flesh*, that is to say, in the very seat of its power." — *Conybeare.* The apostle probably used the word κατακρίνει (*katakrisis*, condemned), in preference to any other which would equally well express the idea of destroying or putting away sin, because in ver. 1 he had said there was now no κατακρίματα (*katakrima*,

condemnation) to Christians. The antithesis thus becomes verbal, as well as actual. Christians should not be condemned ; but sin should be condemned. Not that sin, as something distinct from the transgressor, is punished ; which is absurd. But sin, sinfulness, sinful propensities, whatever stands opposed to holiness in the human heart, is condemned, subdued, and destroyed, by divine grace. Similar phraseology occurs in ch. vi. ; and the similarity of idea is distinctly exhibited by *Stuart* : "As to sins being put to death, condemned, or punished, in Christians, comp. ch. vi. 2—11 ; where the meaning of the writer is, not that sinners are punished by inflicting on them the penalty of the law, but that the carnal mind is, by the grace of the gospel, mortified, subdued, crucified, and as it were put to death. This bears upon the point in question, and makes all plain." The language is highly figurative, but the meaning is sufficiently obvious. Grace will so purify the heart, by removing or destroying evil influences, and implanting and encouraging the growth of good influences, that a more perfect obedience may be rendered to the law of true righteousness. Ver. 4. "Neander rejects the notion that the meaning of this verse is that 'Christ bore for men the punishment attached to sin by the law,' but interprets this and the next verse thus : 'That what was impossible to the law, what it was unable to effect, owing to the predominant sinfulness in human nature, was accomplished by God when he sent his Son into the world in that human nature which had hitherto been under the dominion of sin, and when he condemned sin, that is, despoiled it of its power and supremacy, and manifested its powerlessness in that human nature, over which it had before reigned, in order that the requirements of the law might be fulfilled in believers, as those whose lives were not governed by sinful desire, but by the spirit, the divine vital principle of the spirit that proceeded from Christ.' I am happy to introduce such passages from moderate orthodox writers, because they prove that the ancient bigotry is breaking up and passing away, and new views are

4 That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who

walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

dawning upon the human soul."—*Livermore*.

4. *That the righteousness of the law.* The righteousness required by the law, that is, by divine law, whether written or otherwise. The apostle has labored to demonstrate the fact, that the law was inefficacious to produce holiness, for reasons which he has distinctly assigned. Yet he has uniformly maintained that the law was "holy, and just, and good," as indeed it must be, if given by a perfectly holy Being; and that it requires of its subjects perfect purity and holiness. He gives no intimation that the moral precepts of law have been or ever will be abrogated. To cherish supreme love to God, and genuine love to mankind, in which two precepts the whole law may be comprehended, and to be guided and controlled by the influence of such love, at all times and under all circumstances, is the whole duty and the perpetual duty of all men. Although the law did not impart ability to yield obedience to its requirements, yet its requirements were none the less holy and absolute. By the gospel that grace is manifested which does impart such ability, bringing the heart under new influences and new motives to obedience, so that obedience is no longer constrained, but willing and cheerful. Having "crucified the flesh, with the affections and lusts," Gal. v. 24, thus destroying the predominating influence of sin "in the very seat of its power," and excited a spirit of gratitude and affection to the Heavenly Father by a manifestation of his exceeding goodness, divine grace enables men to do that which they could not do under the influence of mere law; namely, to fulfil the righteous requirements of the law. ¶ *Might be fulfilled in us.* That is, that we might become obedient to the law of righteousness, or become righteous. This is the grand object of the whole scheme of grace: to deliver men from sinfulness, and to make them holy; in other words, to enable them to depart from all iniquity, and to cleave unto holiness with all the heart; for, although the agency of men is recognized, in ceasing to do evil and learning to do

well, in working out their own salvation, nevertheless, "it is God which worketh in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure," Phil. ii. 12, 13; and his grace underlies the whole process of salvation from sin. In proportion to the degree of salvation attained, is the completeness of obedience to the law of righteousness. When deliverance from sinfulness becomes complete, obedience will become perfect, and not sooner. As this deliverance is not fully accomplished on earth, we cannot understand the apostle to say here that even Christians now absolutely and entirely fulfil the law of righteousness. They are released from the predominating influence of sin, and brought under the predominating influence of holiness; and thus they "walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit." Their general, habitual desire to practise righteousness, and their general success, notwithstanding occasional failure, is all that the language in the text can be reasonably understood to imply. "Fulfilled does not here signify a complete, exact obedience, but such an unblamable life, by sincere endeavors after righteousness, as shows us to be the faithful subjects of Christ, exempt from the dominion of sin. See ch. xiii. 8; Gal. vi. 2. A description of such, who thus fulfilled the 'righteousness of the law,' we have in Luke i. 6. As Christ in the flesh was wholly exempt from all taint of sin, so we, by that spirit which was in him, shall be exempt from the dominion of our carnal lusts, if we make it our choice and endeavor to live after the spirit. Ver. 9—11. For that which we are to perform by that spirit is the mortification of the deeds of the body. Ver. 13."—*Locke*. In one sense, indeed, we may understand the apostle to speak of perfect righteousness on the part of mankind; not as the present immediate effect of the manifestation of divine grace by our Lord Jesus Christ, but as its ultimate effect and crowning glory. The work commences here, which shall become perfect hereafter. It is the same in kind, but different in degree. Here, we are sanctified in part; hereafter, wholly. But the same grace

5 For they that are after the flesh, do mind the things of the flesh: but they that are after the

sanctifies. The special reference in the text, however, is to the moral condition of Christians in the present life, and to their comparative sanctification. ¶ *Who walk.* Who conduct, who live. The word is often used in this sense by the apostles. See Eph. iv. 1; 2 Pet. ii. 10; 2 John 6; Jude 18. ¶ *After the flesh.* According to the flesh; under the influence of the fleshly appetites or propensities. The idea is, that Christians should not and do not live for the mere gratification of their carnal desires; the predominating influence under which they act is not that of mere animal propensities. ¶ *But after the spirit.* According to the spirit; under the influence of the spirit; guided by the promptings of the spirit, and thus obeying God, rather than their own lusts. The opposing influences of the flesh and the spirit, and their respective fruits, are exhibited in Gal. v. 19—24. Those who “have crucified the flesh, with the affections and lusts,” and whose hearts have been renewed by the spirit of grace, become able, in a corresponding degree, to fulfil the righteousness of the law.

5. *For they that are after the flesh.* Who are under its influence; whose chief desire is to gratify the propensities of the flesh. ¶ *Do mind the things of the flesh.* They are chiefly devoted to the gratification of fleshly appetites. They are under the predominating influence of the carnal desires, and are thereby prevented from obeying the spiritual law of righteousness. See notes on ch. vi. 16; vii. 5. ¶ *They that are after the spirit.* Who are under the predominating influence of the spirit. ¶ *The things of the spirit.* The holy desires and actions which are prompted by the spirit. *Locke* gives the leading idea of this verse, with sufficient distinctness, in his paraphrase: “As for those who are still under the direction of the flesh and its sinful appetites, who are under obedience to the law in their members, they have the thoughts and bent of their minds set upon the things of the flesh, to obey it in the lusts of it; but they who are under the spiritual law of their minds,

Spirit, the things of the Spirit.

6 For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded

the thoughts and bent of their hearts is to follow the dictates of the spirit in that law.”

6. *For to be carnally minded.* “The mind of the flesh.”—*Stuart.* “The minding of the flesh.”—*Macknight.* “The fleshly mind.”—*Conybeare.* The Greek φρονῆμα τῆς σαρκός (*phronēma tēs sarkos*) literally signifies the mind of the flesh. But, in connection with ver. 5, where the kindred verb occurs, both in the Greek and in the common translation, “mind the things of the flesh,” the idea seems to be *the earnest desire* of the flesh. The *mind*, as indicated by this word, is not merely intellect, but implies the idea of affection, disposition, desire. The noun occurs only in this verse, and in ver. 7, 27. But the verb is found often in the New Testament, and generally in the sense already indicated. See Matt. xvi. 23 (*savourer*); ch. xii. 16; xiv. 6 (*regard-eth*); Phil. ii. 2; iv. 10 (*care and careful*); Col. iii. 2 (*set your affection*). Such is manifestly the idea conveyed in the text. The mind of the flesh indicates an inordinate regard to the fleshly appetites and propensities. To be carnally minded, that is, to be under the predominating influence of fleshly desires, is substantially the same as to be servants of sin, or under the dominion of sin. Ch. vi. 12, 14, 17. ¶ *Is death.* Such a state of mind or disposition is a state of death. The course of conduct induced by such influences results in moral death, because it is sinful. Ch. vi. 23. ¶ *To be spiritually minded.* Or, the mind of the spirit; the disposition, the desire, the bent of mind, induced by the influence of the spirit. The form of Greek phrase is like the foregoing. ¶ *Is life and peace.* The spirit quickens the morally dead (Eph. ii. 1), and under its influence men pass from death unto life. John v. 24; 1 John iii. 14. When the heart of man is under the influence of the spirit of grace, he enjoys life and peace. Just as surely as sin involves death, just so surely holiness is attended by spiritual life, and by a peace beyond all that the things of earth can afford. “It tends to life, and is in fact real life. For to possess and cul

is life and peace :

7 Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not

tivate the graces of the spirit, to be led where he would guide us, is the design of our existence, and is the only path of happiness." — *Barnes*.

7. *Because the carnal mind.* The Greek phrase is precisely the same which is rendered "to be carnally minded," in verse 6; and its meaning is manifestly the same in both places. Had the same translation been given in the common version, the language of the apostle would have been more readily and accurately understood. The reason is here given why minding or chiefly regarding the things of the flesh results in death, as is intimated by the word *because*; but the change in phraseology renders the purpose less apparent. ¶ *Is enmity against God.* Is hostility, or, rather, is hostile, opposed, as the noun is understood to be used for the adjective. The minding of the flesh, indulging its appetites and propensities, studying chiefly to gratify its desires, is utterly opposed to the cultivation of those holy affections, that love of truth and justice, that love toward God and toward men, which God requires by his law, and equally by the influence of his grace. Our Lord said, "Ye cannot serve God and Mammon." Matt. vi. 24. See the note. Equally true is it that men cannot pay supreme regard to their carnal passions and to God at the same time. The dominion of the one is contrary to the other. The service of the one involves a disregard of the other. Love to the one implies disapproval or hostility towards the other. Substantially the same idea is expressed in Galatians v. 17: "The flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary the one to the other." The lusts of the flesh are opposed to the spiritual influences of divine grace, and, whether consciously or unconsciously, they who are under the dominion of those lusts are to the same extent hostile to the source of those gracious influences. ¶ *For it.* That is, the fleshly mind, the minding of the flesh, the anxiety to gratify the carnal appetites. ¶ *Is not subject to the law of God.* We are not to understand that it is not under the

subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.

8 So then they that are in the

legitimate authority of the law; but that it is not in subjection to it; that it is opposed to it; that it exists in opposition to the requirements of the law. ¶ *Neither indeed can be.* Its nature being utterly opposed to what the law requires, it is impossible that it should exist in conformity to the law. Such conformity implies the renunciation of this overweening regard for the flesh. This idea is illustrated by Augustine by the inquiry, "How can snow be warmed? For when it is melted and becomes warm, it is no longer snow." So in the case under consideration. When the affections become fixed on God and his law, when the chief desire of man is to be led by the spirit into righteousness and true holiness, the love of the flesh, the anxiety to gratify its lusts, has not been made subject to the law of God, or consistent with it, but it has ceased to exist in proportion to the thoroughness of the work of grace on the heart. The flesh is thus crucified, with its affections and lusts. Gal. v. 24. Some have vainly imagined that instead merely of certain unholy affections, the apostle speaks of man himself as being an enemy of God, not subject to his law, and unable to become subject to it. They apparently forget what the apostle reiterates in chap. vii., that this fleshly mind, or law in his members, sorely annoyed him, and led him into transgression, even while it was his earnest and habitual desire to obey God in all things. This law in his members he steadfastly resisted, as opposed to the law of God, and because, just so far as it had dominion over him, it rendered him disobedient to God. Nevertheless, by the assistance of divine grace, he was able to serve the law of God with his mind, in spite of the rebellious tendencies of his fleshly nature. Chap. vii. 25.

8. *So then.* Such is the conclusion to which the argument tends. ¶ *They that are in the flesh.* This form of words sometimes denotes those who still dwell in mortal bodies, in contradistinction to those who have been changed from mortality to immortality. Such is not

flesh cannot please God.

its meaning here. It is equivalent to them who are after the flesh, or walk after the flesh, ver. 4, 5; to them who are fleshly minded, devoted to the gratification of the flesh, ver. 6, 7. While men are under the dominion of the fleshly appetites, while they are controlled by the law in their members, while it is their chief study and desire to pamper the body and gratify its appetites, they cannot please God. Such are the persons here intended. That the apostle cannot mean to describe mankind generally as dwelling in bodies of flesh, is manifest from the next verse, where of men clothed in like fleshly bodies he says, "Ye are not in the flesh." ¶ *Cannot please God.* Whatever may have been the design of God in subjecting men to vanity, creating them with natural propensities, good in themselves, but hurtful when excessively predominant, and exposing them to influences which were certain to lead them into transgression, it is the uniform language of the Scriptures, that he is pleased by righteousness, and displeased by unrighteousness. Righteousness is consistent with his own nature, and is pleasing. Unrighteousness is inconsistent with his own nature, and is displeasing; that is, in itself considered, as an ultimate object. It may be, and is, permitted as a means for the production of good; but as an end it is abhorrent to the divine nature. Opposition to the law of righteousness is not pleasing to God. Those who exclusively or mainly regard the gratification of the flesh live in opposition to that law. It follows that such cannot please God; that is, while they remain in that condition, while they are under dominion of fleshly influences. But, when delivered from that dominion, and brought under the predominating influence of the spirit of grace, when they place their affections on spiritual rather than on carnal enjoyments, they become capable of pleasing God, and of experiencing that peace and joy which is otherwise termed spiritual life. Such was already the condition of some whom the apostle addressed, ver. 9; and such is the condition which grace is designed to secure for all. Temporary sinfulness hinders not the final triumph of grace. In

9 But ye are not in the flesh

regard to mankind, conversion to holiness necessarily implies previous unholiness. So that, although men may be in such a condition that they cannot please God, the same men may afterwards become monuments of his grace, being turned away from ungodliness, and being washed, justified, and sanctified, by the spirit of grace. 1 Cor. vi. 9—11. "Hence it is by some inferred that the unregenerate can do nothing that is truly good, nothing but what is evil and displeasing to God. To this I answer that this is one of the texts abused by ancient heretics, to prove that the flesh was by nature evil. We learn from Epiphanius and from St. Chrysostom upon the place, who, therefore, well observe that by the flesh here we are not to understand the body, or the substance of the body, but a worldly, carnal life, full of luxury and riotous living, and turning the whole man into flesh, as is evident from the phrase, *The wisdom of the flesh*, engaging us only to mind the things of the flesh, and to be of the flesh, as the true Christian is of the spirit, being led by and walking in the spirit. — The apostle doth indeed say that they who thus mind carnal things, while they continue so to do, cannot please God. This being only in effect to say, in the words of Chrysostom, that whilst men go on in their sinful courses, they cannot please God, or live in subjection to his laws. But, then, saith he, as Christ only says an evil tree whilst it continues such cannot bring forth good fruit, but doth not say an evil tree cannot be made good, but, on the contrary, saith, make the tree good, that the fruit may be good (Matt. xii. 33), so it is here; for the apostle, by his frequent exhortations to these carnal men to crucify the flesh, and mortify the flesh with its lusts or the deeds of it, and to put off the old man with his deeds; by his threats, that if they live after the flesh they shall die; and by his promises, that if through the spirit they do mortify the deeds of the flesh, they shall live; doth show that men may cease to live according to the flesh, and may so mortify the deeds of the flesh, that they may live." — *Whithy.* One additional remark may not be useless. As the most spiritually

but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now

minded on earth, and this the apostle affirms, do not become entirely free from the law of sin in the members, so the most carnally minded are not wholly unconscions of the law of the spirit. As the purest sometimes stumble, so the vilest sometimes think and act right. The characters of men, however, are designated according to the predominating influence by which they are governed. If they be chiefly desirous to obey the law of the spirit, they are styled spiritual, notwithstanding their occasional lapses. If they be chiefly desirous to pamper the flesh and to gratify its lusts, they are styled carnal, notwithstanding the occasional gleams of spiritual influence upon their hearts. While they remain thus carnal, and so far as they are governed by the impulses of the flesh, they disobey the law, and cannot please God. When, however, they shall renounce the dominion of the flesh, and obey the law of the spirit, they become "dear children" (Eph. v. 1.), and give glory to God for the unspeakable gift of his grace.

9. *But ye are not in the flesh.* The apostle now contrasts the condition of true disciples with that of the unconverted. Of course he does not mean that they no longer dwell in fleshly bodies, for he addresses living men. Nor does he mean that they had entirely escaped the influence of fleshly appetites and passions; for he gives no intimation that they had shared more largely, or profited more abundantly, in the gifts of the spirit, than himself, and he acknowledges in ch. vii. that he had not yet attained perfect deliverance from the flesh. But his meaning is sufficiently manifest, if we will apply to his language the rule of common sense. They were no longer under the predominating influence of their fleshly appetites and propensities; it was no longer their chief object and desire to gratify the flesh in the lusts thereof; they were no longer characteristically sensual. ¶ *But in the spirit.* Spiritually minded, as in v. 6; guided generally by the influence of the spirit of grace and holiness. They were not absolutely free from temptation and sin, yet they were so thoroughly renewed in the spirit of their minds, the

influence of the spirit so far predominated over the influence of the flesh, that the apostle styles them spiritual. For an illustration of their spirituality, and also their liability to fall, see Gal. vi. 1. ¶ *If so be that the spirit of God dwell in you.* If the enlightening, purifying, sanctifying divine spirit had the principal place and influence in their hearts, then indeed were they spiritually minded. See notes on John xiv. 16, 17, 26. ¶ *Now if any man have not the spirit of Christ.* If the temper, disposition, spirit, of man be not assimilated to the spirit of Christ, if the professed disciple do not cherish the spirit of holiness which shone so brightly in his Master. This was a test of discipleship. The apostle refers to this characteristic mark of a Christian in his exhortation, Phil. ii. 5, where the verb occurs which is mentioned in the note on ver. 6. Men deceive themselves if they imagine they are true Christians when their hearts are destitute of the spirit which our Lord always manifested: a spirit of unwavering trust in God, and love to him; a spirit of obedience to the divine law, so that the highest satisfaction shall be afforded by conformity to the will of God, John iv. 34; Heb. x. 5—7; a spirit of love towards all men, and an earnest desire for their temporal and spiritual welfare. Such a spirit animated our Lord; he went about doing good to the souls and to the bodies of men, and submitted to the death of the cross as the highest manifestation of his love, praying for the forgiveness of his murderers, and confidently committing his own spirit to the Father. If we feel and cherish the influence of a similar spirit, we may humbly hope that he owns us as true disciples, and that we are no longer, as the apostle figuratively expresses it, in the flesh, but in the spirit. But, if we be destitute of this likeness to our Master, if we neither love, obey, and trust in God, nor love and endeavor to benefit mankind, let us heed the solemn declaration which follows. ¶ *He is none of his.* That is, he is not a true disciple; he is not Christ's, characteristically. There is a very important sense in which all men are Christ's; the heathen

if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.

and the uttermost parts of the earth have been given to him for an inheritance and a possession. Ps. ii. 8. This includes the wicked, those who are yet destitute of his spirit. The angel testified of him, "He shall save his people from their sins." Matt. i. 21. They were his people while they were sinners. He saves them from sin, not to make them his, but because they are already his. Our Lord himself bears witness to the same truth. In solemn thanksgiving and prayer to God he says, "Thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him." John xvii. 2. See the note. I remark only, in this place, that all were manifestly given to him before they became partakers of eternal life, inasmuch as they were thus given for the special purpose that he might bestow that life. In this important sense men are Christ's while they yet walk after the flesh, are carnally minded, subject to the law in their members, and destitute of his spirit. The declaration in the text manifestly must be understood with this limitation. It is to be understood of discipleship, of Christian character, of spiritual life. Whoso is destitute of the spirit which Christ manifested, has no good reason to believe that he has yet become a true disciple, that he has escaped the bondage of the flesh, that he has attained spiritual life. He need not despair; because, of all which the Father hath given him, our Saviour will lose nothing. John vi. 39. But let him know assuredly that he has not yet received the promised blessing: if he have not the spirit of Christ he is not yet his disciple, nor a partaker of that eternal or spiritual life which he came to bestow. There are those who flatter themselves that they are true disciples, because they have at times experienced rapturous joy in the contemplation of divine grace, while yet their hearts remain cold toward their fellow-men; while they wrong and defraud men without compunction, and contemplate their endless torment without a sigh or a tear. Let no man lay the flattering unction to his soul that he is born of the spirit, is spiritually

10 And if Christ *be* in you, the body *is* dead because of sin;

minded, is truly a disciple of Christ, while thou art destitute of the spirit of him who never wronged but always blessed mankind; who wept over even their temporal distresses, Luke xix. 41—44, and who gave the highest possible proof of his love by dying for their benefit. John xv. 13; Rom. v. 6—8. Let such be mindful of the apostolic admonition: "If a man say I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar. For he that loveth not his brother, whom he hath seen, how can he love God, whom he hath not seen?" 1 John iv. 20. Let them also consider what Paul means, in Gal. v. 15. All the raptures which men may experience, whether truly spiritual, or whether mere animal excitement mistaken for spiritual joy, are of little avail unless accompanied and followed by an abiding, operative love towards God, manifested by obedience to his holy law, and love towards men, manifested by striving to do them good, and refraining from any act or desire inconsistent with their highest happiness. Such was the spirit of the Master. And such must be our spirit, or we are not his disciples in sincerity and in truth.

10. *If Christ be in you.* If his spirit dwell in you. The expression is figurative, and is equivalent to having the spirit of Christ. Ver. 9. The meaning is, if ye be true disciples of Christ; if ye believe his testimony, obey his precepts, and cherish the spirit which he manifested; if his spirit thus dwell in you. ¶ *The body is dead.* Or, more literally, the body, indeed, is dead. Various interpretations have been given of this passage. Some insist that physical death is referred to; as if the sense were, the body is dead, that is, is mortal and doomed to natural death; others, that the reference is to what is styled a death in trespasses and sins; and others, that the same death is intended as in ch. vi. 1—11; namely, a death to sin, represented as the crucifixion of the old man, and the destruction of the body of sin. Ch. vi. 6. The latter appears to me the more correct interpretation, as it harmonizes better than either of the others with the theme of the apostle's discourse. There is no distinct reference,

But the Spirit is life because of righteousness.

in this portion of the epistle, to natural death, but repeated reference to the moral death which sin produces, and also to that figurative death to sin which is indicated by deliverance from bondage to its propensities; hence, a reference here to natural death would seem less likely than to either of the others. Moreover, the apostle addresses those who had already been quickened or made alive from a death in trespasses and sins, by the influence of the spirit; and the supposition is unnatural that he represented them as still subjects of such death. But if we understand him to mean that those who are thus quickened, though they be not perfect, and have not yet entirely escaped the power of temptation, have nevertheless so mortified the fleshly lusts as to be able, generally, to withstand their influence; that, in this sense, they have become dead to sin, being comparatively free from its power; then we find in the language here used a confirmation of the idea expressed in ch. vi., and perceive a coherency between the two places not otherwise to be discovered. "Thus interpreted, the sentiment of the whole passage would run thus: If the spirit of Christ dwells in any one, his body is indeed dead on account of sin, that is, the old man is crucified, or he undergoes mortification as to his bodily sinful appetites; but his spirit is rendered happy on account of righteousness, that is, because of conformity to the requisitions of the gospel. Yea, if the spirit of him who raised up Jesus from the dead dwells in any man, that same spirit will quicken, that is, impart life to, his mortal body; in other words, he will not suffer it to remain a mere *dead body*, but make it an instrument of righteousness (ch. vi. 12, 13, 19), and give it a power of being subservient to the glory of God. By degrees, the Christian 'brings under his body,' and keeps it in subjection. At first, it is, as it were, crucifying the old man; but, in the sequel, the grace of God makes conquest easy, and even delightful. It is such a quickening of our bodies, a converting of them into 'instruments of righteousness,' to which the apostle seems to me here to refer. One circumstance appears to be conclusive, in

regard to this exegesis; which is, that the apostle here describes the spirit which 'quickens the bodies' of Christians as being the spirit which *dwells in them*. Where is the resurrection, at the last day, of our physical bodies, attributed to the sanctifying spirit in believers? Very different is the statement in Col. ii. 12, 13; Eph. i. 19, 20; ii. 5, 6; Rom. vi. 4. It is, then, the spirit who dwells in believers that is to quicken them, in the sense which is here meant; and what can this be, except the one designated in ch. vi. 12, 13, 19? The body is often the occasion of sin and sorrow; it is a *body of death*. It requires to be mortified and crucified. But the spirit of God, in believers, by degrees brings them to yield their members as instruments of righteousness. Then is the old man, the body of sin, dead; and the body itself, like the spirit, is quickened in the service of God."—*Stuart*. I have here quoted the more largely, because the meaning of this verse has been so much controverted, and because the foregoing remarks will aid in correctly understanding what follows. ¶ *Because of sin*. "On account of sin."—*Stuart*. "With respect to sin."—*Macknight*. The paraphrase by *Locke* is of similar import: "Is dead as to all activity to sin; sin no longer reigns in it, but your sinful carnal lusts are mortified." Of course, here, as in ch. vi. 2, 11, we are to understand the language as used in a qualified sense, indicating that the body was comparatively dead as to sin, or as to the influence of sinful propensities; (1) because the apostle acknowledges, ch. vii. 14—25, that he was not yet entirely free from that influence; and (2) because he here declares that the process of purification was still in progress, and that it should hereafter become complete. See ver. 11, 21. Just so far as the influence of the spirit predominates, the body, or the influence of fleshly appetites and propensities, becomes dead, that is, inoperative to the production of sin. But this work is not accomplished in a moment. Many and sharp struggles are experienced by Christians, as a trial of their faith and patience. A final end of the conflict cannot be expected until this

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

mortal and corruptible, the seat of carnal influences, shall put on immortality and incorruption. Then will the soul be entirely under the influence and rule of the spirit of grace. Of this perfect deliverance from temptation and from sin we find glorious promises in this chapter. ¶ *But the spirit is life, because of righteousness.* "The spirit liveth on account of righteousness." — *Stuart.* "And if the spirit of Christ be in you, the body, with its lusts which formerly governed you, ch. vii. 18, will certainly be dead, with respect to sin; but the spirit, your rational powers, will be alive, or vigorous, with respect to righteousness." — *Macknight.* To the same effect, — "The spirit of your mind liveth, that is, is enlivened, in order to righteousness, or living righteously." — *Locke.* Somewhat different in form, but kindred in character and result, is this: "His spirit is rendered happy on account of righteousness, that is, because of conformity to the requisitions of the gospel." — *Stuart.* The influence of the spirit excites activity in the practice of righteousness, and fills the soul with peace and happiness as the fruit of righteousness. Spiritual life properly embraces righteousness as the means through which the spirit of grace bestows happiness on mankind. See ch. v. 21. Righteousness and spiritual enjoyment are closely united; the one cannot exist without the other. The grace which excites the one secures the other. So that the spirit which is alive to righteousness, under the influence of divine grace, is equally alive on account of righteousness, being filled with peace and joy as its fruit.

11. *But if the spirit of him that raised up Jesus, &c.* Namely, the spirit of God. The phraseology is changed, with reference to what follows; but the same divine spirit is denoted. The divine spirit dwelt abundantly in our Lord Jesus Christ. See notes on John iii. 34; xiv. 9. Hence the spirit of grace and of holiness is called the spirit of God, or the spirit of Christ, according to the special application designed by the writer. But here, as elsewhere, the subordination of the Son

to the Father is distinctly recognized; as much, indeed, as when the Son acknowledged his dependence, John v. 19, 30; or when in the hour of death he commended his spirit to the Father, Luke xxiii. 46; or when the apostle declared that God raised up Jesus from the dead, Acts v. 30. The resurrection of our Lord, by the power of the Father, is here also expressly asserted. Hence the description of the spirit of grace as the spirit of the Father, and also as the spirit of the Son, need occasion no doubt concerning their relative rank, or any perplexity in regard to the distinctness of their personality. ¶ *He that raised, &c.* The same God who raised his Son, who literally reanimated the dead body of Jesus Christ. ¶ *Shall also quicken your mortal bodies.* The reference is not, as some have supposed, to the literal resurrection from natural death, but to a figurative resurrection from moral deadness, not unlike that which is mentioned in John v. 25. The change of condition here indicated seems to be the same which is referred to in ch. vi. 11—13. The subject is exhibited in various aspects, yet one general idea runs through the whole; namely, that under the influence of divine grace the body becomes dead, that is, its propensities have a less controlling influence; that the spirit is invigorated, so as to control the carnal passions, and to cultivate the graces of holiness; and that even the body, thus controlled by the spirit, shall not only cease to be an instrument of sinfulness, but become an instrument of righteousness. Such language, of course, is figurative, and is to be so understood. *Macknight* observes that "this is an allusion to our Lord's words, John v. 21, where, speaking of the spiritual resurrection, he says, 'as the Father raiseth and maketh alive the dead, even so the Son maketh alive whom he will,' namely, from the death of sin, as is plain from verse 25. The apostle had told the Romans, ver. 10, that, by the spirit of Christ dwelling in them, their body was dead with respect to sin. Here, lest they might fancy that that death indisposed their bodies for works of righteousness, he added,

12 Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh.

‘If the spirit of him who raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you—he will make even your mortal bodies alive,’ namely, to perform works of righteousness.” To the same effect *Barnes* remarks that “even their body, the seat of evil passions and desires, shall become alive in the service of God.”

12. *Therefore, brethren.* The conclusion from the foregoing facts is now stated. Inasmuch as the spirit of grace dwells in us, moderating and controlling the passions, so that the body and its lusts have become comparatively dead as an exciting cause of sin; inasmuch as it also invigorates the soul with new and spiritual life, so that it is actively engaged in the love and practice of holiness; and inasmuch as the body itself shall be brought more and more under the control of the spirit, so that it shall become alive as an instrument of righteousness—this follows. ¶ *We are debtors.* We are under obligation. The objection stated in ch. iii. 5—8, and, in a different form, ch. vi. 1, 15, here receives its final answer. The facts enumerated by the apostle conclusively show that Christians are under the highest obligations, not of constraint, merely, but of love and gratitude, to cultivate the graces and to bring forth the fruits of the spirit, and to crucify the flesh, with the affections and lusts. Gal. v. 22—24. Of course, if Christians realize this duty, and fulfil this obligation, they will neither “do evil that good may come,” nor “continue in sin that grace may abound,” nor “sin because they are not under the law, but under grace.” In short, the point to which the argument tends is, that the doctrine of grace is not of licentious tendency, but, on the contrary, that it inspires in the hearts of believers a love of holiness, and a sense of obligation to practise righteousness. ¶ *Not to the flesh.* To the corrupt passions and propensities. We are not under obligation to obey these; we are rather to control them, and bring them under subjection. They are not to have dominion over us. ¶ *To live after the flesh.* To gratify our fleshly appetites.

13 For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the

See note on ver. 4. The language here used implies more than it asserts. The idea conveyed is not alone, negatively, that we are not under obligation to gratify our fleshly lusts and propensities, but, affirmatively, that we are under obligation not to obey, but steadfastly to resist, their influence.

13. The obligation mentioned in ver. 12 is enforced by a sufficient reason and motive. Under grace, as well as under law, a just God administers equal and impartial justice. Grace delivers from the penalty of the law, by bringing its subjects into such a moral condition that they no longer deserve it, and not otherwise. If Christians obey the influences of grace, they experience its blessed fruits; if they disobey, and yield to temptation, the penalty is as certain to be endured by them as by others. Indeed, in one regard, they must expect a more severe penalty; because, as their privileges are greater, their guilt is more aggravated. Such is the rule announced by our Lord, as a rule of righteousness, remaining in force as a rule of his kingdom. Luke xii. 47, 48. ¶ *For if ye live after the flesh.* See note on ver. 4. ¶ *Ye shall die.* Ye shall suffer the punishment of your sin. See note on ch. vi. 23. ¶ *Through the spirit.* Under the influence of the spirit; agreeably to the promptings of the spirit of grace which is shed abroad in your hearts. It may be observed, again, that Paul uniformly recognizes the change from sinfulness to holiness as the work of the divine spirit. Man is the visible agent, and his exertions are represented as the immediate cause of the result; but, underlying these, is the spiritual agency, without which all human exertions would be ineffectual. See Phil. ii. 12, 13. So, here, men are represented as acquiring such a control over their fleshly nature, as to become comparatively free from sin. Yet we are reminded that, for the strength to gain this victory, we are indebted to the divine spirit. If our Lord and Master freely acknowledged his dependence on the Father, and did not hesitate to say, “I can of mine own self do nothing,” John v. 30, it is an idle exhi-

body, ye shall live.

14 For as many as are led by

bition of pride and folly, in us, to pretend that by our own power or holiness we have made ourselves to walk. Acts iii. 12. Instead of trusting in ourselves, and in our own exertions, we shall better imitate the humility of our "meek and lowly" Master, Matt. xi. 29, by confessing our own weakness, and trusting in God with all the heart. ¶ *Do mortify.* Resist, restrain, conquer. A similar figure occurs in ch. vi. 6, where it is said that "our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed." The struggle of the spirit with the flesh, the conflict between holy desires and the temptations of the flesh, is oftentimes painful. Hence the apostle represents the victory over the flesh as mortifying, crucifying, destroying, putting the body to death. ¶ *The deeds of the body.* The effect is here put for the cause. The reference is rather to the passions and propensities which prompt to wicked actions, than to the actions themselves. If ye control, mortify, the desires of the flesh. Or if, as some suppose, the meaning is, "if ye refrain from sinful conduct," still we must understand that the real conflict is with the unholy desires, which are styled the lusts of the flesh, as they are supposed to arise directly or indirectly from the physical body. ¶ *Ye shall live.* Ye shall enjoy that spiritual life, and joy, and peace, which God has ordained as the accompaniment of righteousness. In its highest sense, such life is the gift of God; yet he bestows it through the medium of righteousness; so that, in an important and a true sense, it may be regarded as the fruit of righteousness. See ch. v. 21, and note on ch. vi. 23.

14. *As many as are led by the spirit of God.* That is, all who are led by the spirit of God. In one sense, and a very important sense, all men are, at all times, under the control of God. "A man's heart deviseth his way; but the Lord directeth his steps." Prov. xvi. 9. But such is not the sense in which the language of the apostle is here used. It indicates rather a spirit of cheerful and trustful obedience to the influence of the divine spirit; the cultivation of holy affections, and the practice of

the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.

righteousness, under a belief that they are good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour, and that, therefore, they are according to his will. In short, to be led by the spirit of God, is to conform to his will, because we believe it to be his will; to obey his influences, because we believe they are his; to submit ourselves wholly and confidently to his guidance. ¶ *They are the sons of God.* That is, in a peculiar sense; characteristically. See note on Matt. iii. 17. God is the Father of all men, by creation, and manifests his parental character to all in providence. In this respect, all are the sons of God. He manifests his love to all, even sinners, in the exhibition of his grace, by sending his Son to save them from their sins. Matt. i. 21; ch. v. 8. In this sense, also, all men are his sons, and all are taught to pray, "Our Father, which art in heaven,—forgive us our debts," or trespasses. See note on Matt. vi. 9. Yet there is a peculiar sense in which Christians are the sons of God. Such cherish a filial disposition; they confide in him as a benevolent and gracious Father; they love him, because they are conscious that he first loved them, 1 John iv. 19; they are grateful to him for the blessings he has bestowed, and feel an assurance that his loving kindness will never fail; they cheerfully surrender themselves to the guidance of his spirit, being confident that he will lead them to happiness. As children love and obey and confide in their earthly parents, who have secured their affection by uniform kindness, so the genuine disciples of Jesus Christ cherish a like filial disposition towards their heavenly Father, and are characteristically the sons of God. It is to be observed, however, that, although all men had not attained this kind of sonship in the apostle's time, and although such has been the fact in all ages since, it does not follow that all will not become the sons of God, in due time. Because the apostle says, "As many as are led by the spirit of God, they are the sons of God," plainly intimating that none other are entitled to such an appellation, no sane man supposes he designed to be understood that none

15 For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear;

should ever become sons of God, who had not already yielded to the influence of his spirit, at the time when this epistle was written. This would be to exclude from sonship all who have lived since that period. But, if he did not thus limit his declaration, it has no limit whatever, as to time. Its manifest import is, that, whenever a man is led by the spirit of God, he is a son of God. The only question is, whether or not all men shall ever yield to the influence of the divine spirit. Without quoting any of the manifold assurances of the sacred writers on this point, I only remark here: (1.) If the influence of the divine spirit is exerted upon some men, and not upon all, then God is not impartial; for all are sinful, equally helpless, and unable to attain the blessing without divine assistance. (2.) If it be exerted upon all men, and fail of success in regard to a part, then grace does not superabound over sin, and the astonishing fact is disclosed, that God has attempted, by the influence of his spirit, to perform a work which he is not able to accomplish; for, it is not credible that he should apply his grace to any heart, unless he desired to bring it to obedience, nor that he should abandon the work, if he be able to accomplish it. (3.) The fact that all shall be "the children of God, being the children of the resurrection," Luke xx. 36, certainly implies that then, if not before, they shall be truly led by the spirit of God. It is proper to observe that, although a general truth is declared in this verse, the apostle is supposed to have designed a special application of it to his brethren at Rome. There, as elsewhere, the Jewish converts had scruples about admitting the Gentile believers to perfect equality, especially unless they would conform to the law of Moses. These scruples the apostle opposes and condemns, throughout this epistle. And he is supposed here to declare that all, without exception, whether Jews or Gentiles, are the children of God, if they be led by his spirit, in opposition to the fancy of the Jews that this distinction belonged exclusively to the descendants of Abraham. The argument of the apostle is comprehensive rather than

exclusive. It was designed to induce his scrupulous brethren to recognize others as "sons of God;" not to furnish a rule by which they should exclude any from sonship. It was designed to enlarge their faith in the extent and efficacy of divine grace; not to contract it.

15. In this verse is enunciated more definitely than before a vital distinction between law and grace. So far as the law controlled men and restrained them from sin, it produced its effect through the principle of fear. Its language was, If ye sin ye shall die, or be punished. Grace leads men to obedience through their affections. It excites their gratitude to God, and inspires a desire to obey him. It excites their confidence in him as their best friend, and inspires a belief that what he requires is best. In short, under mere law, men obey God, so far as they obey him at all, through fear, as slaves obey a stern master; under grace, they obey him through love, as affectionate children obey a parent in whose kindness they have perfect confidence. This fact alone is a sufficient answer to the interrogative objection, "Shall we sin because we are not under the law, but under grace?" For grace secures a more perfect obedience than could be secured by the law, inasmuch as the motive it presents is both purer and more powerful. ¶ *Ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear.* "You have not received a spirit of bondage, that you should go back again to the state of slavish fear." — *Conybeare.* "Ye have not received a servile spirit, that ye should again be afraid; that is, ye have not the spirit of slaves, who, being in bondage, are fearing and trembling before the dreaded severity of a master; in other words, ye are not, through fear of condemnation or death, all your lifetime subject to bondage. Heb. ii. 15." — *Stuart.* The true Christian is exempt from that fear which hath torment. 1 John iv. 18. He is not affrighted even at the justice of God. For while he steadfastly believes that God will render for "every transgression and disobedience" "a just recompense of reward;" while he knows, by bitter experience, that "no chasten-

but ye have received the Spirit of

ing for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous;" yet he just as steadfastly believes that "afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby," and that God corrects or chastens us "for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness." Heb. ii. 2; xii. 10, 11. With such views of the divine character, and of the administration of the divine government, slavish fear need not be felt; indeed, it cannot exist, if the heart cherish such love to God as the influence of his grace inspires. "There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear." 1 John iv. 18. He therefore who regards God as his Father, in the highest spiritual sense, and cherishes a corresponding filial affection, cannot be in bondage to fear: he can fear no real harm from God, because he believes God's love toward him is purer, and stronger, and more fruitful of good, than that of earthly parents to their children, Matt. vii. 9—11; neither can he fear real harm from any other source, because he believes the testimony of our Lord: "My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand." John x. 29. The true Christian's obedience to the law of life, therefore, is not of fear, but of love; not of constraint, but of freedom. ¶ *But ye have received the spirit of adoption.* Or, a filial spirit; the spirit of children. The idea is, that they had become conscious of their true relationship to God, and that their hearts were properly affected by that consciousness. In other words, they had been persuaded by the influence of the divine spirit that God was truly their spiritual Father, and that they were his sons; and that the same spirit had excited their confidence in God, and their affectionate gratitude to him for his manifold blessings. This spirit of adoption, or filial spirit, is "the feeling of affection, love, and confidence, which pertains to children; not the servile, trembling spirit of slaves, but the temper and affectionate regard of sons." — *Burnes*. "In proof that the Gentile as well as the Jewish believers are the sons of God, the apostle appealed to those sentiments of reverence

adoption, whereby we cry, Abba

and love, and to that assurance of God's favor, with which their minds were filled since they had believed the gospel, and which he very properly terms 'the spirit of adoption;' that is, the spirit of children." — *Macknight*. Such a spirit belongs to Christians in the present life. They enjoy it in such measure as to feel a perfect assurance of sonship. Yet they do not here experience its fulness. The apostle was conscious of this lack, and confidently expected it should be supplied. Ver. 21—25. And another apostle declares that our present sonship is a foretaste, so to speak, of the glory which shall hereafter be revealed. "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is." 1 John iii. 2. ¶ *Whereby.* By which filial spirit, or under its influence. ¶ *We cry, Abba, Father.* We address God, not merely as our Creator, our Ruler, our Judge, but as our Father, the most endearing appellation by which we can address him. Believing that he owns us as sons, and cherishing towards him a filial spirit, we may regard him as a being worthy of all love, in whom also we may trust with all the heart. We may express our gratitude to him without fear that our offering will be slighted; and we may speak of our wants, with a full assurance that he is more ready to bestow what we really need than we are to ask him. "Instead of the timid, cowering spirit of slaves, who tremble before their masters, we are endowed with the spirit of children, so that we may approach God with affection and confidence." — *Stuart*. It may be observed that the apostle uses two words, of different languages, but of the same import, to impress the idea of father; one of which is translated in the text, and the other is merely Anglicised in its form. "Ἀββᾶ (*Abba*) is the Syro-Chaldaic word for Father, and it is the actual word with which the Lord's prayer began, as it was uttered by our Lord himself." — *Conybeare*. Commentators are divided in opinion, whether πατήρ (*father*) was added merely to give in-

Father.

16 The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are

tensity to the expression, or as a translation of the previous word *αἰσθε*, or to indicate to the Roman Christians that all nations stood in a like relationship to God, and each, in his own native tongue, might address him as Father. The latter interpretation seems quite as probable as either of the others. *Light-foot* points out the difference between the word *Abba* (which is indifferently called Syriac, Chaldee, and Syro-Chaldaic) and a word of similar, though not the same, form and meaning. "As it is necessary to distinguish between the Hebrew and Chaldaic idiom, in the words *Abi* and *Abba*, so you may, I had almost said you must, distinguish of their sense. For the word *Abi* signifies indeed a natural father, but withal a civil father also, an elder, a master, a doctor, a magistrate; but the word *Abba* denotes only a natural father, with which we comprehend also an adopting father; yea, it denotes 'my father.'" This difference he illustrates by quotations from the Old Testament, and the Targums. He adds, "Hence appears the reason of those words of the apostle, Rom. viii. 15, and Gal. iv. 6. It was one thing to call God *Abi*, Father, that is, lord, king, teacher, governor, &c.; and another to call him *Abba*, my Father. The doctrine of adoption, in the proper sense, was altogether unknown to the Jewish schools, though they boasted that the people of Israel alone were adopted by God above all other nations; and yet they called God *Abi*, Father, that is, our God, Lord, and King, &c. But since ye are sons, saith the apostle, ye cry *Abba*, O my Father, in the proper and truly paternal sense." — *Note on Mark* xiv. 36.

16. *The spirit itself beareth witness.* Some have understood "the spirit itself" to be "the spirit of adoption," or that filial spirit which is excited in the hearts of true Christians; and they suppose the apostle to teach that this filial spirit itself, or a consciousness of its existence in the heart, affords evidence to the believer that he is truly a child of God. But the more common and the more probable opinion is, that by "the spirit itself" the apostle in-

the children of God :

17 And if children, then heirs : heirs of God, and joint-heirs with

tended the same as by "the spirit of God," in ver. 14. "And if the question be urged, as it is natural that it should be, 'How, then, does the spirit bear witness to our minds or souls that we are the children of God?' the answer is, by imparting the spirit of adoption, or a filial spirit, to us. It is this, then, which affords the evidence to our minds of being in a state of filiation; that is, of bearing the relation to God of spiritual children. And as this spirit comes from the spirit of God, so he may be said, in this case, to bear witness, because he is the author of that spirit which affords the evidence of our filiation." — *Stuart*. The divine spirit impresses on our minds the consciousness that we are the sons of God, bears witness to us that such relationship exists, and thus excites in our hearts a filial spirit, or spirit of adoption, or spirit proper to adopted children. So far as either precedes the other, it is more easy to conceive that the consciousness of sonship is the cause of a filial spirit, than that a filial spirit causes the consciousness of sonship. At the same time, it is to be remembered that whosoever is destitute of a filial spirit has no good evidence of sonship. He who loves not God as a Father, has no good reason to believe that he is characteristically a son of God. ¶ *With our spirit*. "To our spirit." — *Stuart*. That is, to our minds, to our souls. It gives us an assurance. Or, if the common translation be preferred, we may understand the meaning to be, that the divine influence upon our hearts, which *leads us*, ver. 14, and thus constitutes us sons of God, joins its testimony with the filial spirit excited in us, in proof that we are truly God's children. ¶ *That we are the children of God*. See note on ver. 14.

17. *And if children, then heirs.* That is, if God has truly adopted us as his children, if he has granted us such similarity to him in spirit as to make us partakers of a filial relationship to him, he will treat us as actual children, and make us heirs according to the promise. What is true of one is universally true. So many as shall ever become the sons of God,

Christ ; if so be that we suffer with *him*, that we may be also glorified

in the sense here indicated, whether in the apostolic age, or in the present, or the future, whether in youth or in old age, whether in this life or in the next, shall also become heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ. The relationship which exists between God and his children is not an empty name, an unmeaning form. It involves blessings to us of the highest magnitude. ¶ *Heirs of God.* The son of an earthly father inherits earthly possessions. These are sometimes valuable ; and sonship confers great advantage. But all such advantages dwindle into utter insignificance, when compared with the treasures of God, to which his children are heirs. "Righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost," ch. xiv. 17, constitute the kingdom of God on the earth, of which the true Christian is a present partaker. And still greater blessings are reserved for the future life. "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him." 1 Cor. ii. 9. See also 1 Pet. i. 4 ; 1 John iii. 2. To all these blessings the sons of God are heirs. And the same spirit which assures them of sonship gives equal assurance of heirship. The willingness of God to bestow blessings on his children is distinctly announced in ver. 32 ; and the same fact was declared long before by our Lord himself. See Matt. vii. 9—11. ¶ *And joint-heirs with Christ.* The sons of God shall share the blessings bestowed on him who was emphatically the Son of God. Our blessed Redeemer, while on earth, consoled his disciples with the assurance that they should share his inheritance hereafter. See John xiv. 1—3 ; xvii. 24. ¶ *If so be that we suffer with him.* Jesus suffered much on behalf of men ; he was despised, reviled, persecuted, and finally crucified. The apostle intimates that the "Captain of our salvation" became "perfect through sufferings." Heb. ii. 10. The disciples of Christ must expect to suffer many things in the present life. In order to resemble their Master, it is not necessary that they should suffer precisely the same afflictions which befell him ; but it is necessary that they cherish

the same spirit which he manifested in the midst of sufferings. They should not murmur nor complain against God. They should not even be impatient. But, with unwavering confidence in their Father's love, they should patiently endure all which is allotted to them, and ever be ready to say, with sincerity of heart, "Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me ; nevertheless, not my will, but thine, be done." Luke xxii. 42. Such is the spirit proper to the "sons of God ;" and in all ages they have abundant occasion for its exercise. It is not improbable, however, that the apostle had special reference to the peculiar trials of the early Christians, whose sufferings bore a closer resemblance than ours to those endured by our common Master. Jesus forewarned his disciples that they must expect to encounter the persecuting rage of their adversaries. The event verified the prediction. The apostles and early defenders of the faith lived in the midst of persecutions. Many sealed their testimony with their own blood. So uniform was this result of a profession of Christianity, that the apostle declared, "All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." 2 Tim. iii. 12. To this kind of suffering, and to the state of things in the apostolic age, we may suppose Paul to refer particularly in this place, that he might encourage his brethren to meet persecution with a proper spirit. Yet the admonition is profitable to Christians, in all ages of the world, and in all conditions of life. They should cultivate the spirit of their Master, and trust in God for support in trial, and for final deliverance. "Taylor's remark on this passage is very proper: 'Observe how prudently the apostle advances to the harsh affair of suffering. He does not mention it till he had raised their thoughts to the highest object of joy and pleasure, the happiness and glory of a joint inheritance with the ever-blessed Son of God.' In this excellent passage the apostle opens a source of consolation to the children of God in every age, by drinking at which they may not only refresh themselves under the severest sufferings, but

together.

18 For I reckon, that the suffer-

derive new strength to bear them with fortitude." — *Macknight*. ¶ *That we may also be glorified together.* As the earthly sufferings of our Lord were succeeded by a state of heavenly glory, so also the apostle declares that his true disciples shall share in that glory as joint-heirs. This glory is secured, in the unchangeable purpose of God, to all the people of Christ, to save whom from sin he was sent; in other words, to the world, whose sin he taketh away. Matt. i. 21; John i. 29; 1 John iv. 14. Nevertheless the inheritance is attained through sonship, and sonship through the influence of the divine spirit. God giveth eternal life; yet he giveth it through the medium of righteousness. Ch. v. 21. Reversing the order of ver. 29, 30, whom he glorifies he first causes to be conformed to the image of his Son. He makes them sons by exciting in them a filial spirit; and when they resemble Christ in spirit, joint-heirship with him to the glorious inheritance is theirs.

18. Having referred to the trials which beset all Christians as a proof of their faith, and to which the early disciples were peculiarly exposed, the mind of the apostle seems to have been naturally led to contrast those trials or sufferings with the glorious inheritance of the sons of God, of which he had also spoken. Compared with such glory, present sufferings were scarcely worthy to be named. These are finite; that is infinite: these are temporal; that is eternal. 2 Cor. iv. 18. To this inheritance of glory he directs attention, as an encouragement to endure present sufferings patiently, and to be constantly hopeful in regard to the future. Even in the present age, and in this favored land, free as we are from persecution for Christ's sake, we often painfully feel our need of this sustaining hope. Fortune is fickle, and earthly possessions elude our grasp. Human relations are imperfect; professed friends desert and betray us, and open enemies assail us. Mortality yet reigns; our choicest and most beloved friends sicken, and languish, and fade away, until with bursting hearts we perceive the last beam of intelligence in the eye,

ings of this present time *are not worthy to be compared* with the

and the last convulsive quiver of life on the lip. Besides these sufferings, which may be regarded as providential, are all those agonies which result from our own mistakes and our sins. Without the hope of a better condition hereafter, we should faint under our burdens, and become utterly disheartened. When we consider that the early Christians were subject to all the trials which we endure, and that, in addition, they were subject to constant persecution for the gospel's sake, to bitter mockings and scourgings, to every species of indignity, and even to ignominious death, we may in some degree appreciate their need of the consolation which the apostle here imparts, and the value of that sustaining hope in the midst of their trials. ¶ *For I reckon.* I consider, estimate, judge. ¶ *That the sufferings of this present time.* The sufferings endured in the present life, of whatever kind or degree. Special reference is probably had to the peculiar trials which the faithful endured in consequence of being disciples of Jesus; namely, persecution from the adversaries. But, as the greater includes the less, the phrase is equally applicable to the trials of all men in all ages. Even the chastisement of sin may be included; for the pain is slight in proportion to the benefit it is designed to produce. Heb. xii. 9—11. All these may properly be understood as included in "the sufferings of this present time." ¶ *Are not worthy to be compared.* Several words are here inserted by the translators, to complete the sense, as is denoted to all readers by a different type. Some have inserted other words, but with substantially the same result. Thus *Conybeare* renders the passage, "I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are nothing worth, when set against the glory which shall soon be revealed to us." *Stuart* translates, "I count not the sufferings of the present time as worthy of comparison with the glory which is to be revealed to us." The general idea is manifest, in either form, that the sufferings endured in the present life are so greatly overbalanced by the enjoyments to be realized in the future life, that

glory which shall be revealed in us.

19 For the earnest expectation

their comparative magnitude cannot be estimated. Time cannot be compared with eternity, by any specific measure. Nor can any definite comparison be made between the sufferings, which, however painful, are temporary, and the enjoyments, which, besides being at present inconceivable in degree, shall be endless in duration. Well, then, might the apostle say that such sufferings are not worthy to be compared, or are not worthy of comparison, or are nothing worth in comparison, with that glory hereafter to be revealed, to which the sons of God are heirs, and joint-heirs with Christ. In hope of such glory, we may be well content to endure the burdens which our Father judges it proper to place upon us, either as a trial of our faith, or as a necessary preparation for a full appreciation of his grace, or for any other purpose pleasing to himself. ¶ *With the glory which shall be revealed in us.* Or, as it is otherwise translated, "revealed to us." The reference here is to the glorious inheritance to which the sons of God are heirs. In other words, this glory is the state of perfect holiness and unalloyed happiness which God will bestow on his children in the future life. It is spiritual or eternal life, in its highest sense; not merely that life which believers now enjoy, as the result of faith and confidence in God; but that full measure of life which shall be enjoyed, when this mortal shall have put on immortality, and this corruptible shall have put on incorruption; when death shall have been swallowed up in victory, and men shall be the children of God, being the children of the resurrection. Such a glorious state utterly eclipses the temporary sufferings of the present life. With the eye steadfastly fixed on this "glory," and with a lively hope of it in the heart, if we cannot indeed become unconscious of present trials, we may at least endure them with fortitude and patience.

19. *For the earnest expectation.* The word here used is very emphatic. It "signifies, as Blackwall observes, the lifting of the head, and the stretching of the body as far as possible, to hear and see something very agreeable, or of great importance; it is, therefore, fitly

used to denote the greatest earnestness of desire."—*Macknight* It is rendered "fervent desire" by *Tyndale*; "earnest desire," by *Macknight*; "earnest longing," by *Conybeare*. It occurs in only one other place in the New Testament, Phil. i. 20. In both it embraces the idea of intense desire, as well as earnest expectation. ¶ *Of the creature.* The word *κτίσις* (*ktisis*), here rendered *creature*, occurs nineteen times in the New Testament. It means the act of creation in ch. i. 20, which is represented as its primary signification. But it is ordinarily used in its secondary sense, to indicate created things, or creatures; namely, the product of creative power. In this latter sense, it means, (1.) created things in general, both animate and inanimate. Mark x. 6; xiii. 19; Rom. i. 25; viii. 39; 2 Peter iii. 4; Rev. iii. 14; and perhaps Col. i. 15, and Heb. iv. 13. (2.) It appears to denote inanimate or material things, in distinction from spiritual, in Heb. ix. 11, where it is translated *building*. (3.) It denotes specifically mankind in general, without reference to their moral character, or spiritual condition, in the following passages: "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature," Mark xvi. 15; "the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard, and which was preached to every creature which is under heaven," Col. i. 23. It appears to have a similar meaning in 1 Peter ii. 13. "Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake." The context shows plainly that by *ordinance of man*, or human ordinance, the apostle indicated men, human beings, placed in stations of authority; for he specifies the king and subordinate governors. (4.) It indicates Christians, who have been created anew. "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature." 2 Cor. v. 17. "In Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature." Gal. vi. 15. In the last case, however, it may be questionable whether the reference be to the person thus created anew in Christ Jesus, or to the work of divine grace which has been wrought in him, making or creating him anew. I am inclined to understand it in the lat-

of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God.

ter sense, for reasons which may hereafter be given. But in both passages it is manifest that the peculiar signification is denoted by the word *neue*, not by any intrinsic force of the word *creature*. Indeed, we sometimes use *creature* in a contemptuous sense, to indicate a person utterly debased; and critics tell us that the Greek word *zitioc* was used in a similar sense, though not in the New Testament. The same word occurs in the text, and in ver. 20, 21, 22. The question is, in what sense is it to be here understood? On this question commentators are much divided in opinion. Of the various interpretations, some appear so improbable that it is difficult to conceive by what process of thought they were attained. Of the others, though less intrinsically improbable, it is certain that most cannot be made to harmonize with the context, and with the general testimony of the Scriptures. *Stuart* has arranged the different interpretations as follows: "(1.) The angels. (2.) The souls (the animating principle) of the planetary worlds. (3.) Adam and Eve, because they were the immediate work of creative power. (4.) The souls of believers, in distinction from their bodies. (5.) The bodies of believers, that is, their dead bodies, in distinction from their souls. (6.) Christians in general. (7.) Christians in particular, that is, either Jewish Christians or Gentile Christians. (8.) Unconverted men in general. (9.) Unconverted men in particular, that is, either unconverted Jews or unconverted Gentiles. (10.) The material creation, inanimate and animate, exclusive of rational beings. (11.) The rational creation, or men in general, mankind." The first five of these interpretations may be passed by without particular notice. Of the sixth and seventh, it may suffice to say that they appear inconsistent with ver. 23, where the apostle represents Christians as a class distinct from that indicated in this verse; comprehended in it, very probably, but not excluding all others. He says, in ver. 22, that the whole creation, or every creature, groaneth for deliverance; and in ver. 23 he adds, that "we ourselves groan" also, for the

same deliverance; evidently denoting that he did not mean by every creature precisely what he meant by ourselves, namely, Christians. The same reasons which forbid the supposition that Christians in general are exclusively denoted here apply with even greater force against the supposition that either Jewish or Gentile Christians are particularly intended, to the exclusion of the other class. No such distinction is elsewhere recognized in the Scriptures. Whatever sense be assigned to "the first-fruits of the spirit," in ver. 23, whether the miraculous gifts of the spirit, or what is sometimes termed a foretaste of heavenly enjoyments, in either case the early Christians shared the gift, without distinction of race or kindred. It was never denied that both Jewish and Gentile believers entered into rest, through faith, and rejoiced with joy unspeakable and full of glory, Heb. iv. 3; 1 Peter i. 8, agreeably to the words of our Lord, John v. 24. Or, if miraculous gifts be understood as "the first-fruits of the spirit," no distinction was made between different races. The primitive apostles were Jews, and to them was imparted the gift of tongues. Acts ii. 4. When Peter preached to Cornelius and other Gentiles, a similar gift of tongues was bestowed on them by the Holy Ghost, to the great astonishment of the Jews. Acts x. 44—46. See also Acts xi. 15—18; xv. 7—9. Christians were distinguished from the mass of mankind, though included in it; but they were not thus distinguished from each other. The eighth and ninth interpretations, before enumerated, are of kindred character, and may be considered together. It is not easy to conceive in what sense unbelievers in general, or Jewish or Gentile unbelievers in particular, were "subject to vanity," or in "the bondage of corruption," ver. 20, 21, to the exclusion of believers. All were equally frail and mortal, if this be the meaning of the phrases; or, if they indicate moral imperfection, the uniform testimony of the Scriptures affords decisive proof that believers share this imperfection, in a less or greater degree, throughout the present life. Hence it

seems not reasonable to suppose that "the whole creation," ver. 22, consists entirely of unbelievers, to the exclusion of believers. They may be included in it, but they do not exclude others. The tenth interpretation, in the foregoing catalogue, is, that the "creature," or the "creation," denotes the material creation, inanimate and animate, exclusive of rational beings. That the material creation is subject to decay, and that the animate portion of it is subject to mortality, and to the pains and infirmities incident to such a state, is not denied. But no evidence exists that the irrational animals indulge the "hope" of deliverance from such a condition, and of participation with the children of God in a more glorious state, as indicated in ver. 20, 21. Nor is it clearly perceivable that the brute creation unites with believing Christians, in their "groans" and fervent aspirations for absolute redemption from bondage, ver. 23; yet the fact of which the apostle speaks was so palpable, and of such general notoriety, that he says "we know," that is, it is universally acknowledged that such is the truth. Whether or not a future and more perfect life shall be vouchsafed to the brute creation, I find no distinct testimony in the Scriptures. I certainly do not deny that all animals shall so exist, and exist forever in happiness; and, just as certainly, I do not profess to find any revelation of that fact in the inspired oracles. One more interpretation has been given, which, in my judgment, is the true one: namely, that *κτίσις* indicates "the rational creation, or men in general, mankind;" excluding none, but embracing equally Jews and Gentiles, believers and unbelievers. This interpretation has certainly two characteristic marks of truth. (1.) It is consistent with known facts. What the apostle asserts concerning the bondage of the whole creation, or of every creature, and of their earnest desire for deliverance, is known to be true of all mankind. Even those who are overshadowed with the very midnight of heathenism have some idea of a better existence hereafter, to which they look forward with hope. (2.) It suits well with the general theme of the apostle's argument. He "begins by saying that

present afflictions should not be laid to heart by Christians, because of the future glory which is reserved for them. What now is demanded, in order that this should be believed, and that Christians should regulate their thoughts and conduct by it? Why, plainly, nothing more is required than that they should cherish a confirmed belief of it, a steadfast hope that such glory will be bestowed. Such is the conclusion in ver. 25. But how is this hope to be animated and supported? Plainly, by considerations which add to the assurance that future glory is in prospect. And what are these? They are, that God has enstamped on our very nature the desire of such a state; he has placed us in such a frail and dying condition, that the whole human race naturally and instinctively look to such a state, and hope for it. The present is manifestly a state of trial; even Christians, who have the earnest of future glory within themselves, are not exempt from this. But the very fact that we are in a state of trial and probation, naturally points to an end or result of this. And what is such an end, but a state of *future* happiness? for here happiness in a higher sense is not to be attained."—*Stuart*. In this interpretation of *κτίσις*, many commentators agree, however widely they differ in regard to the meaning of the context, and the general result of the apostle's argument. It is defended by *Stuart*, and the objections against it answered, in a very long note, in which the subject is thoroughly discussed, and which is worthy of the most careful attention. ¶ *Waiteth for*. Or, *looketh for*, as in Phil. iii. 20, and Heb. ix. 28, where the same word is found. The idea is, that the creature, or mankind, cherished an anxious desire, an intense longing, a hopeful expectation, ver. 20, in reference to the blessing indicated. ¶ *The manifestation of the sons of God*. The general idea embraced in this phrase is that of a resurrection to immortality, or the enjoyment of a future and better life. Instead of expressing it in this general form, however, the apostle specifically indicates the perfectness which the sons of God are to attain in the future life, and which they cannot attain in the present. The apostle probably did not intend to say that

20 For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected *the same* in hope :

mankind in general had a clear conception of the glories of the future life, or of the full measure of blessedness which is in reservation for the sons of God ; for such a declaration would not be consistent with the facts in the case. But he did intend to say that mankind cherished a universal and intense desire or longing for a future life, of which they had the general idea that it would be far happier than the present, but of which he better understood some of the spiritual characteristics. Such a desire as this is common to all mankind, a desire for good beyond the limits of the present existence ; and this well-known fact the apostle urges as a ground of hope that a future life shall be enjoyed. "Though the Gentiles, in particular, knew nothing of the 'revelation of the sons of God,' the apostle calls 'their looking for a resurrection from the dead' a looking for that revelation, because the sons of God are to be revealed by their being raised with incorruptible and immortal bodies. Further, it is here insinuated that the pious Gentiles comforted themselves, under the miseries of life, by that hope of immortality, and the resurrection of the body, which they entertained. — It is well known that the Egyptians, Persians, Arabians, Indians, and all the Pythagoreans, with even the northern nations, entertained the hope of a future life, and of the resurrection of the body. The apostle, having appealed to the general expectation of mankind respecting a future life, leaves his readers to draw the conclusion ; namely, that if the Gentiles bore the miseries of the present life by the power of this hope, which in them was rather a desire than a hope well founded, the first Christians, who in the gifts of the spirit had a demonstration, and, as it were, an anticipation, of their immortality, were much more to show fortitude and patience, in bearing the sufferings to which they were exposed for the cause of their Master." — *Mac-knight*.

20. *For the creature.* That is, the same creature which is mentioned in ver. 19 ; namely, mankind, the human race. ¶ *Was made subject to vanity.*

Was subjected to a state of imperfection, to a frail, mortal estate. It is not unlikely that under this term the apostle designed to include the moral as well as the physical imperfections incident to mortality, the pains resulting from moral obliquity, as well as those which are occasioned by physical derangement. But the idea which stands out most prominently is that the present existence is mortal, subject to manifold pains, distresses, and sorrows, while it continues, and certain to be terminated by physical death. From such a state the creature, the human race, indulges hope of deliverance. Ver. 20, 21. This deliverance is attained through a resurrection to a future life. And this resurrection, although the mass of mankind might not have a clear perception of it, in the apostle's mind carried with it all its moral results, as well as those which were more obvious to the unenlightened. ¶ *Not willingly.* Not of their own choice. The circumstances of the present life were not arranged by men ; they did not make themselves mortal, subject to bodily pain, distress, and death. Equally true is it that they did not make themselves subject to moral infirmity, to sinfulness, and to consequent remorse of conscience. ¶ *But by reason of him who hath subjected the same.* Or, by him who hath subjected it ; that is, by God, the Creator of mankind, the Father of the spirits of all flesh. He hath given to mankind such a constitution of body, and of mind also, in the present life, as seemed good in his own sight. He holds his children accountable only for the use which they make of their bodily and mental powers, not for the character of the powers themselves ; for the temper of spirit with which they meet the trials of life, not for the trials themselves. Moreover, he has implanted in their hearts a hope that he has greater blessings in store for them ; that, when the gracious object of their present subjection to vanity shall have been accomplished, he will deliver them from their present "bondage of corruption to the glorious liberty of the children of God." Ver. 21. "The creature did not voluntarily choose *its*

21 Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the

present condition of sorrow and pain, for this cannot well be imagined; but God the Creator has placed it in this condition; it is by his sovereign will, by the arrangements of his holy providence, that man is placed in a frail and dying state. But this is not to be considered as an irretrievable misfortune, or evil. Distressing and frail as the condition of man is, it is still a state of hope. So we are assured in the next verse."—*Stuart*. All this is just as true in a moral as in a physical sense. It is just as certain that God ordained the mental and moral constitution of mankind as it is that he clothed them in perishable bodies. And "the glorious liberty of the children of God," for which mankind are permitted to hope, just as certainly implies a moral as a physical renovation. ¶ *In hope*. *Hope*, in this place, differs not materially from "earnest expectation" in ver. 19. He who subjected the human race to the frailties and trials of the present state of existence inspired in their hearts a hope of deliverance, and of a better life hereafter. As "he left not himself without witness," in regard to his own goodness, Acts xiv. 17, so neither did he leave mankind hopeless of a more full appreciation and enjoyment of that goodness in another life. Many critics connect the word *hope* with the following verse, reading the passage thus: the creature, or mankind, was made subject to frailty, not of voluntary choice, but by him who subjected it, in hope that the very same creature, the same human race, shall be liberated from present bondage into the glorious liberty of the children of God: thus making ver. 21 descriptive rather than corroborative of the *hope*. The practical result, to be sure, is not materially affected by a change of construction: in one form the idea is that God himself has implanted in the human heart a hope of more "glorious liberty" hereafter; in the other, that he has implanted a hope of deliverance because such deliverance is certain. In either case the hope is inspired by the divine spirit; that is, it is incorporated in the human mind by the supreme source of all mind, and the blessing is one which God alone can bestow, and which

none can compel him to withhold, or prevent him from bestowing.

21. *Because*. Or *that*. See the foregoing note. The particle here used has a great variety of signification, and may properly be rendered *because*, or *that*, as best suits the position in which it is found. ¶ *The creature itself*. Rather, the same creature. "What is the hope in which the creature is permitted to indulge? It is that *this very same creature*, namely, the one which is subjected to a frail and dying state, shall be freed from the bondage of a perishing condition."—*Stuart*. However widely commentators differ concerning the import of "creature," it is almost universally admitted that its meaning here and in ver. 20 is identical. Whether it embrace all created things, or the whole human race, or any specific part of mankind, in ver. 20, it embraces precisely the same number here. It follows, that if the apostle intended to say in ver. 20 that all men, mankind generally, were subjected to frailty, he intended here to say that the same all men shall be delivered from bondage, and made free with the liberty of the children of God. ¶ *From the bondage of corruption*. The meaning of this phrase is substantially the same which is expressed by the word "vanity" in ver. 20. It is called *bondage*, because it is a state of things involuntarily endured, and from which deliverance is earnestly desired; not, to be sure, that men would prefer non-existence rather than the continuance of the present life, with all its frailties and sorrows, but they anxiously look for a better life, free from such frailties. The apostle describes this state of feeling in ver. 23, and more fully in 2 Cor. v. 4. It is called *corruption*, because the body is mortal, subject to disease and pain, and tends to decay and death. Moreover, the body is the seat of fleshly lusts, and the source of temptations which induce moral defilement, and consequent remorse and anguish. See ch. vii. 23, 24. Deliverance from bondage, then, implies a deliverance from this prolific source of sorrow. Indeed, liberation from physical infirmity and pain would be a slight blessing, comparatively speaking, if mental an-

bondage of corruption, into the glorious liberty of the children of

God.

22 For we know that the whole

guish remain. "The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity; but a wounded spirit who can bear?" Prov. xviii. 14. If it did not even more distinctly appear by the words which follow, it would be proper to conclude that the apostle did not exclude the moral benefits of the glorious deliverance which he describes. ¶ *Into the glorious liberty of the children of God.* Some understand by this simply a resurrection, without reference to any moral change, or deliverance from sinfulness. But this seems to fall far short of the full idea conveyed by the apostle's language. Had he intended only so much, he might have expressed his idea in far different terms. If he had said distinctly that mankind shall be raised from the dead to immortal life, and no more, even then his language would imply more than it asserted in direct terms, because he elsewhere describes the resurrection as connected with a moral deliverance, infinitely more glorious than a change from mortality to immortality. But he does not speak in such limited terms. He describes the condition in which mankind shall exist when delivered from the bondage of corruption as the "glorious liberty of the children of God;" or, according to the Hebrew idiom, the liberty of the glory of the children of God. They are to share the privileges of the children of God; in other words, they are to become the children of God. This is precisely what our Lord announced to his disciples before Paul was an apostle, Luke xx. 36; and this, we may well believe, was one of the blessed truths communicated "by the revelation of Jesus Christ." Gal. i. 12. In what consists the liberty of God's children? Not merely in freedom from bodily pain and physical death. Of this they have no foretaste in the present life. It is something of which they enjoy the first-fruits here, as is manifest from ver. 23, and from the general testimony of our Lord and his apostles. This liberty consists in freedom from the law of sin, which is inherent in our present condition, ch. vii. 23—25; in freedom from temptation; in freedom from sinfulness. Indeed, men cannot

be characteristically the children of God, except so far as they are led by the spirit of God. Ver. 14. But the influence of the divine spirit is diametrically opposed to sinfulness, and those who are absolutely and wholly guided by that influence must necessarily become free from sin. Into this liberty the same creature, or human race, is to be delivered, which was made subject to vanity.

22. *For we know.* The force of this expression is, "no one can have any doubt, we are all assured, no one will call it in question. Of course, it seems to take for granted that the thing to which it refers is well and familiarly known to all." — *Stuart.* This might well be said in regard to the universal craving of mankind for a better life in future; but it is difficult to understand it, as some do, in regard to the brute creation, and even inanimate things. ¶ *The whole creation.* More literally, "every creature." We have the same *κτίσις* (*ktisis*), which is rendered *creature* in ver. 19, 20, 21; with the adjective *πᾶσα* (*pasa*), rendered *whole*, or more properly *every*. The form of expression is precisely the same which occurs in Mark xvi. 15, and Col. i. 23, where the meaning is evidently the whole human race. It cannot mean less, in those passages, because the gospel was to be announced to all, as designed for their benefit; it cannot well mean more, because the apostles had no means of making it understood by any others than human beings. And such is manifestly the meaning of the same phrase here; and the change in the form, making it more definitely embrace *all* men, confirms the fact that all men are included in the formula before used. Why did the whole creation, every creature, the human race generally and universally, groan, as here asserted? Evidently, because they felt the oppression of that "bondage" to which they were subject. Hence, they anticipated with intense eagerness, or waited with earnest expectation for a future and better life. Of course, it is not to be supposed that the heathen nations had any distinct idea of that moral purity which belongs to the fu-

creation groaneth, and travaileth in pain together until now :

ture life. But they had a hope that there should be a future life, in which they would enjoy more perfect happiness. For this life they hoped ; for this life they groaned, as is declared in this verse. They had not a distinct perception of its highest advantages ; but the apostle and his brethren had. Their case was in some degree similar to that of the Athenian worshippers, to whom Paul said, "Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you." Acts xvii. 23. The Athenians worshipped God, while ignorant of his attributes ; the apostle declared his true character. So the whole human race indulged a hope of a future life, and of happiness, though the mass of men were ignorant of the true characteristics of that life, and of that moral condition which was essential to perfect happiness. The apostle had clearer ideas ; yet both he and they hoped for the same life, even as he and the Athenians worshipped the same God ; they ignorantly, but he understandingly. And this universal hope, this universal longing for deliverance from present sufferings, he urges as a ground of assurance to believers. This was manifestly on the ground that the Author of nature would not have implanted this universal desire without providing for its gratification. And that the desire was actually universal, he asserted as a well-known undeniable fact. ¶ *Groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now.* The terms here used are expressive of much pain and uneasiness. A similar figure occurs in John xvi. 21, and for a similar purpose ; namely, to show that present pain shall be succeeded by great joy, inasmuch that the pain shall be accounted as of little comparative importance. Such is the apostle's argument here ; see ver. 18. The whole human race is conscious of bondage to frailty, imperfection, and painful sufferings, both physical and moral ; and the whole race sighs and groans for deliverance. "St. Paul here suggests an argument as original as it is profound. The very struggles which all animated beings make against pain and death show (he says) that pain and death are not a part of the proper laws

23 And not only *they*, but ourselves also, which have the first-

of their nature, but rather a bondage imposed upon them from without. Thus every groan and tear is an unconscious prophecy of liberation from the power of evil."—*Conybeare*. That such "struggles," and tears, and "groans," are common to all mankind, the apostle alleges as a well-known fact. Whether the same be true in regard to all other "animated beings" is not quite so certain. We have no means to verify the fact. With this qualification, the foregoing citation may be fully approved.

23. *And not only they.* Not only the human race generally, the mass of mankind, of which we are a part. ¶ *But ourselves also.* Namely, Christians, as is evident from what follows. They were not exempt from the common lot. They were still subject to bodily infirmity, pain, and death. They were not yet entirely free from moral imperfection and sinful propensities. See ch. vii. 14—25. In common, therefore, with the whole race, they earnestly desired a more happy life, which they understood to be a purer life, though others might not so fully apprehend that fact. The apostle recognized this consciousness of present "sufferings" on the part of his fellow-Christians, and keenly felt them in his own person. And he urged this fact in proof that God has richer blessings in store for his children than any of which they are made partakers in the present life. Mankind was in bondage, yet had hope of deliverance "into the glorious liberty of the children of God." Christians had already become "sons of God" to a certain extent, ver. 14—16, inasmuch as they possessed the "first-fruits of the spirit." But this did not suffice. They still longed for a higher and more perfect blessing, for a more entire deliverance from bondage, for a more glorious liberty, for a more perfect and absolute sonship. Something more than they yet enjoyed was embraced in "the glory which shall be revealed," ver. 18 ; and to this the apostle directed the attention of his brethren, as the actual good which God had reserved for his children, which he permitted and inspired them to hope for, and which he would assuredly bestow when he should raise

fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, wait-

them from the dead. ¶ *Which have the first-fruits of the spirit.* Some have interpreted the word here rendered "first-fruits" as indicating the miraculous gifts bestowed by the spirit on the apostles and some of the first Christians. But such is not the ordinary usage of the word in the New Testament. It occurs in only seven other cases, namely, ch. xi. 16; xvi. 5; 1 Cor. xv. 20, 23; xvi. 15; James i. 18; Rev. xiv. 4; in all which it indicates the first of the kind in the order of time. It would seem, therefore, that in this place the apostle intended, by the "first-fruits of the spirit," those influences of the spirit which had already been enjoyed by him and by all Christians, comparatively purifying them from sin, and filling their hearts with love, and joy, and peace. They were such "fruits" as are enjoyed by all Christians in all ages; different in degree, doubtless, according to the measure of faith and purity, but the same in kind. They are "first," not because they are of higher value than others; indeed, the fact is precisely otherwise, inasmuch as the apostle directs the attention to something far more "glorious" in the future. But they are "first" simply because, in the order of time, they precede others; they are the first which Christians enjoy; and they give assurance of richer blessings. Hence some understand "first-fruits" as a foretaste, a pledge, of heavenly joys. This interpretation does no violence to the language; for, although it be not the primary idea conveyed, it may in this case be included in it; because, (1) "if the first-fruit be holy, the lump also is holy" (ch. xi. 16), and we may confidently believe that the blessings hereafter to be bestowed by the spirit will be of a like gracious kind as those already enjoyed. (2.) The influence of the spirit begets confidence and unwavering trust in God, as the fountain of grace, and thus becomes a pledge of future blessedness. ¶ *Even we ourselves groan within ourselves.* "That Christians were subject to sorrows, needs not to be proved. That they were exposed to more than ordinary ones, may be seen in 2 Cor. v. 2, 3; 1 Cor. xv. 19. That they longed and sighed for deliv-

erance, followed from their very nature. That even the earnest of future glory did not exempt them from sufferings, is certain. But there is a peculiar energy and delicacy in the expression which marks the consequences of their sufferings: we groan within ourselves, that is, internally, not externally. We suppress the rising sigh; we bow with submission to the will of God which afflicts us; we receive his chastisement as children; our frail nature feels it, and we sigh or groan inwardly: but no murmuring word escapes us; we suppress the outward demonstration of pain, lest we should even seem to complain. Is this imaginary on my part? Or did the writer mean to convey what I have attributed to him? So much, at least, we can say, namely, that such a sentiment was worthy of Paul, and of all Christians who suffered with him. It is worthy of being carried into practice at the present hour: it commends itself to the conscience of every one who thoroughly believes in the holy, just, and benevolent providence of God."—*Stuart.* That so much is actually embraced in the expression "groan within ourselves," I neither affirm nor deny; but I fully subscribe to the Christian sentiments expressed in the foregoing quotation. Present trials should be endured patiently and uncomplainingly, because administered by a gracious Father for a benevolent purpose. Although the pressure of affliction may sometimes be so severe as even to extort from us sighs and groans, yet it becomes us to possess our souls in patience, remembering that God has promised a full deliverance, and that our present sufferings are designed by him to produce in us the peaceable fruit of righteousness. Heb. xii. 7—11. It is not inconsistent with this filial, patient, uncomplaining spirit, however, to anticipate, with earnest expectation and intense desire, the deliverance which God has graciously promised. So much the apostle acknowledges concerning himself; and so much may every Christian do, consistently with a spirit of childlike submission to the divine will. Paul submitted to the will of God; yet he "groaned" for more perfect deliver-

ing for the adoption, *to wit*, the redemption of our body.

ance from the bondage of corruption. And thus may all Christians desire deliverance from bodily infirmities, the cause of present sufferings which are grievous, and thus *ought* they to desire deliverance from moral infirmities, the cause of even more severe distress. ¶ *Waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.* The apostle recognizes an adoption, additional to that which results from the influence of the divine spirit on the hearts of men in this world, whereby they are made to realize that they are the "sons of God," and that he is truly their Father. Ver. 14, 15. Adoption is not here made complete. Other and adverse influences continue to operate. While the Christian rejoices in the good he has attained, he feels an irrepressible desire and longing for more perfect blessedness. To that glorious change, which shall fully manifest the filiation of mankind to God, as his children (Luke xx. 36), the apostle manifestly refers by the "redemption of our body." This is the crowning act of our adoption as sons. In the redemption of the body, a full and entire deliverance "from the bondage of corruption" is involved. Freedom from physical pain and death results from that immortality which is characteristic of the resurrection; freedom from fleshly lusts and moral imperfection results from that incorruptible spiritual constitution which is characteristic of the resurrection. Men are to be raised from the dead, not only immortal, but incorruptible, and spiritual. Flesh and blood inherit not the kingdom of God, nor doth corruption inherit incorruption. But, as we bear the image of the earthy in this life, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly in the next. The whole change, both physical and moral, is comprehended by the apostle in "the redemption of our body." He sighed no more ardently for deliverance from physical pain, than for deliverance "from the body of this death." He sighed for happiness; but happiness cannot be enjoyed in full measure, except in connection with moral purity. To what extent the apostle regarded the

24 For we are saved by hope: But hope that is seen, is not hope:

present body as identical with the "body that shall be," may more properly be considered in another place. For the present it may suffice to say, that by the adoption or redemption of our body he manifestly contemplated a change in the vesture of the soul, which should result in deliverance from all pain and distress which are traceable to the present union of the soul with a mortal body.

24. *For we are saved by hope.* Our deliverance is not yet fully accomplished. It is rather an object of faith and hope than of present enjoyment. The salvation, or deliverance, here spoken of, manifestly is the same which forms the subject of several preceding verses. It is a deliverance from present sufferings (ver. 18), from vanity (ver. 20), from the bondage of corruption (ver. 21), from all the weaknesses and infirmities, physical and moral, which result from the present connection between the soul of man and a body of flesh and blood, ver. 23. Salvation, in its highest sense, relates to deliverance from moral evil; but here it seems also to embrace a deliverance from physical pain,—to include, in short, all the benefits involved in a change from mortality to immortality. This salvation is partially enjoyed here, through hope. A confident hope, combining a trustful expectation with fervent desire, affords to the oppressed soul a measure of that relief which the full fruition of the blessing will impart. Under the influence of such hope, the Christian can endure the "sufferings of this present time" with patience and cheerfulness; and although while he lives he is and must be in "the bondage of corruption," yet he joyfully anticipates his final deliverance "into the glorious liberty of the children of God." The declaration of the apostle has a two-fold force: (1.) His brethren were reminded that they had not yet attained the full measure of the glory revealed in the gospel, but that more was to be hoped for; (2) they were reminded of this greater glory, that they might the more patiently wait for it, and in the mean time bear their present burdens with

for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for?

25 But if we hope for that we

more fortitude and Christian submissiveness. ¶ *Hope that is seen.* By a figure of speech, *hope* is here put for the object of hope, for the blessing hoped for. *Seen* is used in the sense of enjoyed, a meaning which the word often has in the New Testament. See note on Matt. v. 8. The idea is, that a blessing already in possession, already enjoyed, is not an object of hope. ¶ *For what a man seeth.* What he enjoys. Such must be the meaning of *seeth*, here; else the question which follows has no perceivable force. ¶ *Why doth he yet hope for?* How can a man hope for what he has already received? True, he may hope for a continuance of the blessing; but the continuance in future is what he does not now enjoy; so that, even in such ease, he does not hope for what he has, but for what is in prospect.

25. *But if we hope for that we see not.* For that which we do not now possess, or enjoy, but which we hope, that is, both desire and expect, to receive in due time. ¶ *Then do we with patience wait for it.* Patience is the natural result of confident hope. True, it is said, "hope deferred maketh the heart sick." Prov. xiii. 12. But this is only when long delay shakes the confidence of expectation, in which case hope becomes imperfect; the desire remains, but expectation nearly or wholly disappears. But while the desire remains fervent and the expectation confident, which is necessary to the perfection of hope, the heart may possess itself in patience, however long the blessing be delayed. In the case to which the apostle specially referred, his brethren might submit to their present sufferings, and patiently wait for final deliverance, so long as they truly hoped for such deliverance; that is, so long as they desired it, and firmly expected to receive it at the proper time. So all Christians may be sustained in the midst of sufferings, so long as their hope in God's mercy and in his faithfulness remains unshaken. For they believe their present sufferings are under the superintendence of a Father, who loves his children, and who will not cause them to endure anything

see not, *then* do we with patience wait for it.

26 Likewise the Spirit also help-

which shall not finally be profitable to them. And they believe, with equal confidence, that, in the resurrection, he will make their adoption perfect, and bestow on them the full measure of the "liberty of the children of God." Having such confidence and such hope, they may patiently wait for the promised blessing.

26. *Likewise.* In like manner as hope sustains the soul in the midst of present sufferings, another aid is vouchsafed by divine grace. ¶ *The spirit helpeth our infirmities.* Spirit, in this place, has been variously interpreted, as meaning the spirit of God, the spirit of man, and a filial spirit, or what is termed "the spirit of adoption." Ver. 15. The first-named interpretation seems to me most consistent with the general theme of discourse, and with the usage of the word spirit in this chapter. I take the general idea, embraced in this verse and the next, to be this: the divine spirit, by whose influence we become the sons of God, sustains us in our weakness, and guides us in our perplexities; and, in seasons of trial, when we know not how to obtain relief, excites in us desires and longings, unutterable it may be in words, but fully understood by that spirit which excites them; and such desires and aspirations are according to the will of God, because excited by his own spirit. This general interpretation may be carried out in detail, in harmony with the doctrine taught by the apostle here and elsewhere, and with the assurance of our Lord that his disciples should be guided and comforted by the divine spirit. John xiv. 16—18. The *infirmities* here mentioned embrace generally the sufferings, the vanity, the bondage to corruption, and all the evils which occasioned men to groan for deliverance, as detailed in the preceding verses; in short, all the physical and moral weaknesses to which mankind are now subject. "The spirit helps us in this, (1) by giving us strength to bear them; (2) by exciting us to make efforts to sustain them; (3) by ministering to us consolations, and truths, and views of our Christian priv-

eth our infirmities : for we know not what we should pray for as we ought : but the Spirit itself maketh

ileges that enable us to endure our trials." — *Barnes*. A still further mode of assistance and relief is disclosed in the sequel. Such assistance, in some measure, is afforded to all. Of course, it is to be understood that those who are so led by the spirit of God as to feel a full assurance that they are the children of God appreciate more fully than others the sustaining power of the spirit, and are in a corresponding degree comforted by it. Yet we may well believe that God does not neglect any of his moral offspring, or leave them to perish for lack of that aid which he is abundantly able to bestow. ¶ *For we know not what we should pray for as we ought.* In our shortsightedness, we know not what we really need. Many things which were regarded as very desirable have proved to be the occasion of uneasiness and sorrow, when obtained ; and, on the other hand, many things which we dreaded and earnestly endeavored to avoid have afterwards been accounted blessings. So that, in all things, we need guidance ; for our unassisted desires and efforts might result disastrously. Especially is this true in seasons of great trial and perplexity. Our Lord himself recognized this fact, in prospect of the terrible agony of the cross. He indicated his strong desire for exemption from suffering, yet submitted himself to the will of Him whose wisdom, and love, and power, were certain to secure the best and most glorious result. Luke xxii. 41—44. To such severe trials and perplexities the apostle probably refers in this place ; for his general object is to encourage his brethren to endure patiently the " sufferings of this present time." Ver. 18. Yet what he says of himself and his brethren, in their peculiar trials, is equally true of all the children of God, in their trials, and sorrows, and perplexities. ¶ *But the spirit itself maketh intercession for us.* We are not to understand that the divine spirit maketh intercession, or offers prayers, to itself, on behalf of men, without their concurrence ; but that it excites a prayerful spirit in them, and leads them to confide in God alone for relief. What

intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.

27 And he that searcheth thá

men do, under the influence and guidance of the spirit, may properly be represented as done either by the spirit or by themselves. Thus Paul exhorts his brethren, " Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling ; for it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure." Phil. ii. 12, 13. In a similar sense, the prayers offered by men, under the influence of the divine spirit, are here represented as intercessions made by the spirit. ¶ *With groanings which cannot be uttered.* Either emotions and desires which cannot be fully expressed in language, or suppressed emotions which are not uttered. Both interpretations are given by commentators ; but the former appears preferable. When the soul is overwhelmed with sorrow ; when we are unable to perceive the means of relief ; when we are perplexed to know what would be best for us, or in what manner it may please God to deliver us ; we may find it impossible to give audible expression to our desires, further than to beseech God to grant us a spirit of submission and patience, and to say, in full sincerity of heart, " Not my will, but thine, be done." This the spirit assists the children of God to do. " In this way, then, the spirit intercedes for the saints, namely, by exciting within them such longing and high desires for conformity to God, and for deliverance from evil, and for the enjoyment of future blessedness, that these desires become unutterable ; no language can adequately express them. What is thus done in the souls of believers, through the influence of the spirit, is here attributed to him ; that is, he is said to do what they do under his special influence." — *Stuart*.

27. *And he that searcheth the heart.* That is, the omniscient God. None other, except by special communication of the divine spirit, can discern the secrets of the heart. See note on John ii. 24, 25. God is often described as having perfect knowledge of the thoughts and intents of the heart. " Man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart." 1 Sam. xvi. 7. " Ye are they

hearts knoweth what *is* the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints, according to *the will of God*.

which justify yourselves before men ; but God knoweth your hearts." Luke xvi. 15. See also Acts i. 24 ; xv. 8 ; 1 Cor. iv. 5 ; 1 Thess. ii. 4. ¶ *Knoweth what is the mind of the spirit*. He needs not that our aspirations for relief, for deliverance from perplexity and sorrow and sin, for the enjoyment of perfect blessedness, should be expressed in audible language. He understands the desire as distinctly as its expression. This desire, this longing aspiration, is styled the mind of the spirit, because it is excited by the influence of the spirit. The idea is, that God knoweth the desire of the human heart, when under the influence of the divine spirit, as well when suppressed and inaudible, as when clothed in language. This desire is "the mind of the spirit" in the same sense that "intercession" is made by the spirit. In either case, it is the result of spiritual influence, and hence attributed to the spirit. ¶ *Because he maketh intercession for the saints*. See note on ver. 26. ¶ *According to the will of God*. Prayers offered and desires cherished, under the influence of the divine spirit, are according to the will of God, because excited and directed by his spirit, and because prayers and desires thus influenced are always qualified, like our Saviour's agonizing prayer in the garden, by the condition, "If thou be willing." Luke xxii. 42.

28. *And we know*. The apostle here offers an additional encouragement to bear present sufferings with patience, and to rely on God with unwavering confidence for deliverance in due time. He calls the attention of his brethren to a fact which they well knew ; that is, which necessarily followed from what they had learned of God's character, through his works, by revelation, and by the influences of his spirit. If he was such a Father as through the spirit of adoption they recognized him to be, they had the most satisfactory assurance of the fact which the apostle proceeds to mention. ¶ *All things work together for good*. Not only present enjoyments, but trials, sorrows, sufferings, all which is not joyous, but griev-

28 *And we know that all things work together for good, to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose*.

ous, are under the direction of that benevolent being who is more affectionate to his children than human parents to their offspring. Matt. vii. 11. He will in no wise injure them, nor suffer any evil thing to befall them, which shall not be overruled by him for their good. Such is the only conclusion consistent with his character as manifested in his works, and revealed in his word ; namely, a character of perfect love. The same testimony is borne by every person in whose heart the love of God has been "shed abroad." Ch. v. 5. Our Lord appealed to the sunshine and the rain, as proofs of God's impartial benevolence, Matt. v. 44, 45. To the Lycaonians Paul addressed a similar argument, Acts xiv. 15—17. His love is not limited in its extent to those only who love him, but extends also to the unthankful. Even "sinners love those that love them." Whoso would imitate God must do more than this. See Luke vi. 32—36. His crowning gift, the pledge of all possible blessings, was given while men "were yet sinners," and before they loved him. Ch. v. 6—10. Who, then, can reasonably doubt that he loves all the souls he has created ? And what else can be expected from such love, than that he should desire their good, and be willing to bless them ? As he has subjected them to "vanity," and exposed them to all the infirmities and sorrows consequent on their "bondage to corruption," how is the conclusion to be avoided, that he will cause the whole system of things which affects them to "work together for good" ? Nothing short of this would be consistent with a loving spirit. And if this be his desire, nothing can hinder its accomplishment, as the apostle exultingly testifies at the close of this chapter. Well, then, might he say, "We know that all things work together for good." ¶ *To them that love God*. More literally, to those loving God. Although the form of the expression indicates present time, it is not to be interpreted exclusively in relation to those who already cherished

a spirit of love. It manifestly includes all, in all ages, who love God. See note on Mark xvi. 16. Whether all men shall love God when they realize his love to them, we have testimony elsewhere. Suffice it to say, here, that to all who love him all things shall work together for good; and the assurance of this fact will sustain them in the midst of trials. ¶ *To them who are the called according to his purpose.* Christians; believers in the gospel of grace. See note on ch. i. 6. To all such, whether in the apostolic age or afterwards, all things work together for good. In a more general sense this divine call is as extensive as the relationship between God and men. Isa. xlv. 22; Matt. ix. 13. See note on Acts ii. 39. The *purpose* of God is the ultimate ground of hope for blessings in this life, and for perfect salvation in the next. Men are placed in this state of vanity and corruption, according to his purpose; they are delivered from it, according to the same purpose. Whenever a sinner is converted from his sins, and becomes a Christian, it is according to that purpose which God had established from the beginning. 2 Tim. i. 9. The force of the expression here is well illustrated by *Barnes*, except that he applies to only a part of mankind what the apostle intended to apply to all. "It implies that God had a plan, purpose, or intention, in regard to all who became Christians. They are not saved by chance or hazard. God does not convert men without design; and his designs are not new, but are eternal. What he does, he always meant to do. What it is right for him to do, it was right always to intend to do. What God always meant to do, is his purpose or plan. That he has such a purpose in regard to the salvation of his people is often affirmed. Rom. ix. 11; Eph. i. 11; iii. 11; 2 Tim. i. 9; Jer. li. 29. This purpose of saving his people is (1) one over which a creature can have no control; it is according to the counsel of his own will. Eph. i. 11. (2.) It is without any merit on the part of the sinner, a purpose to save him by grace. 2 Tim. i. 9. (3.) It is eternal. Eph. iii. 11. (4.) It is such as should excite lively gratitude in all who have been inclined by the grace of God to accept the offers

of eternal life. They owe it to the mere mercy of God, and they should acknowledge him as the fountain and source of all their hopes of heaven." Such is the indissoluble connection between the purpose of God and the salvation of his children. That purpose existed from the beginning, before the human race was created. It was then just as distinctly as now known to God that all men would be in equal need of salvation; that none could attain it by their own exertions; and that all would be wholly dependent on his grace for its bestowment. Being impartial, equally benevolent and affectionate to all his children, on what ground can he be supposed to have made a distinction among them, involving the endless blessedness of some, and the endless wretchedness of others? If salvation were the reward of works, the case might be different; but it is of grace, entirely and exclusively. So far as good works are connected with salvation, they are the results, the effects, and not the cause of it.

29. *For whom he did foreknow.* In this and the following verse, the apostle shows how certainly the salvation of men follows the purpose of God. The whole process of salvation is under the immediate control of God, and his purpose embraces not only the result, but all the steps conducting to it. Concerning the word *foreknow* there has been much controversy. The controversy, however, has not been so much concerning what the apostle says, as concerning what he does not say; not so much concerning the fact asserted, as concerning the reasons or grounds of that fact, and the consequences resulting from it. The literal meaning of *foreknow* is to know beforehand; that is, before the person or thing foreknown has an actual existence. But *know* often has the sense of approve, or love, in the Scriptures; and hence it is not unreasonable to suppose that the meaning here is, those whom he before loved, or loved from the beginning. Although *Stuart* does not fully approve of this interpretation, he says, concerning it and its advocates, "Those who embrace this sentiment are divided: some saying that God *before loved* his saints, because he foresaw their character and good works; others, that out of his

29 For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son,

mere good pleasure he set his love upon them. In the latter way Calvin, Beza, the Westminster Catechism, and most of the Calvinistic writings, take it. But our text, it should be observed, assigns neither the one reason nor the other; it states the simple fact, and no more. I do not see that any conclusive objections can be urged against adopting the sense of before loving or regarding with affection; because the like sense of the verb is common. It is only when the reason for doing this is forced upon us, as being disclosed in the text itself, that I should object to such an exegesis." The apostle does not here declare how many God thus foreknew, or loved even before they existed; nor need he. Christians, who were instructed personally by Christ and by his apostles, already understood that God was kind to the unthankful and to the evil; that he loved the world; that he sent his Son to be the Saviour of the world; and that he manifested his love to the most unpromising class of men, "in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us." This was already a settled point. It was only necessary to show that God had placed the salvation of all those whom he thus loved on such sure ground that it could not fail of accomplishment. ¶ *He also did predestinate.* Predetermined, or determined beforehand concerning them. See Eph. i. 5, 11. What his determination was, or to what he had predestinated them, is disclosed in the following words. ¶ *To be conformed to the image of his Son.* That is, to bear his moral image; to become pure and holy like him in kind, if not in degree. Such conformity to the image of the Son of God is often mentioned as a chief blessing reserved for mankind; imparted in some measure to believers in this life, ver. 9, 10; ch. xii. 2; but in its full extent to be bestowed in the resurrection. Luke xx. 36; 1 Cor. xv. 49; 1 John iii. 2. This, then, is the primary step in the accomplishment of God's purpose. For wise reasons, reasons doubtless consistent with a spirit of infinite love, God determined that his children should commence their existence in a state of

that he might be the first-born among many brethren.

30 Moreover, whom he did pre-

frailty, imperfection, vanity, and corruption, and subject to all the trials and sorrows incident to such a state. Contemporaneous with this determination was his purpose to deliver them from bondage to corruption, and to purify them, so that they should bear the moral image of his Son, as a necessary prerequisite to their enjoying the inheritance prepared for them. "God has not, then (as is often objected to the doctrine of predestination), decreed that men should be saved, whether they be sinful or holy, that is, without regard to the character which they may have; but he has determined that all who are conducted to glory must resemble, in a moral respect, him who leads them to glory; that is, the great captain of their salvation." — *Stuart*. It is absurd to say that men are saved in their sins; for the salvation revealed in the gospel is a purification from sinfulness, or, as it is here expressed, conformity to the moral image of Jesus Christ. ¶ *That he might be the first-born among many brethren.* Our Lord was in a peculiar sense the son of God; yet he is recognized by the sacred writers as a brother to the human race, deriving his existence from the same divine Father, and having assumed a human form. He also acknowledged this relationship while he dwelt on the earth. Matt. xii. 49, 50; John xx. 17. Although the Father clothed him with exceeding purity and glory, it was not his intention that his first-born should be the only son, or the only heir of the heavenly inheritance. He predestined his other children to similar purity and glory, and ordained that they should be "joint-heirs with Christ," ver. 17: he, the first-fruits; they, in due season.

30. *Moreover.* Additional assurance that the purpose of God will be fully accomplished arises from the facts recounted by the apostle; showing, as they do, that all the intermediate steps between the inception and the consummation of that purpose are under his immediate supervision, and wholly controlled by himself. ¶ *Whom he did predestinate.* Whom he predestinated to a moral conformity to Christ. See note

destinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.

on ver. 29. ¶ *Them he also called.* That is, he has called, or will call, the whole number whom he has thus predestinated. He operates on the human heart by the influence of his spirit, as well as by the outward calling of the gospel, producing that moral conformity to Christ which he has purposed. To some, the call comes earlier; to some, later. But none are to be forgotten or overlooked. It may be remarked that the outward call of the gospel was not simultaneous to all men. The Jews were first called; afterwards, the Gentiles. See Matt. x. 1—7; Mark xvi. 15; Luke xxiv. 47. Even Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles, uniformly delivered his message first to the Jews in the Gentile cities which he visited; yet he considered the Gentiles to be equally interested, and joint-heirs with the Jews. So, also, the effectual call of the spirit, or the influence of the divine spirit in the heart, is vouchsafed to some before others in the order of time; yet no good reason has yet been assigned for believing that any shall never be thus called. See note on Acts ii. 39. ¶ *Them he also justified.* Made just; purified from sinfulness; produced in them conformity to the image of his Son. See note on chap. iii. 24. This justification or moral conformity to Christ is the direct consequence of the holy calling or influence of the divine spirit on the heart. It can never be attained by unaided human exertion. Hence God has adopted a method of righteousness wholly his own, by which he secures the accomplishment of his purpose beyond possibility of failure. ¶ *Them he also glorified.* Made them partakers of the "glorious liberty of the children of God," ver. 21. Not that the glorification was complete and universal in the apostolic age, or even now; but that the event was absolutely certain. To the state of perfect glory consequent on entire conformity to the moral image of Christ, according to the eternal purpose of God, the apostle seems particularly to refer in this place.

31. *What shall we then say to these things?* What is the inevitable conse-

31 What shall we then say to these things? If God *be* for us, who *can be* against us?

32 He that spared not his own

quence of the facts already stated? and what impression should be produced on the minds of believers? Although the conclusion is general, and equally applicable to the condition of all, as a sustaining power amid the trials and vicissitudes of life, yet it is probable that here, as in the former part of the chapter, the apostle contemplated particularly the peculiar trials to which he and his brethren were then exposed. Those trials he exhorts them to bear with fortitude and hope, inasmuch as the purpose of God for their final deliverance and glorification could not possibly be frustrated. ¶ *If God be for us.* If God loves us, and has purposed to bless us, by turning away every one of us from our iniquities (Acts iii. 26), and thus bringing us into conformity to the moral image of his Son. ¶ *Who can be against us?* Equivalent to *who can prevail against us?* The interrogatory form is sometimes more impressive than a direct assertion. Opposers we may have; obstacles may be encountered; temptations may assail us; the fleshly propensities may make us temporarily captive to "the law of sin," so that we may almost despair of deliverance "from the body of this death," chap. vii. 24, 25; we may suffer persecution for righteousness' sake, as did our Lord and his primitive disciples. Yet none of these things can prevail against us while God is for us, or loves us, and purposes to bless us. The general sentiment of this verse is illustrated in the triumphant strain of exultation which follows, to the end of the chapter.

32. *He that spared not his own Son.* The apostle refers to the highest possible manifestation of divine love, the most conclusive proof that God is for us, is our friend. He did not withhold his well-beloved Son from encountering labor, and pain, and death, on our behalf, that he might give us knowledge of the divine character, excite our love and confidence, and cause us to forsake sin and cleave unto God. ¶ *But delivered him up for us all.* The mission of Christ was not for the benefit of a select few, but for the benefit of **all**.

Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?

33 Who shall lay anything to

The gift was characteristic of the giver. God is the Father of all, and loves his children with an impartial love. When he would bestow his crowning gift, such love would demand that all be made joint-heirs of it. When he was about to send his Son into the world, and thus to deliver him up for us all, the angel declared, "He shall save his people from their sins." Matt. i. 21. Jesus himself declared that "God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved" (John iii. 17); thus confirming the testimony of his forerunner, who had pointed him out as the "Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." John i. 29. He came not for the special benefit of the comparatively righteous; for he said, "I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance." Matt. ix. 13. Accordingly, the apostles represent his mission as designed for the reconciliation of enemies, and declare that "God commendeth his love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." Ch. v. 8. Even the "chief" of sinners is not excluded. 1 Tim. i. 15. Well, then, might Paul say here, that God gave his Son, "delivered him up" to all which he suffered "for us all," for the common benefit of all his children. ¶ *How shall he not with him also freely give us all things?* Having bestowed the greater blessing, can it be imagined he will withhold the less? Having given the highest proof of his love, how is it possible that his love should not be manifested in all his dispensations? "How can we possibly suppose that, after having bestowed the greatest of all gifts upon us, namely, his own Son, he will refuse to bestow those gifts which are smaller and less costly?" — *Stuart*. "His giving his Son is a proof that he will give to us all things that we need." — *Barnes*. "If he loved us, Gentiles and Jews, so intensely as to deliver up to death his own Son for us all, can he withhold from us any minor blessing?" — *Clarke*. "No argument was ever addressed to creatures capable of being persuaded and obliged, equal to this. For while it convinces

the charge of God's elect? *It is* God that justifieth:

34 Who is he that condemneth? *It is* Christ that died, yea, rather

the understanding, it raises every tender and devout feeling in the heart, and is a continual source both of hope and gratitude." — *Macknight*. Since the love of God was so pure, and his desire for the salvation and final blessedness of his children was so intense, that he gave his Son "for us all," is it within the range of possibility that he should suffer a single one of the number to come short of the blessing, for lack of any necessary assistance?

33. *Who shall lay anything to the charge?* Who shall accuse? Who shall allege cause of condemnation? The phrase is understood as alluding to forms of law, common in that day as in this. ¶ *Of God's elect*. Of his chosen sons. By the elect, or chosen, the apostle doubtless refers specially to those whom he previously styles "sons of God," ver. 14, "children of God," in ver. 16, "heirs of God," ver. 17; namely, those who had already become Christians, whether Jews or Gentiles. They were chosen to be the first-fruits of grace. The manner in which God chose some to embrace the gospel before others is described in the following chapter. But this choice for a special purpose by no means excludes others from the final enjoyment of God's mercy. See ch. xi. 30, 31. It need not here again be discussed, how many are included in the number of those whom God has chosen to be final heirs of grace. The safety of all who are thus chosen is manifest, from the whole scope of the apostle's argument. ¶ *It is God that justifieth*. As God justifies men, or makes them just, by the influence of his grace, any allegation to the contrary, from whatever source, must be unavailing. Objections have often been urged against the salvation of such as were deemed unfit subjects of divine favor. But when, according to the purpose of God, they shall be conformed to the moral image of Christ, and thus be fully justified, no such objection will be entertained by him who justifies.

34. *Who is he that condemneth?* Who shall dare pronounce judgment against

that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.

those whom God loves, chooses, and makes just? The legal phraseology is here again employed. ¶ *It is Christ that died.* This is construed interrogatively by *Griesbach*, and by many others. Who is he that condemneth?—Christ, who died? And so, in the preceding verse: Who shall accuse those whom God has chosen?—God, who justifieth? In either case, however, the idea is manifest that no accusation can avail against those whom God justifieth; and, in like manner, that final condemnation will not be pronounced against those for whom Christ died. If divine love was so fervent that God's beloved Son, according to the Father's will, "died for sinners," it is incredible that they should ever be utterly cast off. But the apostle accumulates testimonies to the same point. ¶ *Yea, rather, that is risen again.* See ch. iv. 25. That same Jesus, who manifested toward mankind greater love than any man hath (John xv. 13; Rom. v. 8), still lives to guide his brethren by his spirit, and gradually to mould them into a likeness unto himself. Will he, who was kind to sinners while he dwelt on the earth, and who prayed for the forgiveness of his murderers while expiring on the cross, will he abandon them, and give them over to condemnation, now that he lives in heaven? ¶ *Who is even at the right hand of God.* He is highly exalted, and all things are put under him. Phil. ii. 9; 1 Cor. xv. 24—28. His power is fully adequate to the accomplishment of his desires. ¶ *Who also maketh intercession for us.* While on earth, he commended his brethren to the Father, and prayed that they might be with him, as joint-heirs of the heavenly inheritance. See note on John xvii. 24. Can he be supposed less desirous of their good since he has entered heaven? Who, then, can condemn, while he who loved us, and gave himself for us, forever lives to desire our good, and is able to accomplish it by the influence of his spirit? Accusations avail naught while God justifies. Condemnation is impossible while Jesus intercedes. Thus certain does the apostle represent the

35 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? *shall* tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or

final blessedness of all whom God loves, and predestinates to be conformed to the moral image of our Lord Jesus Christ.

35. *Who shall separate us?* "The apostle here rises into a strain of the loftiest and most impassioned eloquence, in describing the certainty of the Christian's hope, and the immortality of the love of God to him, as manifested by Jesus Christ. He presents the thought first in an interrogative form,—who shall separate us?—and then in a positive form,—nothing shall separate us from this great fountain of life and happiness."—*Livermore.* ¶ *From the love of Christ.* Some interpreters have understood this as referring to the love of men towards Christ, as meaning that nothing could prevent Christians from loving their Master. Whether the love which men cherish be thus unchangeably fervent or not, need not now be inquired. The general argument of the apostle requires us to understand him as speaking here, not of the love of men towards God, but of God's love to his children, of Christ's love to his brethren. Most commentators, and certainly many of the most judicious, concur in this interpretation. The apostle has all along been exhorting his brethren to bear their sufferings with patience, because God loves them, and will cause all things to work together for their good. If he has subjected them to vanity, he will deliver them. If present sufferings are grievous, they shall be more than compensated by the glory that shall be revealed. If, by reason of present imperfections, we know not how to obtain relief from sorrow and from all which occasions sorrow; if we know not even what to pray for, inasmuch as we know not in what way God has determined that the relief shall come; still he guides us by his spirit, and will finally justify and glorify us, through our predestined conformity to the moral image of his Son. The love of God is the great central sun of all human hopes. Separate us from that, and all is darkness and gloom. But while that shines upon us we can endure present sufferings with cheerfulness, and even

famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?

rejoice in the midst of tribulation, ch. v. 3—5; for, beyond and above what we now suffer, we may cherish a confident hope of blessedness commensurate with a Father's love. The love of Christ, which is the phrase here used, is substantially the same as the love of God. Whom God loves, Christ loves; and whom Christ loves, God loves. In this respect, in affection to mankind, they are one. See note on John x. 30. From this love nothing shall be able to separate us. ¶ *Shall tribulation.* Several specifications of the general declaration here follow. The idea seems to be this: because God permits us to endure affliction, in the instances specified and in others, are we to suppose he has ceased to love us? On the contrary, it is perfectly consistent with his love that we should endure temporary sufferings, which shall be succeeded by the greater glory. Matt. v. 11, 12; Heb. xii. 5—12; 1 Pet. ii. 19—21. The word here rendered *tribulation* indicates the pressure of outward calamities. See note on ch. v. 3. It is supposed the apostle had special reference to the trials brought upon the disciples by the opposers of the gospel. But tribulation may include generally the evils which are suffered from without. ¶ *Or distress.* "This word properly means narrowness of place; and then, great anxiety and distress of mind, such as arises when a man does not know where to turn himself, or what to do for relief. It refers, therefore, to distress or anxiety of mind, such as the early Christians were often subject to from their trials and persecutions. 'Without were fightings, within were fears.' 2 Cor. vii. 5."—*Barnes.* It may also properly denote mental anxiety arising from any other source. ¶ *Or persecution.* To persecute is defined, by Johnson, "to harass with penalties; to pursue with malignity, Acts xxii. To pursue with repeated acts of vengeance or enmity." To such persecution was our Lord subjected, from the commencement of his ministry until his crucifixion; and a similar persecution followed the apostles and primitive disciples, as is fully set forth in the Acts of the Apostles. In every city,

36 As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long;

bonds and imprisonment awaited them. Having thus mentioned persecution, the apostle speaks of some of the particular sufferings connected with it. ¶ *Famine.* Lack of food necessary for sustenance. This was a natural result of such persecution as made them wanderers in the earth. The apostle gives a graphic description of persecution in ancient times, which would apply without essential variation to that which the early Christians endured. Heb. xi. 36—38. Those who were thus persecuted could scarcely avoid famine. ¶ *Or nakedness.* Destitution of necessary apparel. ¶ *Or peril.* Danger of any sort. To such dangers or perils the early Christians were constantly exposed, and from various quarters. See 2 Cor. xi. 26. ¶ *Or sword.* Namely, the sword of persecution. The persecuting spirit, which was then rife in the world, was not satisfied with the constant suffering of its subjects, but thirsted for the destruction of life. The sword is named particularly, because it was a common instrument of death.

36. *As it is written.* The quotation which follows is from Ps. xlv. 22. The apostle applies this language to himself and his brethren, as descriptive of their condition. He well knew the character of the persecution which raged against Christians; he had not only suffered it, but he had formerly been actively engaged in it. Acts xxvi. 9—11. ¶ *For thy sake.* The Psalmist asserts that the Jews endured persecution because they worshipped God, as revealed in the law; the apostle declares that the Christians were persecuted on account of their devotion to God, as revealed in the person of his Son, and in the word of his grace, or the gospel. ¶ *We are killed all the day long.* Or, constantly. Their lives were constantly in peril. The persecution which they endured was savage and unrelenting, often destructive of life. Hence it is called being killed. ¶ *We are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.* Christians were regarded by their persecutors as deserving of death; and as little scruple was entertained, in regard to their slaughter, as to the slaughter of so many sheep. Such was

we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.

37 Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors, through him that loved us.

the perilous condition of the primitive Christians. They were mocked and derided; spoiled of their temporal goods; scourged and imprisoned; stoned, crucified, beheaded, and slain by almost every conceivable form of torture. These were among the "sufferings of this present time," ver. 18. In the midst of such afflictions, their confidence in the love of God was not shaken; but they trusted in him as their "refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble." Ps. xlvi. 1. The form of the interrogation sufficiently implies that none of the things already mentioned were sufficient to separate Christians from the love of Christ, or to make them doubt the sincerity of that love. What follows is a direct affirmation of the same fact.

37. *Nay*. More literally, *but*. Yet perhaps the common translation expresses the idea quite as accurately. ¶ *In all these things*. In all the trials and sufferings previously mentioned. ¶ *We are more than conquerors*. We rise above our trials, and hold fast our integrity. We are not disheartened or dismayed. We are not driven to distrust the love of God, nor to regard ourselves as outcasts from his favor. We know that God permitted his Son to suffer persecution and death, though he audibly proclaimed from heaven, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Matt. iii. 17. And while we endure like afflictions, and even be made partakers of his death, we may still confide in God's unchangeable love. Thus are we victorious, and more than victorious; we even glory or rejoice in tribulation, that we may imitate the example of our crucified Lord; and we rejoice with unspeakable joy, in the hope that we shall also be made like our risen Lord, and become joint-heirs with him of the heavenly inheritance. The company of apostles rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for the name of Jesus. Acts v. 41. Thus also their successors rejoiced. ¶ *Through him that loved us*. They did

38 For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come,

not pretend that their unaided strength enabled them to endure the afflictions which encompassed them; but they confessed their dependence on divine aid. As Jesus acknowledged that of himself he could do nothing, except as the Father enabled him (John v. 19, 30), so his disciples uniformly confessed that their strength was imparted by the divine spirit. See Phil. iv. 12, 13. See also note on Matt. xxviii. 20.

38. *For I am persuaded*. I am confident; I have full assurance. I feel absolutely certain. ¶ *That neither death*. The fear of violent death at the hands of persecutors, or even the infliction of such death. This shall not cause us to despair of God's love, and is by no means to be regarded as an evidence that his affection has cooled. He permitted his Son to die; yet he loved him, and raised him from the dead. And if it please him that we walk in the footsteps of our Master, and mingle our blood with his, God will manifest his love by making us partakers of that life upon which our forerunner hath already entered. ¶ *Nor life*. Nor the hope of life, as the price of apostasy. It was customary to inflict death on those who held fast their integrity, and to preserve those who would recant, and disavow their former profession of faith. The temptation to apostasy was doubtless enforced on the disciples, as on our Lord, by intimations that their trust in God was fallacious; that he had forsaken them; that, in short, he manifested no love to them, and was not entitled to their love or their confidence in return. See Matt. xxvii. 43. Even this should not disturb their faith in God's love. ¶ *Nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers*. Many commentators suppose that different ranks of evil angels are here intended. It is much more probable that the apostle refers to different orders of civil magistrates, who exerted their power to oppress and destroy Christians. See Eph. vi. 12. ¶ *Nor things present*. The affliction which we now endure. "The sufferings of

39 Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to

separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

this present time." ¶ *Nor things to come.* Afflictions and trials to which we may hereafter be exposed. God will not permit us now or hereafter to endure any pain or sorrow, which shall not be made subservient to our good, or which is inconsistent with his love toward us. Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, and considering what things he endured, we may well confide in our heavenly Father that his love still embraces us, even while he causes us to tread a similar thorny path. The sustaining power of such firm confidence in the unchanging love of God is manifest in the language of Paul, Acts xx. 22—24. Inspired by this power, the disciples of Jesus were ready to face any danger, and even in the agony of death, like their blessed Master, could confidently appeal to the Source of unchanging love. Luke xxiii. 46; Acts vii. 59, 60.

39. *Nor height, nor depth.* Neither height of prosperity, nor depth of adversity. This interpretation is approved by many judicious commentators; though a great variety of opinion has been expressed by others. ¶ *Nor any other creature.* "In this general clause the apostle includes whatever else could be named as having any influence to separate believers from the love of God, exercised towards us through Christ." — *Macknight.* The general character of this clause renders it of less consequence whether we understand accurately the precise idea conveyed by the other terms used. Whatever particulars have been previously specified, this covers the whole ground. And the manifest import of the whole passage is, that nothing, of whatever name or nature, can destroy the love of God towards his children, or cut them off from its beneficial influence. ¶ *From the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.* See note on ver. 35. Thus closes one of the most glorious passages to be found in the apostolic writings. It is marvellous, that any should doubt the apostle's firm conviction that all whom God ever loved shall be objects of his love forever.

"The spirit of this passage gives assurance of the final triumph of the gospel in this world, and it inspires a calm and a strong assurance that all will eventually be won to this omnipotent love in the world to come." — *Livermore.*

With this chapter, the apostle is generally understood to close his direct annunciation and enforcement of that scheme of divine grace which he styles "the righteousness of God." Ch. i. 17. He has fully illustrated its impartiality and universality; he has declared that the grace is as effectual to overcome sin in Gentiles as in Jews; and that, as sin has entailed death on the whole race of men, so shall grace triumph in their restoration to life, and their deliverance into the glorious liberty of the children of God. This result is subject to no contingency, for it rests wholly on the eternal purpose of God which he purposed in himself before the world began. In the following chapters, the rejection of the Jews, as the chosen people of God, is discussed. The privileges pertaining to them as a peculiar people were transferred to the Gentiles, who embraced Christ and his gospel. This was the very gall of bitterness to the Jews. They were indignant when Jesus foretold this change Matt viii. 11, 12; Luke xiii. 24—30. When the apostle announced that this prophecy had become a fact of history, they were exasperated beyond endurance. Acts xxii. 21, 22. He proceeds, therefore, to show that this fact, so distasteful to them, was in accordance with the known providences of God, had been foretold by his holy prophets in ancient time, and was consistent with his character as an impartial Father. Regarding the following chapters as illustrative of the foregoing, and as designed to justify the ways of God to man in his choice of the Gentiles as his adopted children under the gospel, their interpretation will be attended with fewer difficulties than when understood as teaching that God has elected some to endless blessedness, to the utter exclusion of others.

CHAPTER IX.

I SAY the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing

CHAPTER IX.

1. *I say the truth in Christ.* I speak the sober truth as becomes a Christian. I speak as one who is under the influence of the spirit of Christ. Ch. viii. 9. Some have regarded this as a form of oath; but the phraseology used does not require this interpretation, nor is it demanded by the general nature of the subject. It is a strong form of affirmation, equivalent to that which was so often employed by our Saviour: "verily, verily, I say unto you." ¶ *lie not.* I do not in the least degree prevaricate. ¶ *My conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost.* My own conscience bears witness to me, that I am perfectly sincere in my declaration; and my conscience, as I believe, has been enlightened by the influences of the divine spirit. The apostle does not make this solemn asseveration of his sincerity, and repeat his protestations under different forms of speech, without good reason. In consequence of his devotion to the religious instruction of the Gentiles, and his earnest defence of their equal privileges as the children of God, the Jews accounted him an apostate from their religion, and imagined that he was the enemy rather than the friend of his kinsmen, the descendants of Abraham. He desired to give them the strongest possible assurance that such was not the fact; that he did not preach salvation to the Gentiles because he loved them more, nor recognize the defection of the Jews because he loved them less. And although he was constrained to say that the Gentiles, through faith, had attained privileges which the Jews had forfeited, through unbelief, yet he desired to convince them, if possible, that he cherished no unfriendly feeling towards his own nation. Hence he repeats the declaration of his sincerity, in the strong expression of love which follows, by a variety of phraseology.

2. *That I have great heaviness, &c.* Namely, on account of Jewish unbelief. The apostle sincerely lamented the rejection of Christ and his gospel by

me witness in the Holy Ghost,

2 That I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart.

3 For I could wish that myself

the Jewish nation. He knew that his kinsmen were thus strangers to that joy and peace which results from believing; and he knew that temporal judgments, destructive to their national prosperity, had been foretold by his Master. As Jesus wept over Jerusalem, when contemplating the impending ruin, so Paul was filled with sorrow, in prospect of the same event. He foresaw, through the spirit which influenced him, that their blindness would long continue; that they were rejected from being the peculiar people of God; that the kingdom would be taken from them, and given to a people who would bring forth its appropriate fruits, Matt. xxi. 43; in short, that while the Gentiles came from the four winds to partake of the gospel feast, the Jews, as a people, would for ages be excluded from its enjoyment. Matt. viii. 11, 12. Hence his heart was oppressed with heaviness and sorrow; and he would willingly suffer on their behalf, if thereby they could become sincere disciples of Jesus Christ.

3. *For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ.* Some have strangely supposed the apostle to mean that he was willing to become endlessly miserable, on behalf of his brethren; or, in common parlance, to be damned, so that they might be saved. But such a willingness or wish savors of impiety. To remain in eternal rebellion against God, to endure the fiercest tortures he can inflict, and to be compelled to curse and blaspheme his name, on account of his vindictive cruelty, is not a thing to be wished for by a Christian, nor one to which he would willingly submit. Much he would endure cheerfully, for the good of others. Physical pain, and even death, may be met with fortitude, by a good man in a good cause. But it is incredible, that any one who has once tasted the Lord's goodness, who has experienced the love of God shed abroad in his heart by the power of the Holy Ghost, could consent to have the grateful emotions of his heart converted into curses and blasphemies. Those who profess such willingness are blinded

were accursed from Christ, for my brethren, my kinsmen, according to the flesh :

4 Who are Israelites ; to whom

and deceived. They can only hope to be forgiven, because "they know not what they do." A much more reasonable interpretation of the passage is given by *Macknight*. He paraphrases the whole verse thus: "For I myself could wish to be cut off from the church instead of my brethren, my kinsmen by descent from Abraham ; and therefore in what I am going to write I am not influenced by ill-will towards my nation." He adds this note : "The word ἀνάθεμα (*anathema*), which I have translated *separated*, answers to the Hebrew word *Hherem*, which signifies a thing separated by the sentence of men to be destroyed, as Achan was, Josh. vii. 25. The word is elegantly used on this occasion for a violent death, because, as *Locke* observes, the Jewish nation was now *anathema*, a thing cast away by God, and separated to be destroyed. The apostle was willing to suffer death, if thereby he could have prevented the terrible destruction which was coming upon the Jews. Wherefore, 'separated from Christ' means cut off by death from the visible church, called Christ, Rom. xvi. 7, 'who were in Christ before me,' who were in the church of Christ before me. The apostle's wish, thus understood, was not contrary to piety. Because, if he had been cut off from the church of Christ, either by the hand of God or man, that evil might have been cheerfully borne by him, on account of the great good that was to follow from it. In this wish the apostle seems to have imitated Moses, who desired to be blotted out of God's book, rather than that the Israelites should be destroyed. Exod. xxxii. 32." In regard to the condition of the Jews, however, which filled Paul with heaviness and sorrow, I think he included the ordinary consequences of unbelief and sinfulness, as well as the extraordinary judgment which God was about to inflict on that unhappy people. ¶ *For my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh.* The Jewish nation, the descendants of Abraham, whom Paul acknowledged as kinsmen, partakers of the same blood, and brethren, children of

pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises ;

the same ancestor, according to natural descent, though not now his brethren in the faith.

4. *Who are Israelites.* The posterity of Jacob, who was also called Israel. In this verse and the next the apostle enumerates several privileges enjoyed by his "kinsmen according to the flesh," by which they had hitherto been highly distinguished from the nations of the earth. See ch. iii. 1, 2. ¶ *To whom pertaineth.* Or, whose are. ¶ *The adoption.* The sonship. God had separated Abraham from the Gentiles, and had granted him a special revelation of his will. He covenanted with Abraham that his posterity should preserve a knowledge of his name, and character, and purposes. Of Abraham's children, Isaac was selected as the heir of this promise ; and of Isaac's children, Jacob was chosen. The descendants of Jacob, indiscriminately, were set apart as a chosen people, and unto them, through Moses and the prophets, God continued to make special communications of his will. After their deliverance from bondage in Egypt, Moses declared to them, "Thou art a holy people unto the Lord thy God ; the Lord thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth." Deut. vii. 6. They were, therefore, in a peculiar sense, the sons of God, having been adopted, as it were, to be members of his family, and to enjoy a more familiar intercourse with him than was vouchsafed to others. See note on ch. viii. 15. We find frequent allusions in this chapter and the two which follow to this act of grace, by which God distinguished the Israelites from other nations. By calling their attention distinctly to the fact that they had thus been a chosen people, the apostle may have designed to prepare their minds to admit that the God and Father of all might as rightfully now choose others, as he formerly chose them, to be a peculiar people to himself. ¶ *And the glory.* This is generally understood to refer to the shechinah, or glorious, visible manifestation of God's presence

5 Whose *are* the fathers, and of whom, as concerning the flesh,

Christ *came*, who is over all, God blessed forever. Amen.

which, as a pillar of cloud by day, and of fire by night, guided their journey in the wilderness, and which rested over the ark deposited in the Holy of Holies in the first temple. ¶ *And the covenants.* The divine covenants made with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob. See Acts iii. 25. ¶ *And the giving of the law.* Namely, the Mosaic law, given at Mount Sinai. ¶ *And the service of God.* The words of God are supplied by the translators. The context indicates that special reference is had to the ritual service, or the particular rites and observances prescribed by the Mosaic law. ¶ *And the promises.* The promises made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; perhaps, also, those made through the prophets and holy men of God, who spake as they were moved by the divine spirit. 2 Pet. i. 21. The apostle is supposed to refer particularly to the promises of a Messiah, and of the blessings to be communicated to men through him.

5. *Whose are the fathers.* Namely, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and the patriarchs. The Jews very naturally regarded it as an honor to have descended from such ancestors. A privilege it certainly was, however much it may have been abused; for they thus had a better opportunity to learn the character of God, and the duty and destiny of men, than was enjoyed by the Gentiles. ¶ *And of whom, as concerning the flesh, Christ came.* It was doubtless an honorable distinction to any nation or people that it should give birth to the Messiah. Whatever higher nature belonged to our Lord, he possessed a human body, and in this respect he was of Jewish flesh and blood. True, "he came unto his own, and his own received him not." John i. 11. See the note. Nevertheless, they were his own, and, as to the flesh, he was of their kindred. ¶ *Who is over all, God blessed forever. Amen.* This passage has been a fruitful source of controversy between Trinitarians and others. By the former it is interpreted as a distinct and positive declaration that Jesus Christ was truly the supreme God. By others it is insisted that this language must be so understood as not to contradict the

declaration of Jesus himself, "My Father is greater than I." John xiv. 28. See also John x. 29. If, in any sense whatever, the Father was greater, surely our Lord Jesus Christ could not have been the supreme God. While I would most scrupulously avoid detracting anything from the true dignity of our Saviour's character, while I steadfastly believe that he is highly exalted above all other created beings, I also yield entire credit to his declaration that God is his superior, that God sent him, that he came to do the Father's will, and that he relied on God for assistance and protection. "It must, one would think, strike a Trinitarian as a very singular fact, that the title of 'God over all, blessed forever,' which is nowhere else given to Christ, should be introduced thus incidentally and abruptly, without explanation or comment, and without any use being made of the doctrine. The supposed fact appears still more extraordinary and unaccountable, when we recollect that one main purpose of the Epistle to the Romans was to meet the prejudices and errors of the Jews respecting Christianity; and that the doctrine which the apostle is imagined to have asserted so briefly and explicitly, and then to have left without attempting to clear it from a single objection, must have been in the highest degree obnoxious to them; and one, therefore, which, in consistency with the design of the epistle, required the fullest illustration and defence. — *He who was over all;* that is, over all which has just been mentioned by the apostle. The rapidity of expression in the original, however, does not fully appear in such a rendering, because in our language we are obliged to supply the ellipsis of the substantive verb. It may be imitated, however, by employing the participle instead of the verb. Doing this, I will give what seems to me a more correct translation of the passage, and of its context, than that of the common version. 'My brethren; who are Israelites, whose was the glory of being adopted as sons, whose were the covenants, and the law, and the service of the temple, and the promises, and from

6 Not as though the word of God hath taken none effect. For they *are* not all Israel, which are

of Israel :

7 Neither because they are the seed of Abraham, *are they* all chil-

among whom the Messiah was to be born ; he who was over all, being God blessed forever. Amen.' This conclusion, as every one must perceive, is in the highest degree proper and natural. Among the privileges and distinctions of the Jews, it could not be forgotten by the apostle that God had presided over all their concerns in a particular manner. With regard to the ellipsis of the substantive verb, which we have supposed, nothing is more common. In the five verses, including the verse we are considering, between the 3d and 9th, it occurs at least six times."—*Norton*. By others the passage is regarded as a doxology, addressed not to the Son, but to the Father. "There is some difficulty in this clause, howsoever we explain it. We prefer to take it as a doxology. It may be interpreted in two different ways, accordingly as it is differently punctuated. (1.) If joined to the preceding clause, thus, 'Christ—who is over all, God blessed forever,' it makes Christ to be the supreme God, 'God over all.' But this is certainly discordant with St. Paul's usual manner of speaking ; in itself, too, it sounds unbecoming, even in many Trinitarian ears, though the larger part of Trinitarians adopt it. (2.) It may be separated from the preceding clause by a period, thus, 'Christ—who is over all. God be blessed forever,' or, 'Blessed be God forever. Amen ;'—making the clause or sentence in question a doxology, as the concluding word, 'Amen,' naturally implies. In this construction, the tenor of thought is agreeable to St. Paul's usual manner. As he had just said that, although Christ was of the Jews 'in respect to the flesh,' yet he was 'over all,' it was natural for him to add an exclamation of praise to God, in view of the universal dominion he had given to Christ, and of the universality of his saving enterprise. Against this second construction of the passage, it is pleaded, by many Greek critics, that the latter clause cannot be a doxology, agreeably to the Greek idiom. We suppose, indeed, that the original is not precisely in the form that a doxology usually has. But the

variation, in this respect, is too slight to be a valid objection in the case of so informal a writer as St. Paul, who often transposes words from their more usual order. Besides, we find, in the Septuagint, Ps. lxxviii. 19 (Sept. Vers. lxxvii. 20), an example which is completely in point ; so that the construction, though unusual, is not abnormal."—*H. Ballou*, 2d.

6. *Not as though the word of God hath taken none effect.* The apostle here pursues the same train of thought as in ch. iii. 1—4 ; where, having recounted the "advantage" of the Jews, he inquires, whether the unbelief of some should "make the faith of God without effect ;" to which he gives a decided negative. So, here, he specifies the privileges which the Jews had hitherto enjoyed, as the chosen people, the adopted sons of God, and expresses his sincere sorrow that, by unbelief, they had forfeited those privileges, which were now transferred to others, agreeably to the word of our Lord, Matt. viii. 11, 12 ; xxi. 43 ; but he adds, that this rejection of the Jews, and the adoption of others, as the chosen seed, by no means makes the word of God of none effect. This fact he illustrates in what follows, showing that mere natural descent gave no title to the blessing, but that, from the beginning, God had bestowed such external privileges according to his own choice. The argument is, that, if God might choose Isaac, to the exclusion of Ishmael and others, and Jacob, to the exclusion of Esau, as the heir of the general promise made to Abraham, without prejudice to his faithfulness or his veracity, in like manner he might exclude any others of Abraham's posterity, and adopt even Gentiles as the true spiritual seed of Abraham. See Gal. iii. 7—9. ¶ *For they are not all Israel.* Namely, true Israelites ; Israelites in spirit and in character. Although they were the lineal descendants of Israel, according to the flesh, yet they lacked his spirit, and were not accounted as his true seed, even as Ishmael and Esau were not reckoned as the seed of Abraham and of Isaac.

dren : but, In Isaac shall thy seed be called.

8 That is, They which are the children of the flesh, these *are* not the children of God ; but the children of the promise are counted for the seed.

7. *Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham.* His posterity by natural descent. ¶ *Are they all children.* The promise of sonship, or of peculiar privileges, as a chosen people, did not extend to all the posterity of Abraham, but was limited to his posterity through one of his sons. ¶ *But, in Isaac.* See Gen. xxi. 12. ¶ *Shall thy seed be called.* The true spiritual seed ; the children of the promise. The promise was to Abraham, for himself and his posterity ; yet God saw fit to confine its privileges to a single branch of that posterity, to the exclusion of the nations which descended from Ishmael and the other sons of Abraham. The Jews had never expressed any doubts concerning the propriety of this distinction, nor any fears that the promise of God had thereby failed. So neither ought they to imagine that the exclusion of any other of Abraham's posterity was inconsistent with that promise. Such is the argument implied by this reference to facts recorded in their own Scriptures.

8. *That is.* Lest his reference should not be fully understood, the apostle repeats his declaration in plainer terms. ¶ *They which are the children of the flesh.* Or, according to the flesh ; children by natural descent. ¶ *These are not the children of God.* They were not necessarily the children of God, or adopted sons, or the chosen people, because they were the natural posterity of Abraham : the descendants of Ishmael and of the sons of Keturah were as truly the posterity of Abraham as were the descendants of Isaac ; yet they did not inherit the promise, nor were they adopted as the peculiar people of God. ¶ *But the children of the promise.* The race particularly intended in the promise, when it was said, "In Isaac shall thy seed be called." ¶ *Are counted for the seed.* Or, regarded as the seed. The distinction between the posterity of Isaac, who was emphatically the child of promise in more than one respect,

9 For this *is* the word of promise, At this time will I come, and Sara shall have a son.

10 And not only *this* ; but when Rebecca also had conceived by one, *even* by our father Isaac,

11 (For *the children* being not

and the other descendants of Abraham, was originally designed ; and, agreeably to that design, the Jews became a peculiar people, among whom was preserved the knowledge and worship of the true God. So long as they made a faithful improvement of their privileges, they remained a chosen people ; but, when they proved unfaithful, and rejected the promised Messiah, they were rejected, and their privileges were transferred to others. The apostle would have them realize that the same God who originally selected their race might with equal justice and propriety select any other people, to be characteristically the children of Abraham. See note on Matt. iii. 9.

9. *For this is the word of promise, &c.* The promise is recorded in Gen. xviii. 10, and repeated in ver. 14, with a slight change of phraseology. The apostle refers to the extraordinary birth of Isaac, in order to show how distinctly God manifested his purpose to select a single branch of Abraham's family as the chosen seed. Other children there were ; but it suited not the divine purpose to adopt these.

10. *And not only this.* This was not the only instance in which God had made a visible distinction among the children of even the same parents, in regard to temporal and religious privileges. Descent from Abraham established no claim to the promised blessing ; for, of Abraham's children, one only was selected ; and of the children of this one, a single son was taken, while the other was excluded. The selection is declared in ver. 11, 12. ¶ *But when Rebecca, &c.* See Gen. xxv. 21—23. The case here mentioned by the apostle is even more striking than the former, in proof that God is guided by his own purpose, without regard to what might be considered as natural or moral claims on the part of mankind, in the distribution of temporal privileges. In the choice of Isaac, it might be imag-

yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of

God, according to election might stand, not of works, but of him

ined that reference was had to the fact that he was the son of the free woman, while Ishmael was son of the bond-woman. Gal. iv. 31. But, in the case now presented, the choice was made between twin children of the same parents, and the choice was announced before the children were born. No reason is given for the selection, except that such was the choice of God; and none other is necessary. He knows by what means his gracious purposes may best be accomplished; and, while he secures the end, we need not doubt the propriety of the process. By calling their attention to this instance of divine sovereignty, the apostle designed more fully to satisfy his Jewish brethren that the promise of God was not vitiated because he excluded from its present benefits some of Abraham's posterity. He had done this while the patriarchs lived. They doubted not his veracity; neither should others.

11. *For the children bring not yet born.* This fact is mentioned by the apostle, to evince, beyond all possible doubt, that the choice of one of these twins, and the rejection of the other, as the heir of promise, and the ancestor of a chosen race, depended not on any previous worthiness or unworthiness, on their part; but, that it was the choice of God, uninfluenced by human character, and resting on grounds which he has not seen fit to reveal. ¶ *Neither having done any good or evil.* As, of course, they could not, before they were born. The sole object of the apostle here seems to be, to show that God makes distinctions among men in regard to temporal privileges, of either a natural or spiritual character, without respect to their previous character. Yet the remark that these children had done neither good nor evil throws light on a subject which the apostle was not here discussing; and it may not be impertinent to call attention to it in this aspect. *Stuart* calls this "a very important declaration in respect to its bearing on some of the controverted questions about hereditary depravity, or original sin. It appears, that when the words related in the next verse were spoken to Rebecca, the children in

her womb had arrived to such a state of growth as that life and motion in them were perceived by the mother, Gen. xxv. 22, 23; that is, to the age of some five months. Comp. Luke i. 24. At this period, then, the apostle declares that they had done neither good nor evil; that is, they had as yet no positive moral character; there was, as yet, no development of their moral powers. The assertion is so clear and direct here, that I see not how we can evade the force of it. And with the principle here developed the tenor of other texts agrees. Isa. vii. 15, 16; comp. viii. 4; Deut. i. 39; Jonah iv. 11. That some knowledge of law and its obligations should exist, in order that sin can be committed, seems to be clearly decided by Rom. iv. 15, and to be plainly implied by James iv. 17; John ix. 41; 1 John iii. 4. Every man's consciousness of the nature of moral guilt, moreover, seems spontaneously to decide in accordance with these texts. But *when* children do arrive at such a growth of moral nature that they begin to sin, the Scripture does not seem to have decided; I mean that I have yet discovered no text where this point is fixed. — The apostle, however, has told us when sinning had *not* begun, in respect to Jacob and Esau. That they possessed powers and faculties, even in the womb, which were afterwards employed in committing sin, when they were more fully developed, is undoubtedly true. But the *power* or *faculty* of sinning is one thing; the commission of sin, another. Adam in paradise, before his fall, certainly possessed the power or faculty of sinning, but he was not guilty of sin because he possessed such a power, but for the abuse of it." It is not possession of powers which the Creator has given us, that makes us sinners; it is the abuse of them. To the same effect, *Barnes*, and others. And in reference to an ancient theory, recently revived, it may not be amiss to repeat the remark of *Whitby*: "Those words, the children being not yet born, nor having done good or evil, being used as an argument to prove the election, or preference of the one above the other,

that calleth,)

could not be of works, is a strong argument against the preëxistence of the souls, and their being sent into bodies by way of punishment for their former sins; for upon that supposition it could not be true that the children had done neither good nor evil before they were born; nor could the argument be firm, that one could not be preferred before the other on the account of any works done by them, seeing the one might have sinned more than the other in their state of preëxistence." ¶ *That the purpose of God, &c.* "That God's purpose according to election might abide, coming not from the works of the called, but from the will of the caller." — *Conybeare*. The choice was made, independently of any works or character of the children, but solely because such was the will of God. It might therefore be regarded as fixed and certain. It depended on no contingency. It stood firm, because it was wholly an act of sovereignty. The reason of this choice God has not seen fit to reveal. Yet we should be both unwise and irreverent, if we imagined that the act was arbitrary, or without good reason. God has revealed so much of his character to us, that we are bound to believe that, in all his providences affecting mankind, he consults their good; and that some good object is designed in the distinctions he has made between them, as well as in the blessings which are poured out indiscriminately upon all. See note on ver. 13. It may as well be observed here as elsewhere, that the word here rendered *election* indicates choice. It occurs in Acts ix. 15 (*chosen vessel, or vessel of choice*); *oh. xi. 5, 7, 28*; *1 Thess. i. 4*; *2 Pet. i. 10*. In all these places, it denotes that the person chosen is selected from among others for a special purpose by the will of God. The word *election* has obtained a technical theological sense, which is not warranted by its scriptural usage. If it were understood as defined by lexicographers, as "the act of choosing; choice; voluntary preference," it would convey to the mind a more distinct and a more accurate idea. This verse, it should be observed, is parenthetical, — thrown in for the pur-

12 It was said unto her, The

pose of enforcing the idea that the distinction between Jacob and Esau was a pure act of sovereignty.

12. *It was said unto her.* That is, to Rebecca, ver. 10, to which this verse joins. The reference is to Gen. xxv. 23, of which only a part is quoted: "And the Lord said unto her, Two nations are in thy womb, and two manner of people shall be separated from thy bowels: and the one people shall be stronger than the other people; and the elder shall serve the younger." Among the Jews, certain rights pertained to the first-born: he was the head of the family; a larger inheritance was his; and he succeeded to the peculiar rights of his father, in preference to the younger sons. To a considerable extent, a similar usage now prevails in many nations; and it is not yet a century since the law of primogeniture was abolished in this country. For reasons not revealed, God saw fit to reverse this rule in regard to the children of Isaac and Rebecca. The younger was chosen as the heir of promise, in preference to the elder. The Jews were familiar with this fact. They had never doubted the propriety of the divine choice, in this case; especially as their own nation had the benefit of it. The apostle appeals to this act of supremacy, in proof that God has a right to do what he will with his own; and, moreover, that his promise was not vitiated or rendered ineffectual, because some of Abraham's natural posterity failed to enjoy present advantage from it. It should not be overlooked, that the very form of the declaration to Rebecca indicated that reference was had to the posterity of her children, rather than to the children themselves; and that the distinction between them had respect to temporal privileges, without affecting their eternal destiny. "The sense is, that the descendants of Esau, who were Edomites, should be inferior to and subject to the descendants of Jacob. Jacob was to have the priority; the promised land; the promises; and the honor of being regarded as the chosen of God." — *Barnes*. "The election, of which the apostle speaks, is not an election of Jacob to eternal life, but of his pos-

elder shall serve the younger.

terity to be the visible church and people of God on earth, and heirs of the promises in their first and literal meaning, agreeably to what Moses declared, Deut. vii. 6—9, and Paul preached, Acts xiii. 17. — The apostle's professed purpose in this discourse being to show that an election bestowed on Jacob's posterity by God's free gift might either be taken from them, or others might be admitted to share therein with them, it is evidently not an election to eternal life, which is never taken away, but an election to external privileges only." — *Macknight*. Scarcely a commentator of any note, in the present day, pretends that the election here mentioned had any reference to the condition of Jacob and Esau, or their descendants, in the future life. Would that all Christians were as wise !

13. *Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated.* The apostle quotes a part of Mal. i. 2, 3, to confirm what he had already said concerning the distinction between Jacob and Esau, or rather between their descendants. The language of the prophet clearly indicates that reference is made to the posterity of the twin brothers, and to the temporal privileges enjoyed by each. "I have loved you, saith the Lord. Yet ye say, Wherein hast thou loved us ? Was not Esau Jacob's brother ? saith the Lord : yet, I loved Jacob, and I hated Esau, and laid his mountains and his heritage waste for the dragons of the wilderness." Jacob was heir of the promised land, and his descendants enjoyed it. To Esau and his descendants a less fruitful region was assigned. This is the special difference to which the prophet refers. The family of Jacob, moreover, were regarded as the chosen people, and "unto them were committed the oracles of God." Ch. iii. 2. There is no reference whatever, here or elsewhere, to a distinction between them in the future life. It is to be observed, that when it is said the Lord *hated* Esau, positive hatred is not implied ; for "the Lord is good to all, and his tender mercies are over all his works." Ps. cxlv. 9. See Matt. v. 43—48. The meaning is, simply, that God loved Jacob more than he loved Esau ;

13 As it is written, Jacob have

or, more properly, he bestowed richer blessings on Jacob than on Esau, as if his love were more fervent. The phrase is a common Hebraism. See note on Luke xiv. 26. "What God's hatred of Esau was, is declared in the words of the prophecy which immediately follow, namely, 'and laid his mountains waste.'" — *Macknight*. "On Jacob have I bestowed privileges and blessings, such as are proofs of affection ; I have treated him as one treats a friend whom he loves ; but from Esau have I withheld these privileges and blessings, and therefore treated him as one is wont to treat those whom he dislikes. — That the whole refers to the bestowment of temporal blessings and the withholding of them, is clear, not only from this passage, but from comparing Gen. xxv. 23 ; xxvii. 27—29, 37—40. As to *hated*, its meaning is rather privative than positive. When the Hebrews compared a stronger affection with a weaker one, they called the first *love*, and the other *hated*. Comp. Gen. xxix. 31 ; Deut. xxi. 15 ; Prov. xiii. 24 ; Matt. vi. 24 ; Luke xiv. 26, comp. with Matt. x. 37." — *Stuart*. This whole passage (ver. 6—13) is designed to show that the distinctions which God had established among the descendants of Abraham did not make his promise without effect ; and, as a necessary consequence, that the exclusion of a part of Jacob's posterity would be equally consistent with that promise. If God might properly determine to exclude Esau and his posterity, even before they had done any evil (ver. 11), how much more the unbelieving Jews, who rejected the gospel, and filled the measure of their iniquity by crucifying the Lord of glory. In all this, however, the apostle speaks only of blessings pertaining to the present life, and gives not the slightest intimation that the distinction is to be perpetuated to all eternity. Nevertheless, it has been insisted that he has here established a principle of universal application : namely, that it is right and proper for God to make any distinctions among his children which may seem good to him, without regard to their worthiness or unworthiness ; that this principle applies to the future life as well as to the present, to eternity

I loved, but Esau have I hated.

as well as to time ; in a word, that he might as properly determine from the beginning to make some forever happy and others endlessly wretched, as he could determine to make some white and others black, some civilized and others barbarians, some to inherit a "land flowing with milk and honey," and others to dwell in barren and "waste" mountains. There is a fallacy in this argument, which deprives it of all force. Because God may properly make distinctions which are consistent with the eternal attributes of justice and mercy, and with that love which the apostle describes as his distinguishing characteristic (1 John iv. 16), it does not follow that he may make distinctions utterly inconsistent with all these. That he has made various and very great distinctions among men, in the present life, is true ; and these distinctions extend not only to personal and political advantages, but to mental and moral endowments. To some are granted strong intellectual powers ; to others, weak. To some it is permitted to have the benefits of civilization, with all its means and appliances for the acquisition of knowledge ; to others a state of barbarism is assigned. Some are born in Christian lands, and their consciences are enlightened and guided by the influence of the gospel ; others grope through life in the thick darkness of heathenism. Precisely all the compensations which attend these distinctions, in the present life, we know not. But this we do know : if the present be succeeded by a future life, endless in duration, and crowned with perpetual happiness, then existence is a blessing to every man ; for the sufferings of this present time are of trivial importance, when compared with future glory. Ch. viii. 16. Whatever distinctions it may please God to make among men, for the accomplishment of his holy purposes, so long as existence is a blessing to its possessor, such distinctions are consistent with his own nature and attributes, and therefore right and proper. But election to endless holiness and happiness, on the one part, and reprobation to endless sinfulness and misery, on the other, would make existence a blessing to the elect,

14 What shall we say then? Is

but an absolute curse to those who were thus reprobated. It is utterly inconsistent with the revealed character of God, that he should purpose, before men had done good or evil, to make such a distinction between them. Because God may, and does, bestow on different men different privileges and enjoyments, in such a manner as to manifest his kindness even to the least apparently favored, their existence being on the whole a blessing, does it follow that he may, just as properly, and just as consistently with his own nature, inflict an endless curse upon some of his children, while he blesses others? Because he may do that which is consistent with his own nature, does it follow that he may just as properly deny himself, and do that which is contrary to his own nature? If not, then there is no force in the argument that the principle established in regard to temporal distinctions will justify an endless distinction among men. Temporal distinctions, resulting in final good to all, may be made in a spirit of love, and they are therefore right and proper ; but an endless distinction, resulting in good to some, and in an absolute and unmitigated curse to others, is entirely different in its character, and is not to be justified on the same principle. It may now be repeated, that, in the passage under consideration, the apostle refers to temporary distinctions, and to none other. "Here ends his proof that God had, all along, made distinctions among the descendants of Abraham ; so that the promise to the fathers that they and their seed should be the children of God was not made to *all* their posterity. The promise did, indeed, give assurance of the blessings in Christ, as St. Paul elsewhere explains it, to all the nations and families of the earth. This ultimate result he does not here meddle with ; it does not here come within the scope of his subject. His aim, for the present, is to show that the Jewish people of his day, though lineal descendants of Abraham, were not necessarily children of God ; they might be excepted, as Ishmael, Esau, &c., were, without any breach of the ancient promise. We shall see, in a subsequent chapter, that he asserts

there unrighteousness with God? God forbid.

15 For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have

their ultimate salvation in Christ, when he comes, in regular course, to that subject."—*H. Ballou, 2d.*

14. *What shall we say then?* What conclusion is to be drawn from the facts already stated? ¶ *Is there unrighteousness with God?* Is God unrighteous, because he confers on some persons or nations peculiar privileges, which he withholds from others? Is he unjust, because he makes distinctions among his children, and gives more light to some than to others, and a clearer revelation of his character and purposes? This question, supposed to arise in the Jewish mind, the apostle meets with his customary emphatic negative, *God forbid.* See note on ch. iii. 4. He proceeds, in what follows, to show that the facts he had alleged were perfectly consistent with the ordinary providences of God: that such distinctions had existed among men from the earliest ages; and that Moses, in whom they confidently trusted, had recorded several examples. The authority of Moses they would not dispute. Their objection was therefore effectually silenced by an appeal to that authority. It is observable that the apostle does not attempt to explain the reasons or grounds of such distinctions, except simply that God so chooses. But the objection is silenced by the notorious fact, that similar distinctions in regard to color, social position, political privileges, mental power, and physical condition generally, have existed from time immemorial, between different nations, and between different individuals of the same nation. This fact is perfectly obvious. And although we may not be able to assign the particular reasons for making such distinctions, we are bound to believe they are just and proper, consistent with that spirit of universal benevolence which pervades all the works of God. This we may believe without difficulty, if we also believe that the final good of the whole race shall be the result of existence; but, on the contrary supposition, I grant that the attempt to reconcile such distinctions with a spirit of im-

mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.

16 So then, *it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that run-*

partial and infinite goodness would be attended by extreme difficulty. See note on ver. 13.

15. *For he saith to Moses.* See Exo. xxxiii. 19. ¶ *I will have mercy, &c.* In the original passage the reference is clearly to temporal privileges and distinctions; and in the same sense it is quoted by the apostle, as illustrative of the distinction which forms his present subject of discourse. "*Here mercy is not an eternal pardon granted to individuals, but the receiving of a nation into favor after being displeased with it; for these words were spoken to Moses after God had laid aside his purpose of consuming the Israelites for their sin in making and worshipping the golden calf.*"—*Macknight.*

16. *So then, it is not of him that willeth, &c.* The conclusion of the whole matter is, that the universe is governed by God, and not by man; that the desires and exertions of mankind are overruled and controlled by the purpose of God; that the Creator of all exercises his undoubted right of determining not only the bounds of every man's habitation, but the peculiar privileges which he shall enjoy, without regard to human wishes and struggles. "It may be thought that this conclusion should have been introduced immediately after ver. 13. But the apostle reserved it to this place, that he might have God's answer to Moses as its foundation likewise. For, as in electing the Israelites to be his church and people, so in pardoning them as a nation for worshipping the golden calf, God acted from his mere good pleasure. But if God, from mere good pleasure, elected them at the first, and afterwards continued them his people, notwithstanding they deserved to have been cast off for their idolatry, why might he not, under the gospel, make the Gentiles his people, although formerly idolaters?"—*Macknight.* The general drift of the apostle's argument is, that temporal privileges, and among them the special privilege of being God's chosen people, to whom should be communicated a revelation of his will,

neth, but of God that showeth mercy.

17 For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same pur-

are bestowed by the Sovereign Ruler of the universe, according to his own purpose, and not on account of any previous merit or demerit of men. Thus Isaac was denoted as the heir of the promise to Abraham, before he had earned any such distinction by his works. Thus Jacob was chosen, and Esau was rejected, as the heir of promise, before they were born. Thus, also, the privilege had been continued to Jacob's posterity, for ages, notwithstanding their repeated backslidings, and their numerous acts of disobedience and rebellion against God. These things being true, and acknowledged even by the Jews to be true, it was wholly unreasonable that they should charge God foolishly, and question his justice, because he saw fit to exercise the same sovereignty in admitting the Gentiles to the privileges which the Jews, without previous merit, had so long enjoyed and abused.

17. For the scripture saith to Pharaoh. See Exo. ix. 16. ¶ *Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, &c.* Some understand this to refer to the creation of Pharaoh, and his exaltation to power as King of Egypt; others, to his preservation amidst the plagues which befell the land of Egypt: the latter translate the phrase, I have preserved thee, or I have made thee to stand. I apprehend the apostle's argument is very little affected by adopting either of these interpretations in preference to the other. In either case, this fact stands out prominently: that when God, by the mouth of Moses, spake to Pharaoh the words quoted by the apostle, Pharaoh occupied a position to which he had been divinely predestinated, for a special purpose. What that purpose was, is declared in the following words. This instance is adduced by the apostle as a further proof that the universe is under the control of its rightful Sovereign, and of him alone; that not only are privileges apportioned to men, according to his good pleasure, but that also events which seemingly obstruct the accomplishment of his purpose are made subservient to the more glorious

purpose have I raised thee up, that I might show my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth.

manifestation of its triumph. Well did the Psalmist say, "Surely, the wrath of man shall praise thee; the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain." Ps. lxxvi. 10. In regard to every divine purpose to be accomplished by human instrumentality, the means are as effectually secured as the end. There is no contingency, nor possibility of failure. See note on Acts ii. 23. ¶ *That I might show my power in thee.* Namely, the miraculous power displayed in the plagues inflicted on Pharaoh and his subjects, in proof that the Israelites were a chosen people, under the peculiar care of God. See the history of the transactions referred to, Exo. ch. vii.—xiv. In the outset, God said to Moses, "I will harden Pharaoh's heart, and multiply my signs and wonders in the land of Egypt. But Pharaoh shall not hearken unto you, that I may lay my hand upon Egypt, and bring forth mine armies, and my people, the children of Israel, out of the land of Egypt, by great judgments. And the Egyptians shall know that I am the Lord, when I stretch forth mine hand upon Egypt, and bring out the children of Israel from among them." Accordingly, by plagues of blood, and frogs, and lice, and flies, and murrain, and boils, and hail, and locusts, and "darkness over the land of Egypt, even darkness which may be felt," was Pharaoh admonished that the God of Israel willed the liberation of his people from bondage. But his heart was hardened, and he would not permit them to depart. Then came the crowning judgment. "At midnight the Lord smote all the first-born in the land of Egypt, from the first-born of Pharaoh that sat on his throne, unto the first-born of the captive that was in the dungeon; and all the first-born of cattle." Exo. xii. 29. This was effectual. By the general consent, and even urgency, of Pharaoh, and his rulers and people, the Israelites departed from the house of bondage. Yet one more display of divine power remained. Pharaoh was moved to pursue the children of Israel, that he might again

18 Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will *have mercy*, and

subjugate or destroy them. By divine command, the waters of the Red Sea were divided, so that Moses and his company passed over dry-shod; and as Pharaoh attempted to follow, the waters returned, and overwhelmed and destroyed both him and all his host. "And Israel saw that great work which the Lord did upon the Egyptians; and the people feared the Lord, and believed the Lord and his servant Moses." Exo. xiv. 15—31. Such was the manifestation of divine power, in the deliverance of the Israelites from Egypt. And the opposition of Pharaoh to their deliverance afforded occasion for the display of that power. See note on ver. 18. ¶ *And that my name might be declared throughout all the earth.* "According to Warburton, God, in this speech to Pharaoh, declared that Egypt was chosen by him as the scene of his wonders, and that the Israelites were sent thither for this very purpose, that, through the celebrity of the Egyptian nation, the fame of the power of the true God, in destroying the people of that nation, and in delivering the Israelites, might be published far and wide, and draw the attention of all the nations who had any intercourse with the Egyptians. Accordingly, Rahab told the Israelitish spies that the Canaanites had heard of the drying up of the waters of the Red Sea. Josh. ii. 9—11; 1 Sam. iv. 8. And, considering the communication which the other nations had with Egypt, on account of its being so early advanced in legislation, sciences, and arts, it is reasonable to believe that anything extraordinary which happened in that country would soon be divulged through all the earth." — *Macknight.*

18. *Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy.* He bestows privileges and blessings on whom he will, according to his own purpose. Such is the conclusion of the whole argument. The choice of some, to the comparative or entire exclusion of others, as the recipients of peculiar privileges of various kinds, was according to the uniform method by which God had always governed the world. The Jews had not complained of partiality while they were the favored people, while they

enjoyed peculiar advantages. Nor should they complain when the Gentiles were admitted to the kingdom which they had forfeited by their sinfulness. Such seems to be the object of the apostle's argument. ¶ *And whom he will he hardeneth.* This is added as the natural counterpart of the foregoing declaration. The general idea I take to be this: In the government of the world, and in the accomplishment of his holy purposes, God overrules the wickedness of the wicked as well as the righteousness of the righteous, and makes them equally subservient to the general result. "The metaphysics of the case are not meddled with. Stop where the apostle stops, and there is nothing in the sentiment offensive to the moral sense, nothing that all religious men do not recognize, in some form. The moral offence arises only when we try to explain metaphysically, what metaphysics cannot explain, *how* it is that the divine agency overrules the human." — *H. Ballou, 2d.* Some appear unnecessarily shocked at the idea of God's hardening the heart of Pharaoh, or of any other person or nation. With one single exception only, and that in the case of one who was more than man, all men who have attained years of discretion have been sinners. From this fact, if there were no other proof, it would be undeniable that sinfulness is one of the conditions of the present existence. But this is precisely the existence which God has bestowed; and no religious man is conscious of any shock to his moral sense, in contemplating this subjection to vanity as the work of God. If, then, the universal sinfulness of mankind, to a certain extent, be consistent with the divine purposes, and consistent also with the infinite holiness and benevolence of the divine character, why need it be considered inconsistent with either that some should be more sinful than others, if thereby the power of God be manifested, and his name be the more extensively made known? And who so accurately and so wisely as God can determine the precise measure of the sinfulness adequate to the proposed end? Are not the general sinfulness of all, and the greater sinfulness of some, to

whom he will he hardeneth.

19 Thou wilt say then unto me,

be accounted for on the same principle? And what is that principle, except the divine purpose? If privileges are granted to some which are withheld from others, if what is revealed to some is hidden from others, so that while some grow in grace and knowledge, others wax worse and worse, what more wise course can we pursue than to fall back on the divine will, and devoutly exclaim, in the language of our Lord, "Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight?" Matt. xi. 26. There is nothing in all this at which the moral sense revolts, provided we confidently believe that, in the general issue of the divine government, the good of all its subjects shall be secured. Unquestionably, the idea that God will make his children endlessly wretched on account of the general state of sinfulness to which he has subjected them, or of the greater sinfulness to which some are appointed, or for no reason at all except as an exhibition of sovereign power, is revolting to the best feelings of the human heart. But, confidently believing that God will finally secure the holiness and happiness of all his children, that he will make every man to be a gainer by his existence and by all its circumstances, we can without difficulty believe that when he would send Joseph into Egypt, to secure a great good, he prepared the means, in the unholy passions of his brethren, who meant it unto evil; that when he would display his glory in the deliverance of his people from Egypt, he so arranged events as to secure the opposition of the most powerful king on the earth, whom he had raised up for that very purpose; that when he would communicate the gospel of his grace through his beloved Son, and purposed that he should set the seal to his ministry and his message in his own blood, that Son was "delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God," to be "crucified and slain," even by "wicked hands." All this, and the like, may be believed, in perfect consistency with a firm faith in God's infinite holiness and benevolence; and, consequently, without any shock to the moral sense, so long as we believe also that all shall be overruled

Why doth he yet find fault? for who hath resisted his will?

for the highest good of the whole, and of every individual of his moral offspring. In this place, the argument of the apostle refers to nations rather than individuals; his object being to show that it was right, and consistent with his uniform principle of administration, that God should take from the Jewish nation the privilege, so long enjoyed, of being his peculiar people, and adopt the Gentiles in their stead. Nevertheless, nations are composed of individuals, and the same principle equally applies to both.

19. *Why doth he yet find fault?* This objection, on the part of the Jew, is anticipated by the apostle. And the reason on which the objection is founded is also anticipated; *for who hath resisted his will?* If the distinctions among men are made and overruled by God, for the accomplishment of his own designs, if none can effectually resist his will, so as to prevent the full execution of all his purposes, why should he *find fault* with them, and hold them subject to punishment? Such seems to be the force of the objection. To resist the will of God must be here understood of effectual resistance. "The word translated *resist* is commonly used to denote the resistance offered by soldiers, or armed men. Thus, Eph. vi. 13: 'Take unto you the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to withstand (resist, or successfully oppose) in the evil day.' See Luke xxi. 15: 'I will give a mouth and wisdom which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay or resist.' See, also, Acts vi. 10; xiii. 8: 'But Elymas withstood them,' &c. The same Greek word occurs, Rom. xiii. 2; Gal. ii. 11. This does not mean that no one has offered resistance or opposition to God, but that no one had done it successfully. God had accomplished his purposes in spite of their opposition. This was an established point in the sacred writings, and one of the admitted doctrines of the Jews. To establish it had even been a part of the apostle's design; and the difficulty now was, to see how, *this* being admitted, men could be held chargeable with crime. That it was the doctrine of the Scriptures, see 2 Chron. xx. 6: 'In thine hand is

20 Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God?

there not power and might, so that none is able to withstand thee?" Dan. iv. 35: "He doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?" See, also, the case of Joseph and his brethren: "As for you, ye thought evil against me, but God meant it unto good." Gen. i. 20.—*Barnes.*

20. *Nay, but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God?* To the objection in the previous verse, "St. Paul deigns no direct answer, but silences the question itself, as bordering on impiety. It showed a disposition to trench on the sovereignty of God in the choice of ways and means. If any should ask, Where is the impiety of this question? let it be considered that the Creator obviously has the right to form his creatures as he sees fit, and to use their agency as he pleases, so long as he thereby does them no wrong; and this depends on his ultimate purpose with respect to them, which, be it observed, is not the subject here argued. St. Paul here has reference only to their present condition, and to the uses they are made to subserve in the present stages of divine providence. The ultimate purpose of the whole is here kept out of sight, reserved, to be brought forth in a subsequent chapter."—*H. Ballou, 2d.* ¶ *Shall the thing formed, &c.* The apostle here, and in what follows, refers to the word of the Lord by the prophet: "Woe unto him that striveth with his Maker! Let the potsherd strive with the potsherd of the earth. Shall the clay say to him that fashioneth it, What makest thou? or thy work, He hath no hands?" Isa. xlv. 9. These questions imply that nations or individuals, deriving their existence from God, should not question his right to make such distinctions among them as he chooses, supposing that he does not absolutely injure any of them. But, in order to a full and proper acquiescence in the will of the Creator, in regard to such distinctions, the mind must cherish a confident faith that the ultimate result shall manifest his benevolence to all the children of

Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou

his creation; which benevolence can be manifested only by making their existence upon the whole to be a blessing to each individual. This point is stated, with much directness and force, by Rev. Edward Beecher, in a remarkable, and, in most respects, very valuable book, entitled "The Conflict of Ages." The point is stated with special reference to another feature of the divine government; but it is equally applicable to that which is now under consideration. "God has made us intuitively to perceive and feel, and, therefore, he also perceives and feels, that increase of powers to any degree of magnitude produces, not a decrease, but an increase, of obligation to feel and act benevolently towards inferiors; that is, with an honorable regard to their true and highest good. In proportion as a mind is strong, independent, and abundantly able to secure its own welfare, it is free from temptations to be absorbed in its own interests and cares, and is at leisure to think, and feel, and plan, for others, whose welfare is not thus secure. Moreover, as the powers of the superior mind increase, he has the greater ability to do good or evil to inferior minds. Of course, his obligation to use it for their good increases. Moreover, the influence of his example increases as his powers increase. Of course, he is bound by a proportionate obligation to make it such as all can safely imitate. No moral principles are recognized as true with a clearer and more absolute intuition than those which I have now stated. How is it in the parental relation? Do not all feel that the superior powers of parents create an obligation of the most touching and imperative kind towards a weak, defenceless, new-born infant? Do not such superior powers, and the fact that their example will exert a controlling influence, sacredly bind them in all things so to use their powers, and regulate their example, as to promote the highest good of the young heir of immortality who lies helpless in their arms? Would it not seem unspeakably horrible to allege their superior powers as a reason for doing otherwise? If, there-

made me thus?

fore, God gives existence to inferior and dependent minds, is he, the Infinite Father, can he be, under any other or different obligations? Does he desire us to think of him as not tenderly affected, and not bound by the appeal made to him by a new-created mind, in view of the fearful eternity that spreads out before him, so to exert his infinite powers, and so to order his infinite example, as shall most entirely tend to promote his eternal good? Does not every intuitive conviction, every honorable impulse of a benevolent mind, call for such an assurance concerning God, in order to be satisfied with his character? Is not this the dividing line between the divine and the satanic spirit? When, in this world, those who have gained wealth, knowledge, and power, separate themselves in feeling and sympathy from the poor, ignorant, and weak, and form select and exclusive circles, as if their superior powers and advantages imposed on them no obligation to sympathize with the sufferings and promote the welfare of those below them, can anything more perfectly illustrate the satanic spirit of him whose law is selfishness? Ought not the spirit of God to be entirely the reverse of this? Is it not? Could he be honorable or righteous if it were not so? Does any one allege his right, as creator, to do as he will with his creatures? Within certain limits, he has this right. But creation gives no right to the creator to disregard or to undervalue the well-being of creatures, or to treat them contrary to the laws of their intellectual, moral, and voluntary nature, on the ground that he created them. It is not enough to say, that, as he would treat them if he had not made them, so ought he now to treat them. On the other hand, the fact that he created them makes the most touching of all appeals to every principle of honor and right in the Almighty Creator to be their defender, protector, and friend. If it is said, God, as the greatest of all beings, makes himself, and not his creatures, his great end, it is enough to say, in reply, even if this were so, — on which I do not feel called upon now to express an opinion,

21 Hath not the potter power

— still, God cannot promote either his own happiness or glory, except by the observance of the principles of honor and right of which we are now speaking. Even if, therefore, he makes himself his chief end, he must observe them." — pp. 31—33. No apology can be necessary for inserting so long a note, when its value is duly considered. Let the principle embraced in it be kept in mind, and the argument of the apostle may be admitted, to its widest extent, without the slightest shock to the moral sense: and that the apostle had confident faith in the divine benevolence to all, issuing in the ultimate good of all, is evident from the following chapters. In view of this result of the divine government, he exhorted his brethren to acquiesce in the method which the Ruler has adopted. And well might he thus exhort, and rebuke all gainsayers, inasmuch as God best knows how the highest good is to be secured, and will surely accomplish it. On the contrary supposition, that God has purposed the final injury of any portion of his children, the attempt to justify his ways to men is desperate indeed.

21. *Hath not the potter power, &c.* "This is the similitude which God himself used for illustrating his power and sovereignty, whereby he is entitled to make some nations great and happy, and to punish and destroy others. Jer. xviii. 6: 'O house of Israel, cannot I do with you as this potter? saith the Lord. Behold, as the clay is in the potter's hand, so are ye in mine hand, O house of Israel. At what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up,' &c. Here every reader must be sensible that nothing is said concerning God's creating individuals, some to be saved and some to be damned, by an exercise of absolute sovereignty. It is power and sovereignty in the disposal of nations only, that is described by the figure of the potter." — *Macknight*. To be sure, the same principle holds good in regard to individuals; but always with the provision that benevolence guide the exercise of power, so that no real injury be suffered by its subjects. ¶ *Of the same lump.* Of the same mass of clay.

over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honor, and another unto dishonor?

As the potter, of the same mass of clay, forms vessels for various uses, so God, of the same human nature, appoints men and nations to fulfil their several destinies. ¶ *To make one vessel unto honor, and another unto dishonor.* Some vessels are put to a more honorable use than others. In like manner has God ordained, from time to time, that some nations shall be exalted to higher honor and glory than others; that some shall be distinguished from others by greater privileges, and by a higher culture, both intellectual and moral. Similar distinctions are made among individuals. Physical strength and beauty, natural power of intellect, moral power, and advantages for improvement of the mind and heart, are given to men in diverse proportions, to say nothing of those distinctions which arise from rank or wealth, or the like. All such distinctions are reconcilable with a spirit of impartiality in the Supreme Disposer of events, provided, always, that benevolence underlie them. Variety is a distinguishing characteristic of God's works. No two trees or blades of grass are precisely alike. No two individuals have precisely the same lineaments of body or mind. No two nations precisely resemble each other. So long, however, as no absolute injury is done to any, none has reason to complain, or, in a rebellious spirit, to say, Why hast thou made me thus? Existence, being a blessing to each one, demands gratitude, instead of dissatisfaction, on the part of all. Confiding in the wisdom and benevolence of the Creator, each creature should cheerfully accept the lot assigned to him, and patiently wait the full development of the divine plan. Some of the advantages resulting from this variety of present condition are set forth in 1 Cor. ch. xii. We may safely believe that other and even more important advantages will be realized, when we shall see as we are seen, and know as we are known. 1 Cor. xiii. 12.

22. *To show his wrath.* See note on ch. i. 18. In the administration of divine justice, God brings judgments on guilty men and nations, as a penalty of

22 *What if God, willing to show his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much long-*

transgressions; and such judgments are said to indicate wrath; yet it is not to be supposed that anything like hatred is cherished in the fountain of love. ¶ *And to make his power known.* The case of Pharaoh, before mentioned, was evidently in the mind of the apostle; "that I might show my power in thee." Ver. 17. In that case judgment was delayed until, by means of the attending circumstances, the hand of God might become more visible to men, and thus the moral effect of the judgment be increased. So in another judgment, then near at hand, and of which the apostle forewarned his brethren, the Lord had long forborne its execution until the nation should become ripe for destruction, and until its overthrow should be an unmistakable manifestation of divine power. ¶ *With much long-suffering.* It may be observed, without attempting to discuss any of the metaphysical perplexities of the question, that, although the purpose of God existed from eternity to choose the Jews as a peculiar people for a season, and afterwards to confer the same favor on the Gentiles, and although the change involved the national overthrow of the Jews, yet that overthrow was connected with their sinfulness, and God is represented as waiting the appointed time with "much long-suffering." What is true of nations, in this respect, is equally true of individuals. ¶ *The vessels of wrath.* "The apostle, by giving the Jews the appellation of vessels of wrath, fitted for destruction, carries on the similitude of the potter, by which he had illustrated God's sovereignty in his dealings with nations, ver. 21. See Ps. ii. 9, where the figure of a potter's vessel, dashed in pieces, is introduced to express the destruction of a nation." — *Macknight.* "Whoever carefully peruses those three chapters, ix., x., xi., will find that those who have not believed, ch. xi. 31, are the present rejected Jews, or that Israel to whom blindness hath happened in part, ver. 25; the same who fell, and on whom God has shown severity, ver. 22; the same with the natural branches, whom God spared not, ver. 21; who were

suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction :

broken off from the olive-tree, ver. 20, 19, 17 ; who were cast away, ver. 15 ; who were diminished and fallen, ver. 12 ; who had stumbled, ver. 11 ; who were a disobedient and gainsaying people, ch. x. 21 ; who, being ignorant of God's righteousness, went about to establish their own, ver. 3 ; because they sought righteousness, not by faith, but, as it were, by the works of the law, ch. ix. 32 ; and therefore had not attained to the law of righteousness, ver. 31. These same people, spoken of in all these places, are *the vessels of wrath fitted for destruction*, ver. 22 ; and the same for whom Paul had great heaviness and continual sorrow in his heart, ver. 2, 3. In short, they are the unbelieving nation or people of Israel. And it is with regard to the reprobation or rejection of those people that he is arguing, and vindicating the truth, justice, and wisdom of God, in this ninth chapter. Now, if we turn back, and review those three chapters, we shall find that the apostle, ch. x. 1, heartily desired and prayed that those same reprobated and rejected people of Israel might be saved ; he affirms that they had not so stumbled as to fall finally and irrecoverably, ch. xi. 11 ; that they should again have a fulness, ver. 12 ; that they should be received again into the church, ver. 15 ; that a holiness still belonged to them, ver. 16 ; that, if they did not still abide in unbelief, they should be grafted into their own olive-tree again, ver. 23, 24 ; that blindness was happened to them only for a time, till the fulness of the Gentiles be come in, ver. 25 ; and then he proves from Scripture all Israel, all this nation, at present under blindness, shall be saved, ver. 26, 27 ; that as touching the (original) election, they were still beloved for the fathers' (the patriarchs') sake, ver. 28 ; that, in their case, the gifts and calling of God are without repentance, ver. 29 ; that through our (the believing Gentiles') mercy, they shall at length obtain mercy, ver. 31. All these several things are spoken of that Israel, or body of people, concerning whose rejection the apostle argues in the ninth chapter. And, therefore, the rejection he there argues about cannot be absolute reprobation

23 And that he might make known the riches of his glory on

tion to eternal damnation ; but to their being, as a nation, stripped of those honors and privileges of God's peculiar church and kingdom in this world, to which, at a certain future period, they shall again be restored." — *Taylor*. ¶ *Fitted for destruction*. The measure of their iniquity was now filled, and the judgment, foretold by Christ, was at hand.

23. *And that he might make known*. Or, might manifest openly. God has chosen to execute judgment in a signal manner, in some periods of the world, to attract the attention of mankind, and make them realize that he is a God that judgeth in the earth. Ps. lviii. 11. See note on ver. 17. In like signal manner he has sometimes bestowed blessings, and for the like purpose. Thus, when he rejected the Jews and adopted the Gentiles as his chosen people, which is the subject here discussed by the apostle, he shattered the political organization and power of the Jews by a mighty blow, bringing on them tribulation such as had never before been known. Matt. xxiv. 21. "Against this day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God," they had long been "treasuring up wrath" (chap. ii. 5), until their cup of iniquity was even now full. The blow, long delayed, at length fell ; and from its desolating effect that unhappy nation has not yet recovered. The Gentiles were brought into the kingdom with an equally strong hand. The purpose of God to receive and own them as his people was manifested by a miraculous display of power. The Holy Ghost was imparted to the Gentile disciples, as well as to Jewish, enabling them to speak with tongues, to heal the sick, and to perform divers other miracles. Both "the goodness and severity of God" were thus openly manifested. Chap. xi. 22. ¶ *The riches of his glory*. Or, his abundant glory ; the phrase being a common Hebraism. ¶ *Vessels of mercy*. Namely, those who believed in Jesus, whether Jews or Gentiles, in contrast to the unbelieving mass of the Jewish nation, styled, in verse 22, "the vessels of wrath." This interpretation is fully confirmed by ver. 24.

the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory,

24 Even us whom he hath

¶ *Which he had afore prepared unto glory.* The glorious privileges accorded to Christians, whether Jews or Gentiles, were embraced in the original purpose of God; and he so directed events as to prepare them for adoption into his spiritual kingdom at the appointed time. It is observable that in ver. 22 the fitting of the vessels of wrath for destruction is expressed in an indefinite manner, not absolutely indicating that they were thus fitted by themselves, or by their Creator; perhaps, because both his purpose and their conduct concurred in the same result. But the vessels of mercy are distinctly declared to have been "prepared unto glory" by him who bestowed the blessing. The gift was free; their selection from the mass of mankind was free; as much so as the election of Isaac to be the heir of promise, while he was yet a child, or the distinction between Jacob and Esau, "being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil." Ver. 7, 11. However we may feel that our iniquities are justly punished when privileges are taken away from us, we should always regard whatever blessings God bestows upon us as free and spontaneous expressions of his love and grace. The glory here mentioned by the apostle "is not the glory of eternal life; for the Scripture never speaks of that as to be bestowed on nations, or bodies of men complexly. Ver. 24. But it is the glory of being made the church and people of God. — In this verse the apostle assigns a second reason for God's bearing the vessels of wrath in his hand with much long-suffering before he dashed them in pieces. It was, that he might display the riches of his goodness in making the believing Jews and Gentiles his church and people. In other words, the existence of the Jews as a nation was necessary to the establishment of the gospel dispensation. For, according to the ancient oracles of God, of which they were the keepers, Christ was to come of them, and was to exercise his ministry among them, and to be put to death by them; and the first preachers of the gospel were to

called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles.

25 As he saith also in Osee, I

carry the gospel or new law from Zion, and they were to persuade both Jews and Gentiles to receive it, by showing that in all points it agrees with the former revelations, and that it had been foretold by all the holy prophets of God since the world began." — *Macknight.*

24. *Even us.* Those who had believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, and had thus become the church of God, his chosen people, partakers of the privileges formerly enjoyed only by the Jews, and even greater privileges arising from the more full revelation of the divine will granted to them.

¶ *Whom he hath called.* The phraseology seems to have reference to the language of the prophet, quoted in the next verse, in proof that it was God's purpose to admit the Gentiles to special privileges. Or, if we take the word *called* in its ordinary sense, we may understand that they were called of God into the enjoyment of such privileges.

¶ *Not of the Jews only.* The Jews were not universally excluded from the kingdom of the gospel on the earth. A remnant of them believed and entered into rest, while the body of the nation remained in unbelief, and miserably perished. ¶ *But also of the Gentiles.* Believing Gentiles were to enjoy a perfect equality with believing Jews. This is the point of the argument in this chapter. It followed that, as the great body of believers were Gentiles rather than Jews, the latter as a nation were thrust out of the kingdom, while the former sat down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, agreeably to the word of our Lord, Luke xiii. 28. The "vessels of mercy" entered into the enjoyment of this glorious privilege, while the "vessels of wrath," the Jewish nation, a small remnant only excepted, were rejected.

25. *As he saith also in Osee, &c.* Osee is the Greek form of writing the Hebrew name Hosea. The passage, which is quoted substantially, though not literally, is found in Hosea ii. 23: "I will have mercy upon her that had not obtained mercy; and I will say to them which were not my people,

will call them My people, which were not my people; and her Beloved, which was not beloved.

26 And it shall come to pass, *that* in the place where it was said

Thou art my people; and they shall say, Thou art my God." The point to which the proof tends is, that this calling of the Gentiles, as the peculiar people of God, which was so distasteful to the Jews, had been foretold by their own prophets, as the purpose of God. If, then, they believed the prophets, which was their constant boast, they should not charge God foolishly because he was now accomplishing his purpose.

26. *And it shall come to pass.* This verse also is quoted substantially from the prophet Hosea i. 10. "Yet the number of the children of Israel shall be as the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured nor numbered; and it shall come to pass that in the place where it was said unto them, Ye are not my people, there it shall be said unto them, Ye are the sons of the living God." This quotation seems introduced to foreshadow the future ingathering of the Jews, after their rejection and dispersion, which is more distinctly predicted in ch. xi. See note on ver. 25. It is certain that the prophet's language referred to the recalling of the Jews, after a temporary rejection. Whether the apostle quoted the words in the same sense, or whether, as some commentators suppose, he applied them to the calling of the Gentiles, who had not previously been a chosen people, the practical effect was the same; the Jews were admonished that it was no new thing for God to admit to favor those who had been* previously excluded. As this was a doctrine taught by their own prophets, they could not deny its truth, and ought not to question its propriety. Upon the same principle that the Jews who had once forfeited peculiar privileges might be graciously reinstated in their full enjoyment, the Gentiles might be admitted to the same privileges, although they had done nothing to merit so great a blessing. It was wholly a work of sovereign grace. It is not unnatural, however, to suppose that the apostle quoted the prophet's words in their original

unto them, Ye *are* not my people; there shall they be called, The children of the living God.

27 Esaias also crieth concerning Israel, Though the number of the

sense, to prepare the way for the very difficult task to which he next addressed himself, namely, to show that the Jews were to be rejected, and to remain for a season estranged from the privileges so long enjoyed. If the rejection was not final, as is more distinctly shown in ch. xi., but only temporary, as predicted by the prophet, the Jews might the more easily be persuaded that the doctrine taught by the apostle was consistent with their own Scriptures.

27—29. By an appeal to the prophet Isaiah, the apostle now declares the fact which was so exceedingly repulsive to every Jewish mind; namely, that the nation, so long distinguished as the peculiar people of God, was to be excluded, and only a small remnant preserved, as members of the new church about to be established.

27. *Esaias.* The Greek form of the Hebrew name Isaiah. ¶ *Crieth concerning Israel.* See Isa. x. 21, 22. "The remnant shall return, even the remnant of Jacob, unto the mighty God. For though thy people Israel be as the sand of the sea, yet a remnant of them shall return; the consumption decreed shall overflow with righteousness." The important fact implied in this language, with reference to the subject to which the apostle applies it, is that only a remnant shall be preserved; the mass of the nation being rejected and destroyed. ¶ *As the sand of the sea.* A phrase often used to denote a great multitude. In the early ages, the art of numeration was but imperfectly understood, and very large numbers were frequently indicated by this and similar figures of speech. ¶ *A remnant.* A small number, compared with the whole. "It is probable that Isaiah had reference primarily to the Jews of his own time, to that wicked generation that God was about to punish by sending them captive into other lands. The case was one, however, which settled a general principle of the Jewish government, and therefore it was applicable to the case before the apostle. If the thing

children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, a remnant shall be saved :

28 For he will finish the work, and cut *it* short in righteousness :

for which he was contending, that the Jews might be rejected, existed in the time of Isaiah, and was settled then as a precedent, it might exist also in his time, and under the gospel."—*Barnes*.

28. *For he will finish the work, &c.* See Isa. x. 23. "For the Lord God of hosts shall make a consumption, even determined, in the midst of all the land." Here, as before, the design is to show that God has a right to destroy nations which abuse their privileges, and that it is no new thing for him to exercise this right ; that the desolation about to befall the Jewish people had its prototype in judgments executed in ancient times upon the same chosen race. ¶ *And cut it short in righteousness, &c.* "The general intention seems to be this : that the judgment, or consumption, in Sennacherib's invasion, which the prophet Isaiah predicts, would be precise and exact, cutting the nation very close and bare ; but in righteousness, perhaps in mercy, sparing a select remnant. This the apostle applies to the overthrow of the Jewish nation, upon which he is discoursing."

—*Taylor*. The rejection of Christ by the Jews filled the cup of their iniquity, and involved their rejection as the peculiar people of God. And this rejection was made the more conspicuous, and became a more visible manifestation of divine sovereignty, by the overthrow and the almost total destruction of the nation by the power of the Romans. It is observable that our Lord uses similar language in reference to the same event. "Except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved : but for the elect's sake, those days shall be shortened." Matt. xxiv. 22. So here, when of the vast multitude of Jews, "as the sand of the sea" for number, only a remnant was to be preserved, it is said the Lord will cut the work short in righteousness. ¶ *Upon the earth.* Upon the land of Judea ; such is frequently the meaning of the word here used. "By accommodation and illustration, this ancient warning was applicable to the rejection of the Jews from Christian privileges

because a short work will the Lord make upon the earth.

29 And as Esaias said before, Except the Lord of Sabaoth had

on account of their unbelief. All would not come into the new kingdom, and thus be saved. But it was quite improbable then that the Jews would venture into open conflict with the overmastering power of Rome, and thus surely draw down destruction upon themselves. This great catastrophe, however, happened in a few years afterwards, when Vespasian and Titus well-nigh obliterated the Jews from the face of the earth, and drove them forth to be vagabonds and exiles in all the world, and no more to possess a country, a city, or a holy national temple of divine worship, under the sun."—*Livermore*. It may reasonably be doubted, however, whether the exclusion of the Jewish people from their national and religious privileges is absolutely perpetual. Intimations are given of a future ingathering of the Jews, and of their resettlement in the Holy Land. And, in this very discourse, the apostle suggests that God had not utterly cast off his chosen people, but that he would again restore them to favor. See ch. xi. 12, 15, 23—32.

29. *And as Esaias said before.* Namely, in a previous part of his prophecy. The passage referred to is Isa. i. 9, which is almost literally quoted. ¶ *Except the Lord of Sabaoth.* Sabaoth is a Hebrew word, which was left untranslated in the Septuagint and by the apostle. It means *hosts*. It is so rendered in our version of the prophet : "Except the Lord of hosts." ¶ *Had left us a seed.* Had preserved a remnant, as in ver. 27. *Seed* often means posterity. But it is also used to indicate the residue, what is left after the consumption of the mass. Such seems to be its meaning here. A great destruction is foretold. It would be total, if God did not interpose and preserve a remnant, even as seed which might be sown, from which should spring a fresh supply, and thus the species be preserved. "I apprehend the ground of the usage in this case, by the seventy, is, that *seed* (what is sown) denotes what remains of grain, after the consumption for the year, until seed-time

left us a seed, we had been as Sodom, and been made like unto Gomorrah.

comes, which is then sown; so that, considered in this light, seed is equivalent to residuum, which is the sense of it here."—*Stuart*. ¶ *We had been as Sodom, &c.* Namely, we should have been totally destroyed, as were Sodom and Gomorrah. The calamity which befell Sodom and Gomorrah is often cited by the sacred writers as an example of utter destruction. That which came upon Jerusalem and the Jewish nation was nearly as complete, and, in some respects, more severe, inasmuch as the overthrow was not so sudden, and was preceded by terrible and long-continued sufferings. See note on Matt. x. 15. A remnant escaped, and in this respect Jerusalem was unlike the cities of the plain. Otherwise, the desolation of the one was almost as complete as that of the other. "To be like Gomorrah is to be utterly destroyed, as this city was. The sentiment, therefore, is: Isaiah said, concerning the Jews, that only a small remnant should be rescued from utter destruction."—*Stuart*.

30. *What shall we say then?* What conclusion is to be drawn from the facts and proofs before exhibited? By an appeal to the ancient prophets, the apostle had established the fact that God had, in former times, chastised his people for their sins; that he had brought destruction and captivity upon the nation; and that he had indicated his intention to transfer their peculiar privileges to other nations, who would more faithfully improve them. In the former part of the chapter, he had proved, from their own Scriptures, that the choice of some, and the rejection of others, as a peculiar people, was an act of pure sovereignty, according to a purpose which existed before the chosen had done good, or the rejected had done evil. In the latter part, he had also shown that divine judgments were visited on Jews as well as Gentiles, in consequence of their sins. The Jews, therefore, could not consistently object that he taught contrary to their own Scriptures, when he announced their rejection, and the election or choice of the Gentiles, as a covenant people; nor when he intimated very plainly that

30 What shall we say then? That the Gentiles which followed not after righteousness, have at-

their rejection would be accompanied by the almost total destruction of the nation. In drawing his conclusion here, however, the apostle omits any more distinct reference to their approaching destruction, and speaks only of the transfer of their privileges to the Gentiles. ¶ *That the Gentiles.* Namely, the believing Gentiles. He does not assert this of all the nations of the earth; but only of those who embraced the gospel, and cherished faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. The idea is, that the divine favor is not confined to the Jewish nation; but that the believing Gentiles shall freely receive the privileges long enjoyed by the Jews, but now forfeited by unbelief. ¶ *Which followed not after righteousness.* Who had not attempted to establish their own righteousness, like the Jews, by legal observances. See note on ch. x. 3. They were, therefore, the more ready to submit to God's righteousness, and gratefully to accept salvation by grace. The word righteousness here means the same as justification. "The Gentiles, which sought not justification, have obtained justification."—*Barnes*. ¶ *Have attained to righteousness, &c.* They are justified by faith. Such is the fact stated by the apostle. He does not assert that they obtained righteousness because they did not follow after it. The most which can be made of his assertion is, that they obtained it, notwithstanding they did not follow after it. Of his own free grace, God disposed their hearts to embrace the promised Messiah, and to exercise faith in the gospel which he proclaimed. This faith had a purifying influence, and righteousness, or justification, was its result. From such an unpromising stock as the Gentiles appeared to be, God had selected scions to be engrafted into the body of his church, to take the place of the unfruitful branches removed. See ch. xi. 17. Thus was indicated his purpose to gather his church thenceforward from the Gentiles, rather than from the Jews, as of old. We are to remember, however, that what is here said has no reference to the final destiny of either Jews or Gentiles; but only to the dis-

tained to righteousness, even the righteousness which is of faith :

inction which God was pleased to make between them in this world. To the Jews, in past ages, God had made known his will more fully than to the Gentiles. They had abused their privileges, and were now to be rejected. Yet he would not leave himself "without witness" among men. The Gentiles therefore were called into a covenant relation with him, that they should bear his testimony, and spread it abroad among men; profiting by it themselves, and communicating to others the means of spiritual improvement. "From this recapitulation of the whole dispute of the apostle in this chapter, and his declaration that this was the design of it, to justify God in this proceeding and dealing with them both, it is exceedingly evident that it was not at all designed to determine anything touching God's absolute decrees of dealing with mankind in general, thus or thus, as to their final and eternal state, but only to justify his dealings, as in his providence he had actually done with the unbelieving Jews, rejecting them upon their stubborn infidelity, and the hardness of their hearts; and with the believing Gentiles, admitting them to be his church and people, and the spiritual seed of Abraham, upon their faith and submission to the terms he had proposed for their justification and acceptance with him."—*Whitby*. That the acceptance of the Gentiles was connected with their faith in the gospel, and that the rejection and destruction of the Jewish nation was a just penalty of their unbelief and unrighteousness, and of their rejection and crucifixion of the Messiah, is undeniable. Yet it must not be forgotten that the examples to which the apostle appeals, ver. 6—13, go to show that the distinction between nations rests on the original purpose of God, without respect to their previous merit or demerit; it was announced even before the heads of the respective nations were born. It must be remembered, also, that the believing Gentiles embraced the gospel because God mercifully presented it to them and opened their hearts to receive it; and that it was not thus presented to them because they had already believed it.

31 But Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath

On the other hand, it would be easy to show that the gospel was more widely and speedily diffused in the world, and thus became incomparably more beneficial to mankind, in consequence of its rejection by the Jews. To this fact the apostle alludes, ch. xi. 11—15, 32. So that the whole procedure of divine providence, in giving a special revelation first to the Jews, and afterwards to the Gentiles, may be ascribed to the sovereign purpose of God, without regard to the deserts of men, but with the single design to secure the highest good of the greatest number in this world, without sacrificing the endless happiness of a single individual. So long as this result is secured, it is impious to question the propriety of the temporal distinctions which God makes between nation and nation, or individual and individual, ver. 20—24. But to suppose similar distinctions shall continue through eternity, involving the endless wretchedness of millions, or even of a single soul to whom God has given existence, is wholly inconsistent with his character as revealed and manifested, and utterly repugnant to all reasonable conceptions of divine love, or of divine justice. See notes on ver. 13, 20.

31. *But Israel*. The Jewish nation; the people who had long been recognized as the church of God on earth. What follows relates to the nation generally, not to every individual. The earliest converts to Christianity were Jews; the apostles were Jews; a remnant of the Jews was embodied in the Christian church. But the great body of the people, the Jewish nation generally, rejected the Lord Jesus Christ and his gospel. ¶ *Which followed after the law of righteousness*. The Jews sought righteousness, or justification, "by the works of the law." Ver. 32. "The reason why they did not obtain justification in that way is fully stated in ch. i.—iii., where it is shown that the law demands perfect compliance with its precepts; and that Jews, as well as Gentiles, had altogether failed in rendering such compliance."—*Barnes*. ¶ *Hath not attained*, &c. The cause of their failure is assigned in the next verse. They imagined themselves to be righteous,

not attained to the law of righteousness.

and despised others. Yet all their efforts, being in a wrong direction, did not secure the prize sought.

32. *Wherefore?* Why did they fail to attain righteousness? ¶ *Because they sought it not by faith.* They did not imitate their father Abraham, who “believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness.” See note on ch. iv. 3. And when the promised Messiah came, they received him not, they did not lay hold on his gospel by faith, and trust in God for pardon through grace; hence they neither worshipped nor served him in spirit and in truth (John iv. 24), but rested in a mechanical observance of law. ¶ *But as it were by the works of the law.* In the former part of this Epistle the writer has fully illustrated the fact that neither Jews nor Gentiles had perfectly obeyed the laws respectively known to them; so that neither had attained perfect righteousness. But in this place it would seem that special reference is had to the ritual law; for, by a rigid observance of the forms and ceremonies therein prescribed, the Jews actually made their principal effort for righteousness. Of the moral code, or of what may be denominated the spirit of the Mosaic law, they were negligent. See Matt. xxiii. 23. They were diligent to obey the letter, which in itself was of little worth, except as a sign of inward devotion, but utterly neglectful of the spirit, which giveth life. Our Lord declared that the whole law, in its spiritual character, was comprised in supreme love to God and universal love to mankind. Matt. xxii. 37—40. Perfect compliance with these requisitions would have secured life; but perfect compliance was not rendered. If imperfect compliance could not secure life, how far from life were those who did not even pretend to comply! Yet such seems to have been the fact in regard to the Jews, even to those whose pretensions to righteousness were most earnest and public. When the lordly Pharisee, who had a sovereign contempt of sinners, stood in the temple and thanked God that he was more holy than others, he did not pretend that he cherished or endeavored to cultivate a

32 Wherefore? Because *they sought it not by faith*, but as it

spirit of pure love to God and man, but the theme of his boasting was his freedom from scandalous sins, and his punctilious observance of the ritual law. “God, I thank thee that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week; I give tithes of all that I possess.” Luke xviii. 11, 12. No wonder that he failed to obtain righteousness under the influence of such a spirit; no wonder that the humble publican, who appealed to God’s mercy for pardon of his sins, “went down to his house justified, rather than the other.” I apprehend the general character of the Jews, who “trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others,” was delineated by our Lord in this parable. If so, the apostle might well say that by such works of the law they had failed to attain true righteousness. Their great difficulty was two-fold: they trusted in themselves, rather than in God; and their efforts in pursuit of righteousness were misdirected to a point where even perfect success would have been unavailing. Thus, “being ignorant of God’s righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, they submitted not themselves unto the righteousness of God.” Ch. x. 3. ¶ *For they stumbled at that stumbling-stone.* “A stumbling-stone is a stone or impediment in the path, over which men may fall. Here it means that obstacle which prevented their attaining the righteousness of faith, and which was the occasion of their fall, rejection, and ruin. That was, the rejection and the crucifixion of their own Messiah; their unwillingness to be saved by him; their contempt of him and his message.” — *Barnes.* It should be remembered, however, that the “fall, rejection, and ruin,” of the Jews, was not final and irrecoverable, as is evident from ch. xi.; for, as individuals, the mercy of God still encircled them; and, as a nation, they were to be restored, and admitted to joint privileges with the Gentiles. Moreover, although their rejection and their national overthrow may and should be regarded as the just penalty of their unbelief and iniquity, yet it should not

were by the works of the law. For they stumbled at that stumbling-stone;

33 As it is written, Behold, I

be forgotten that God had long before declared his purpose to establish the gospel among the Gentiles, by means of this perversity and national rejection of the Jews. In this case, as in that of Joseph's brethren, they meant it unto evil, and were sorely punished; but God meant it unto good, that his name might be glorified, and mankind be incalculably blessed, by the more extensive diffusion of the gospel of grace.

33. *As it is written.* The prophecy to which the apostle appeals is found in two passages, which he combines, giving the substance of both. See Isaiah viii. 14, 15; xxviii. 16. He quotes this as a prediction "that Christ was to be an occasion of offence and of stumbling to some, but the ground of surety to all who believed on him. The event showed that the Jews stumbled at this very stumbling-stone, namely, faith or belief in Christ, as the method of attaining righteousness."—*H. Bal-lou, 2d.* "It is a very common practice among the Jewish Rabbis, in citing the Scriptures, to mix passages together that are of the same tenor; and I may add, this is done by writers every day, without any consciousness of doing violence to the Scriptures, or of using an improper liberty. The reader will observe that in Isa. xxviii. 16 the predicates of the stone that was to be laid in Zion are, that it is tried, precious, a firm foundation; but one of the predicates in Isa. viii. 14 is, that it is a stone of stumbling, or a rock of offence. This is just what would coincide with the design of the apostle in the passage before us. He is describing the unbelief of the Jews, their rejection of the Messiah. Of course, the stone of stumbling is best adapted to the description of their case. It would seem to be clear, from the manner in which Paul cites both of these passages, that he applied them both to the Messiah; or, at least, that they were, in his view, capable of such an application in the way of analogy."—*Stuart.* ¶ *A stumbling-stone, and rock of offence.* These two phrases are of

lay in Zion a stumbling-stone, and rock of offence: and whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed.

similar import. See note on Matt. xi. 6. Our Lord applies to himself another prediction, in which he is styled "the head-stone of the corner" (Ps. cxvii. 22), and speaks of the consequences resulting to those who should be offended, or who should stumble, at that stone. See notes on Matt. xxii. 42—44. Some of the more obvious reasons why the Jews stumbled, and rejected and crucified the Messiah, are: (1.) He did not meet their expectations as a temporal prince. They looked for one who should deliver their nation from bondage, and exalt it over the nations of the earth. He came in a lowly, humble guise, and constantly disavowed all intention to establish an earthly kingdom. (2.) They expected their Messiah would recognize their religious guides as the most holy people on the earth. He did not so regard them; on the contrary, he declared that none could enter his spiritual kingdom unless their righteousness should exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees. (3.) They expected the Messiah would recognize their nation generally as the chosen people of God, and would grant them peculiar privileges in his kingdom. He proclaimed God as the universal Father of men, and assured them that they were to be excluded from the privileges which they had heretofore enjoyed and abused, and which should now be transferred to others, who would appreciate and profitably improve them. These and similar characteristics, which they could not overlook, were so revolting to their religious bigotry and national pride, that they stumbled and fell upon that stone; and bitter were the consequences. ¶ *Whosoever believeth on him.* Any person, every person, whether Jew or Gentile, who believes on him as the true Messiah. ¶ *Shall not be ashamed.* See note on ch. v. 5. The apostle is speaking of the rejection of the unbelieving Jewish nation, and the acceptance of believing Gentile nations. Yet the believing remnant of the Jews should enjoy a perfect equality with their believing brethren among the Gentiles. All who

CHAPTER X.

BRETHREN, my heart's desire

thus accepted him would be brought under influences productive of that righteousness which the Jews had failed to attain by legal observances. And this result, whether viewed in a national or in an individual aspect, was no new doctrine; but it had been predicted in ancient times by a prophet whom the Jews themselves acknowledged to have been an inspired servant of the most high God.

CHAPTER X.

1. *Brethren.* It is supposed by many that the apostle, by this general term, especially addresses the Jewish believers at Rome, his countrymen, the remnant of Israel. I perceive no necessity for thus limiting the address. He had spoken, in the preceding chapter, of the rejection and temporal destruction of the Jewish nation, according to the divine purpose, and as the just penalty of their unbelief and iniquity. He had insisted that God would take from them the privileges which they had so long enjoyed, and would bestow them upon the Gentiles, who were more ready to receive them and profitably use them. He had even used apparent severity, when speaking of the Jews. But he desired not to be regarded as their enemy. On the contrary, he desired his Christian brethren, both Jews and Gentiles, to understand that he cherished a warm affection for his kinsmen according to the flesh, and an ardent desire for their good. ¶ *My heart's desire.* The desire of the heart is a sincere desire; not an outward profession merely, but an earnest and fervent emotion. The labors of the apostle abundantly prove the sincerity of his desire for the spiritual prosperity of his Jewish brethren. Although he well understood that the nation was given over to judicial blindness (ch. xi. 7, 8), and although he encountered opposition and persecution at every step, yet he constantly and perseveringly labored to bring his brethren to a knowledge of the truth, that they might be saved. To be sure, he was commissioned especially as an apostle to the Gentiles,

and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved.

2 For I bear them record that

Yet, if we trace his missionary travels, as recorded in the Acts of the Apostles, we shall perceive that into whatsoever city he entered, he first addressed the Jews; if they rejected his message, as they generally did, he then turned to the Gentiles. Almost everywhere he secured a few converts from among the Jews; but the mass rejected and persecuted him. Nevertheless, he continued to labor for their good, and thus manifested the sincerity of his affection for them. ¶ *And prayer to God.* He did not believe his brethren were utterly cast off, or placed beyond the reach of divine mercy. Otherwise, with his views of prayer, he would not have ventured to interpose in their behalf. 1 Tim. ii. 8. The fact that he prayed for them, therefore, shows his belief that they were still objects of the divine love, and capable of receiving the blessing asked. ¶ *For Israel.* That is, for the Jewish nation generally, and especially the unbelieving portion. His desire and prayer cannot be supposed to refer to the believing Jews, to the exclusion of unbelievers; for the characteristics mentioned in ver. 2, 3, do not apply to them, but are evidently descriptive of those who had stumbled at the stumbling-stone. Ch. ix. 32, 33. ¶ *That they might be saved.* "Notwithstanding the present rejection of the Jews, it was still the earnest prayer of St. Paul that they might be saved. This is the first intimation, here given that he did not despair of them."—*H. Ballou, 2d.* He did not regard the national rejection of the Jews as fatal to their prospect of final blessedness. Although the wise and holy purpose of God had previously bestowed special privileges upon the Jews, from which all others were excluded, the apostle did not believe that those others should therefore be cast off forever. Neither did he believe that the Jews must endure endless misery, because they were now excluded from like privileges bestowed on the Gentiles. They were punished, and they deserved punishment, nationally and individually, because they had rejected and crucified the Lord Jesus, under the influence of

they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge.

wicked motives. Yet he fully realized that God had a gracious purpose to be accomplished, even by this wickedness. See Acts ii. 23. And he did not believe that God would consign them to hopeless misery, when he might just as easily bring them to repentance through the pains which they suffered. Heb. xii. 10, 11. Condign punishment he might inflict, as in the case of Pharaoh, for the manifestation of his power, and for the admonition of others. Yet not a cruel and unmerciful punishment, which could neither glorify him nor benefit his children. See note on ch. ix. 20. Being persuaded, then, that the unbelieving and rebellious Jews were still objects of divine love and mercy, that it was perfectly consistent both with the character and with the purpose of God to purify their hearts, and to adopt them again as his spiritual children, Paul cherished a fervent desire and uttered earnest prayers for their salvation. "That the apostle speaks not, in the preceding chapter, of the absolute and preemptory rejection and reprobation of Israel, is evident from this prayer and vehement desire; for, on supposition of such a decree of reprobation, this must not only be a vain prayer, but also an opposing of his will and desire to the good pleasure of almighty God revealed to him; for it is evident he prays here for all Israel, — for them whose zeal to God was not according to knowledge, and who were ignorant of God's righteousness (ver. 2, 3); not for those only, as Esthian descants, whom God hath predestinated to be saved by the prayers of the saints." — *Whitby*. "If the vessels of wrath, fitted for destruction, mentioned ch. ix. 22, were the unbelieving Jews, and if that description implied that they were under God's curse of reprobation, the apostle would not here have prayed for their salvation at all." — *Macknight*.

2. *For I bear them record.* I bear witness; I testify concerning them. ¶ *That they have a zeal of God;* or, as some translate, *for God.* The Jews were unquestionably zealous in performing the rites prescribed by the law, and in enforcing a rigid conformity to the traditions of the elders. Some of them, in all probability, were insin-

cere; it would be marvellous if the fact were otherwise. Yet there is good reason to suppose that the mass of the people, however destitute they were of true righteousness, and however guilty of manifold sin, really believed that they were serving God acceptably. They mistook the true character of their impulses, and thought they were only zealous for God, when in fact they were under the dominion of an unholy spirit. ¶ *But not according to knowledge.* This puts the case in the mildest form. Their zeal was an ignorant zeal. They mistook the principal requirements of the law; and, in their excessive devotion to rites and forms, they omitted the weightier matters which deserved their careful attention. Matt. xxiii. 23. Paul well knew their zeal, for he also was a Jew; and he knew the character of their zeal, for he had been a partaker of it. Even the Jewish Christians long continued to be "zealous of the law," and insisted on a strict compliance with its principal rites and ceremonies. See note on Acts xxi. 20. This zeal of the converted Jews occasioned much trouble to the apostles, and to the brethren who entered the church from among the Gentiles. But the zeal of the unbelieving Jews was of a more violent character; and Paul knew precisely what that zeal was. He declared to the Jews, at Jerusalem, when "they went about to kill him," Acts xxi. 31, that he was a Jew, and that he had been instructed "according to the perfect manner of the law of the fathers, and was zealous toward God as ye all are this day. And I persecuted this way unto death, binding and delivering into prisons both men and women." Acts xxii. 3, 4. Such was his zeal, and such the zeal of the unconverted Jews generally. It was an ignorant zeal, truly; for whoever supposes he honors God by dishonoring and abusing God's children, grievously mistakes. Yet it was an earnest zeal; for Paul says, "I verily thought with myself that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth." Acts xxvi. 9. And, to the same effect, our Lord forewarned his disciples, "They shall put you out of the synagogues; yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will

3 For they, being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going

think that he doeth God service." John xvi. 2. Of such zeal it may be remarked, (1) That it was contrary to the spirit of the moral law, which required supreme love to God, and sincere love to mankind. See notes on Matt. xxii. 37—39. The more fervently such zeal burned, the more deeply would its subjects be involved in disobedience to the law. Zeal is not necessarily directed aright because it is honest and sincere. The divine law is an authority to which human passion, and even human judgment, should be in subjection. If we disregard that, and follow our own impulses, we are in imminent danger. (2.) The apostle acknowledges that, even in their wickedness, in their rejection of Christ, and their persecution of his disciples, the Jews were doing what they "verily thought" they ought to do; he knew, by personal experience, the precise character of their zeal; and he represents it as creditable to them that they were faithful to their convictions of duty. He desired only that their zeal should be better directed; that they should zealously strive for spiritual holiness, under the guidance of a Christian faith and spirit, rather than violate the moral law, and abuse their brethren, under the vain hope of attaining righteousness by observing, and by compelling others to observe, the forms and ceremonies prescribed in the ritual law.

3. *Being ignorant.* It should not be overlooked that, although their ignorance was voluntary in so far as they had the means of knowing the truth, and failed to attain it through indolence or the force of prejudice, yet that same ignorance was in accordance with the purpose of God previously announced. See chap. xi. 7—10. To the same effect is the reason assigned by our Lord for speaking to the Jews in parables. See Matt. xiii. 10—15. The ignorance and perversity of the Jews served a purpose in the great system of divine providence, and was necessary to the fulfilment of the prophecies, and to the establishment of the gospel kingdom among the Gentiles. Ch. xi. 11, 15, 28, 30, 32; Matt. xxvi. 53, 54; Luke xxiv. 25, 26; Acts ii. 23; iii. 17, 18. In this view of the case, their ignorance

may be pleaded as a palliation of guilt, so far, at least, as to indicate the impropriety of inflicting upon them a punishment inconsistent with their final good. See note on ch. ix. 20. ¶ *Of God's righteousness.* Of that righteousness which is of God's appointment; the righteousness which springs from faith; the righteousness which results from the influence of the divine spirit upon the heart. See note on ch. i. 17. ¶ *And going about.* Attempting; endeavoring. ¶ *To establish their own righteousness.* Namely, by a rigid adherence to the ritual law, and a punctilious observance of all its ceremonies. They seem to have really believed that righteousness consisted in such obedience. On account of their faithfulness in this respect, they trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others. See Luke xviii. 9—14. In the effort to establish their own righteousness, or to attain justification by the works of the law, the Jews labored under a two-fold disadvantage. (1.) They selected the least important part of the law, as its principal requirement. Even perfect obedience to this availed little, while its more important precepts were disregarded. A man might perform the whole ritual while his heart was full of pride, vainglory, and even enmity towards his brethren. See Matt. xxiii. 23—28. Indeed, it not unfrequently happened that this kind of excellence became the source of pride, and occasioned some to despise others. (2.) The attempt was utterly hopeless, even though they had apprehended the length and breadth of the moral law, and had exerted their utmost power to attain justification by strict obedience. In this effort no mere man has been successful, since the foundation of the world. Hence the apostolic declaration, "By the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight. — For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God." Ch. iii. 20, 23. ¶ *Have not submitted, &c.* Not only was the effort to establish their own righteousness ineffectual, because wrongly directed, and utterly impracticable in itself, but it hindered the Jews from attaining righteousness in the method of God's ap-

about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted them-

pointment. It engendered pride in their hearts, so that they were unwilling to acknowledge their own helplessness, and to ask and receive justification as a free gift from divine grace. *Barnes* well observes that "no obstacle to salvation by grace is so great as the self-righteousness of sinners." Men who have long indulged the fancy that they are more dear than others in the sight of God, and entitled to peculiar reverence from men on account of their attainments in holiness, are exceedingly unwilling to humble themselves before God and man, and to exclaim, "God, be merciful to me, a sinner." Luke xviii. 13. Yet this is the first step towards obtaining justification in the way of God's appointment. Unless a man become humble, and realize his need of assistance, unless he realize his sinfulness, and his inability to attain deliverance by his own unassisted efforts, he is not in a fit condition to ask grace and forgiveness of God, or to receive it with gratitude when freely offered. Yet he who has long been accustomed to regard himself as superior to others, and to say, "Stand by thyself; come not near to me, for I am holier than thou," Isa. lxxv. 5, finds great difficulty in *submitting* himself to that grace which regards all men as equally in need of divine aid, and equally unable by their own strength to attain perfect holiness. Upon this stone the Jews stumbled. Had our Lord recognized their claims to peculiar sanctity, had he ministered to their pride by assurances that they were worthy to be honored both by God and by man for their transcendent holiness, very probably they would have acknowledged him as a divine messenger; yet even then they might have found it difficult to profit by his instructions. But when he assured them that their supposed righteousness was worthless, that none could enter his kingdom unless their "righteousness should exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees," Matt. v. 20, and exhorted all who would obtain rest to their souls to be "meek and lowly in heart," Matt. xi. 29, their proud spirits rebelled; they would not submit to what

selves unto the righteousness of God.

4 For Christ is the end of the

they regarded as degradation. They continued to trust in their own righteousness, and rejected the proffered gift. And such is substantially the experience of all self-righteous men. An overweening confidence in their present attainments hinders them from realizing their true state of dependence on divine grace, and from laying hold by faith upon the promise of a free pardon, and of divine assistance in the pursuit of true holiness. Would that all might seriously ponder the words of our Lord: "Every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted." Luke xviii. 14. True holiness doth not excite pride and vain-glory in the heart. But, in every stage of advancement, the true Christian acknowledges that it is of God's mercy that he has been purified, and that by the grace of God he is what he is. 1 Cor. xv. 10.

4. *For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness, &c.* "The observance of the law ends in Christ, is done away; and, by believing in him, we now attain to the very spirit of righteousness, which the letter of the law could not give, though it indeed demanded it. See ch. vii. 12—14." — *H. Ballou*, 2d. "Belief in Christ, receiving him by faith, and thus attaining to the *righteousness of God*, accomplishes the end or object of what the law would accomplish, namely, which perfect obedience to the law would accomplish. In this simple way, and consonant with the context, I interpret this long agitated and much controverted text. — Now, the *end* of the law was the justification of men, that is, their advancement to happiness and glory in a future world. So the apostle himself states in the sequel: 'The man that doeth these things shall live by them.' But, inasmuch as 'all men have sinned and come short of the glory of God,' so 'no flesh can be justified by the deeds of the law;' in other words, legal justification, on the ground of merit, is now impossible. Christ, then, is the end of the law; that is, he accomplishes or brings about that which the law was designed to accomplish, the acceptance of men with God, and their admission to the happiness of the

law for righteousness to every one that believeth.

future world." — *Stuart*. It is not clear that perfect obedience to the law would have entitled men to happiness in the future world. Future life itself, with all its blessings, must be regarded as the free gift of God, unpurchased and undeserved by the obedience of mankind. It is indeed questionable whether a future life was revealed in the law; and it is very certain that it forms no part of the reward promised to obedience. Life, as the reward of obedience, and death, as the penalty of disobedience, indicated happiness and misery, to be sure, but in the present life. See note on ch. vi. 23. With this qualification, the foregoing note may be regarded as substantially expressing the apostle's meaning. Various other interpretations have been given; such as that Christ made an end of the ceremonial law; that he fulfilled the whole law, both ceremonial and moral; and that the *end* or object of the law was to make men feel the need of a Saviour, and thus to conduct them to Christ. See Gal. iii. 24. Each of these interpretations may express an important fact; but neither seems appropriate to the subject which is here discussed. The apostle is contrasting legal righteousness with the righteousness which is by faith; the righteousness resulting from works, with that which is of grace; the righteousness which men may attain by their own exertions, with that which is of God's appointment. It is not easily perceived what relation the abolition of the ceremonial law, or the fulfilment of the law by Christ, or the tendency of the law to lead men to Christ, bears to this particular subject. But the interpretation here proposed is perfectly consistent with the context. This verse is thus seen to be explanatory of the last clause of the preceding verse. According to God's method of securing righteousness, a living faith in Christ produces an effect equivalent to perfect obedience to the law. Such obedience would have given life, as the result of righteousness. Ver. 5. The same life results from faith in Christ. Ver. 11; John v. 24. From such faith obedience naturally follows, under the influence

5 For Moses describeth the righteousness which is of the law, That

of gratitude to God, — a much higher motive than fear of a penalty, which prompted those who endeavored "to establish their own righteousness." Ver. 3. The contrast is pursued in the succeeding verses.

5. *For Moses describeth, &c.* See Lev. xviii. 5: "Ye shall therefore keep my statutes and my judgments; which if a man do, he shall live in them." Life, or happiness, is proposed as the reward of perfect obedience; and no provision is made for the pardon of a single transgression. "This is taken from Lev. xviii. 5, and is generally thought to be a promise of eternal life to those who obeyed the law of Moses perfectly. But any one who reads that chapter throughout will be sensible that, though 'the doing of these things' means a perfect obedience to the whole law, and more especially to the statutes and judgments written in that chapter, the life promised to the Israelites, as a reward of that general obedience, is only their living long and happily as a nation in Canaan. See Lev. xviii. 26—29." — *Macknight*. That the reward was to be enjoyed on earth, I have no doubt; and that a long life was frequently mentioned in connection with it, is true. Yet I apprehend that purity, and happiness as the result of purity, was the essential substance of the reward. A conscience void of offence towards God and towards men (Acts xxiv. 16) is of more value, and is more productive of true happiness, than mere length of days, or residence in any particular locality. Perfect obedience would insure this; but a single act of disobedience would destroy it. Whoso relies on his own works must render exact and constant obedience. He cannot retrieve lost ground, nor make up past deficiencies. He can do no more than his duty at any time; and the present requires his utmost exertions. The only hope of pardon is in grace, which is freely offered in the gospel, but is not disclosed in the law. Hence appears the impracticability of all efforts to attain perfect holiness by the deeds of the law, because human imperfection necessarily prevents perfect obedience. No mere man has yet accomplished the work ·

the man which doeth those things shall live by them.

and, what so many have attempted and uniformly failed to accomplish, from the beginning of the world until now, may well be regarded as impossible. And such is also the testimony of the Scriptures. It is upon this ground that the gospel is commended to the gratitude of men, giving assurance as well of purity and happiness here, which human frailty is incapable of obtaining, as of perfect holiness and felicity hereafter. "By his use of this text, St. Paul seems to presuppose that no man could perfectly fulfil everything contained in these statutes; that the life, or blessedness, here offered, could not, therefore, be attained by this method; and that we must seek it on different grounds, which are stated and illustrated in the next verses."—*H. Ballou*, 2d.

6. *But the righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise.* Righteousness is here personified, as addressing mankind. The meaning is, that a preacher of such righteousness might describe it thus. The description which follows is substantially in the language of Moses. Deut. xxx. 11—14: "For this commandment which I command thee this day, it is not hidden from thee, neither is it far off. It is not in heaven, that thou shouldest say, Who shall go up for us to heaven, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it, and do it? Neither is it beyond the sea, that thou shouldest say, Who shall go over the sea for us, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it, and do it? But the word is very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart, that thou mayest do it." Such was the address of Moses to the Jews, when he was about to die, concerning the law which God had given them by his ministry. "It is observable, here, that Paul does not affirm that *Moses* describes anywhere the righteousness of faith, or the effect of the scheme of justification by faith. His object was different, — to give the law and state its demands and rewards. Yet, though he had not formally described the plan of justification by faith, yet he had used language which would fitly express that plan."—*Barnes*. It is not unusual for the

6 But the righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise,

New Testament writers thus to quote the Old Testament, in an accommodated sense. Although originally applied to one subject, it may serve equally well to describe or illustrate another. See note on Matt. ii. 15. The quotation in this place is not exact, but somewhat altered, and interspersed with remarks explanatory of the accommodated sense in which the language originally spoken of the law is applied to the gospel. "His main statement is, 'the glad tidings of salvation is offered, and needs only to be accepted;' to this he transfers the description which Moses has given of the law, namely, 'the word is nigh thee,' &c.; and the rest of the passage in Deuteronomy he applies in a higher sense than that in which Moses had written it (according to the true Christian mode of using the Old Testament), not to the Mosaic law, but to the gospel of Christ."—*Conybeare*. ¶ *Say not in thine heart.* Say not within yourselves; that is, do not think, or imagine. The apostle alleges the words of Moses to meet certain objections which naturally arose in the Jewish mind. ¶ *Who shall ascend into heaven?* The Jews were accustomed to describe an insurmountable difficulty by saying it was high as heaven. By this phrase Moses probably designed to admonish the Jews that it was no difficult undertaking to understand the law, after it was revealed. They had no severe exertion to make, in order to attain it; for it was already within their reach. In like manner, the apostle reminded his Jewish brethren that the knowledge of the gospel, which revealed righteousness by faith, might be attained without extraordinary effort; for it was already revealed and openly preached. But, from the explanatory remark which follows, it would seem that he had a farther object. ¶ *That is, to bring Christ down from above.* The Jews expected a Messiah, and professed a readiness to receive him. They expected he would be of divine origin, or that he would descend from heaven; and that his advent would be signalized by some remarkable display of divine power. See John ii. 18, and note on

Say not in thy heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down *from above* :)

Matt. xii. 38. When Jesus came he demonstrated his Messiahship by words and works which no mere man could say or do, John iii. 2 ; vii. 31, 46 ; yet because he did not gratify them with precisely the sign which they required, because he labored to establish a spiritual kingdom instead of the magnificent temporal dominion which they anticipated, and because he reprov'd them for their wickedness instead of flattering their self-righteousness, they rejected him. The apostle assures them that it was in vain to wait for another Messiah ; to look up into heaven for the advent of the promised seed ; for he had already come, and performed his mission. He had revealed the gospel of grace. It only remained that they should embrace it by faith, in order to enjoy its benefits. Of course, it is not to be supposed that Moses had the same object in the language quoted from him ; but the apostle, by way of parenthesis, declares in what sense he applied the quotation ; and the foregoing interpretation seems consistent with his design. If the Jews could be convinced that the Messiah had already come, and that his advent was substantially such as the prophets had predicted, they would be in a fit condition to receive him, and believe his gospel. Accordingly the apostle assured them that such was the fact, and that they need not look to heaven for another.

7. *Or, who shall descend into the deep?* The language of Moses is, "Who shall go over the sea for us?" The same idea of distance and difficulty is common to both expressions. In the days of Moses, and in the apostolic age, a voyage at sea was regarded as a most dangerous enterprise. Probably, however, the apostle changed the form of the quotation, with reference to the application he was about to make of it. The word rendered *deep* is often applied to the sea in the Old Testament. See Gen. vii. 11 ; Job xli. 31 ; Isa. xlv. 27. In the New Testament it ordinarily denotes the interior of the earth ; and its meaning is not unlike that of *hades*, deep, covered, hidden. Standing, as it does in this place, in opposition

7 *Or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead.)*

to heaven, it seems to indicate that it would be as difficult to descend into those depths, to bring one up, as to ascend into heaven, to bring one down. This view is confirmed by what follows. ¶ *That is, to bring up Christ again from the dead.* Such is the sense in which the language of Moses is quoted. Let no man inquire who shall descend into the earth to bring up Christ, or to raise him from the dead ; for he is already risen. "The Jews expected the Messiah would abide with them forever. John xii. 34. Wherefore, when his disciples saw Jesus expire on the cross, they gave up all hope of his being the Christ. Luke xxiv. 21 : 'We trusted that it had been he who should have redeemed Israel.' It is true, the objection taken from Christ's death was fully removed by his resurrection. But the Jews, pretending not to have sufficient proof of that miracle, insisted that Jesus should appear in person among them, to convince them that he was really risen. This they expressed by one's descending into the abyss, to bring Christ up from the dead. The *abyss* here signifies the receptacle of departed souls : called *hades*, because it is an invisible place ; and the *abyss*, or *deep*, because the Jews supposed it to be as far below the surface of the earth as heaven was thought to be above it. Ps. cxxxix. 8."—*Macknight*. The Jews had quite as indistinct knowledge of astronomy as of theology. The main design of the apostle seems to be to convince them that there was no real difficulty, except in the state of their own minds, in coming to a knowledge of the truth, and enjoying that special salvation which results from faith ; in other words, in attaining righteousness by faith. 1 Tim. iv. 10. There was no need to bring Christ down from heaven, or up from the dead. All this had already been accomplished, as they might believe, if they would give heed to the evidence. He had committed to his apostles "the word of reconciliation." 2 Cor. v. 19. This word was near to them, ver. 8, was preached to them by the apostles. The only thing lacking was faith on their part. This

8 But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, *even* in thy mouth,

and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach:

fact the apostle urges, to show the exceeding folly of them who persisted in the vain effort to "establish their own righteousness," by the works of the law, instead of "submitting themselves unto the righteousness of God," by embracing the gospel which was freely and plainly preached to them, ver. 3, or by exercising faith in Christ, who was "the end of the law for righteousness unto every one that believeth," ver. 4.

8. *But what saith it?* What is the language of this "righteousness which is of faith"? Ver. 6. What is the matter of fact in regard to this doctrine? Is the pursuit and acquisition of it difficult, or is it easy? ¶ *The word is nigh thee.* This indicates the ease with which the desired object might be accomplished. What is afar off is attained with difficulty, represented by ascending to heaven, or descending into the depths of the earth, in pursuit of it. What is near at hand may be attained with ease. The gospel, being commended to the Jews, accompanied by sufficient evidence of its truth, might be understood and embraced at once, if they would but open their minds and hearts to receive it. ¶ *In thy mouth, and in thy heart.* "The apostle's meaning is, that the duty of faith in Christ, which he preached, was nigh them, was easy to be performed, because it was founded on the strongest evidence. The eye-witnesses, by testifying the resurrection of Christ from the dead, and by confirming their testimony with miracles, gave all men more full assurance of his resurrection than if he had shown himself alive after his resurrection to all the world. For such an appearance would have been no proof of his resurrection to any but to those who had known him in his lifetime, and had seen him expire on the cross. Or, if it is thought that such an appearance would have convinced those who had never seen Jesus before, I ask how could they know that the person who called himself 'Jesus risen from the dead' was really he, except by the testimony of those who knew him in his lifetime, and had seen him die?"

So, then, even this loudly-demanded proof of Christ's resurrection resolves itself into the very evidence we now possess; namely, the testimony of the persons who conversed with him familiarly during his lifetime, and saw him die, and who gained credit to the testimony which they bore to his resurrection, by working miracles in support of it. Further, by preaching that the deliverance which the Christ was to work for the Jews was not a deliverance from the dominion of the Gentiles, but from the dominion and punishment of sin, called, ver. 9, *salvation*, the apostles made the Jews sensible that, to work this kind of salvation, there is no occasion for the Christ's coming down from heaven, in a visible, pompous manner, to take to himself a temporal kingdom. The duty, therefore, of faith, which the apostles preached, as necessary to salvation, was both plain and easy, and was to be performed with the mouth and with the heart, in the manner explained ver. 9." — *Macknight.* It may be added, that the words of Moses imply that the law delivered by him was already the subject of conversation and meditation among the Jews; so that they had no occasion to seek for it at a distance, or to use any extraordinary effort to obtain knowledge of it. So, also, "the word of faith," or the gospel, had been openly taught among the Jews for several years; it had been an exciting subject, on either side of which the feelings of men had been strongly enlisted; its prominent facts were well understood, and had long been revolved in their minds and discussed in their conversation. They needed no miracle to make them acquainted with the subject; for it was already familiar to their minds. One thing only they lacked in regard to it, namely, faith. ¶ *The word of faith, which we preach.* That is, the gospel, which is commended to the faith of men, or which must be embraced by faith, in order to a full enjoyment of its blessings. The great fact, which lies at the foundation of Christianity, and on which depends all rational faith in its divine origin, is declared in the

9 That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thy heart that God

hath raised him from the dead thou shalt be saved.

10 For with the heart man

next verse ; as well as the manner in which faith may be tested, whether or not it be genuine and steadfast.

9. *That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus.* By confessing the Lord Jesus, we are to understand acknowledging him as the true Messiah, acknowledging the great fact proclaimed by Peter, on the day of Pentecost, — “Let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God hath made that same Jesus whom ye have crucified both Lord and Christ.” Acts ii. 36. They were to acknowledge his authority as their Master, and be willing to obey him in all things. They were to acknowledge him as the anointed Son of God (see note on Matt. i. 1), and to exercise the most unlimited faith in all which he taught concerning God and man. Not only were they thus to believe in their hearts that Jesus was both Lord and Christ, but they were to confess their faith openly. To *confess* is more than to *profess*. Men profess voluntarily, and sometimes forwardly, when the subject of profession is deemed honorable. But they confess their faith when they incur danger thereby. See Acts xxiv. 14. Men profess sometimes in hope of gain : they confess at the hazard of loss. See note on ver. 10. ¶ *And shalt believe in thine heart.* Shalt sincerely and undoubtingly believe. Something more than a mere assent of the mind is indicated : a firm persuasion resulting from satisfactory evidence, a persuasion exciting emotion in the heart. ¶ *That God raised him from the dead.* This was the great fact presented for belief. It may not improperly be styled the corner-stone of Christianity. If this be true, all is true : if this be false, there is no ground for rational faith in the remainder. If God raised Jesus from the dead, he confirmed the truth of all which Jesus taught ; for surely he would not perform a miracle of this kind on behalf of an impostor. If he did not raise Jesus from the dead, then what Jesus said of his resurrection was not true ; and his other teachings, whether true or false, lack the confirm-

ation of divine authority. Hence we uniformly find the apostles insisting on the resurrection of Jesus, as the first thing to be believed. Until this was believed, his authority as a divine teacher could not rationally be admitted. When this was believed, his authority was acknowledged, as a matter of course, and the believer was prepared to “grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.” 2 Pet. iii. 18. ¶ *Thou shalt be saved.* That is, shalt become a present partaker of that “righteousness which is of faith,” ver. 6, and of that present salvation which is the portion of believers, 1 Tim. iv. 10. The believer in Christ is already in a state of salvation : not of perfect and entire salvation, indeed, for some measure of sinfulness cleaves to him while he continues on earth ; but he enters at once upon a state in which he becomes conscious of the mercy and pardoning grace of God, in which his heart is moved by gratitude and the influence of the divine spirit to abandon sin and cleave to righteousness, and in which he can cherish unwavering confidence that the same divine grace which has thus far delivered him from the power of sin will as freely make that deliverance complete in the resurrection. Final and perfect salvation may be communicated through the medium of perfect faith, or knowledge, in heaven ; but it is nowhere represented as suspended on the condition of that measure of faith which men may exercise on earth.

10. *For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness.* That faith which affects the heart, or which is accompanied by the emotions of the heart, is the only faith in the gospel which is of practical value. If it work by love, it will purify the heart. Thus only is “the righteousness which is of faith” attained. ¶ *Confession is made unto salvation.* By salvation may be understood, as in ver. 9, a consciousness of divine grace and pardon, and an assurance of perfect salvation hereafter ; the effect of which is to fill the heart with gratitude, and to excite earnest efforts

believeth unto righteousness ; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.

to avoid sin and practise righteousness. "In the first ages, the spreading of the gospel depended, in a great measure, on Christ's disciples confessing him openly before the world, and on their sealing their confession with their blood. Hence Christ required it in the most express terms, and threatened to deny those who denied him. Matt. x. 32, 33; 1 John iv. 15. The confessing Christ being so necessary, and at the same time so difficult a duty, the apostle very properly connected the assurance of salvation therewith ; because it was the best evidence which the disciple of Christ could have of his own sincerity, and of his being willing to perform every other act of obedience required of him. There is a difference between the profession and the confession of our faith. To *profess* is to declare a thing of our own accord ; but to *confess* is to declare a thing when asked concerning it." — *Macknight*. It may be remarked generally, on ver. 9, 10, that the profession of faith indicated as necessary by the apostle is very simple and comprehensive. Faith in Jesus Christ as the Son of God, confirmed by the fact that God raised him from the dead, was required ; and no more. Not that there was nothing more to be learned or believed ; but this was the foundation. Whoso believed this had the faith of a Christian, was in a state of salvation, and was fitly prepared for growth in grace and knowledge. "Of course, he means faith in *the* Christ, and in *the* resurrection of his, which the gospel sets forth, and confession of him accordingly. So simple is the Christian's creed." — *H. Ballou*, 2d. Strikingly similar is this confession of faith to that of the Ethiopian eunuch, which was so satisfactory to Philip, that he admitted the convert to the church by baptism. See note on Acts viii. 37. "The confession was, that Jesus is the Lord, is the Christ ; and the faith was, that he is raised from the dead. — Jesus and the Resurrection were the two heads of the apostle's sermons elsewhere. Acts i. 22 ; iv. 2 ; xvii. 18 ; xxiv. 21. Why, we would ask, in the name of truth and salvation, did not

11 For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed.

the apostle Paul lay down the programme of the doctrines of the Trinity, the Atonement, the Total Depravity of Man, the Deity of Christ, Election, and other points, on the present occasion of stating a saving faith, if those articles are essential ; and if he did not do it, if he concentrated the attention of his converts on two memorable truths and facts, as the vital germs of the new and divine life, namely, Jesus the Lord, and his Resurrection, may we not fairly infer that he did not deem them salvatory, if, indeed, he was not then, on the contrary, entirely unacquainted with these errors, which afterwards chiefly sprang up from the unhallowed union of Christianity and Jewish and Pagan philosophy?" — *Livermore*. There is much good sense, as well as rhetoric, in the foregoing remarks ; and they are commended to the reader's careful attention. Among the "other points" of human creeds, the writer might have mentioned with equal truth and force the doctrine of endless misery. Nowhere is this proposed by the apostles as an article of Christian faith. It is excluded, rather, by their assurances of salvation to some of the most unpromising sinners the world has yet known. See note on Acts iii. 25, 26. See also what Paul says concerning himself. Acts xxii. 4 ; xxvi. 9—11 ; 1 Cor. xv. 9 ; 1 Tim. i. 12—15. It could scarcely be expected that an apostle, so sensible as Paul was of his own state before conversion, would require belief that any were beyond the reach of divine grace.

11. *For the scripture saith*. See Isa. xxviii. 16. To satisfy his Jewish brethren that the blessings of the gospel were not designed for the exclusive benefit of themselves, he reminds them that their own great prophet had plainly intimated the impartial distribution of divine favors. ¶ *Whosoever believeth on him*. In this matter there was no distinction between Jew and Gentile. Jesus was preached to all as the Christ, the Son of God, whom the Father had raised from the dead and exalted to glory. Whosoever exercised faith in him, believed in his Sonship and in his testimony, acknowledged

12 For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek :

his authority and their obligation to obey him, and cherished a confident hope that all his promises should be assuredly fulfilled, — all which is necessarily embraced in a true and living faith in him, — such believers, of whatever nation, and of whatever previous character, became partakers of present salvation, and passed from death unto life. John v. 24. ¶ *Shall not be ashamed.* See notes on chap. v. 5 ; ix. 33.

12. *For there is no difference, &c.* What is implied in the previous verse is here distinctly asserted. Jews and Greeks, or Gentiles, stood on equal ground in this respect. This subject had long before been debated in the council of apostles ; and they had unanimously agreed that God had exhibited the impartial character of the gospel by unmistakable signs. They had previously doubted the propriety of Peter's preaching the gospel to the Gentiles ; he assured them that, "as I began to speak, the Holy Ghost fell on them, as on us at the beginning ;" and he forcibly exclaimed, "Forasmuch, then, as God gave them the like gift as he did unto us who believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, what was I that I could withstand God? When they heard these things they held their peace and glorified God, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life." Acts xi. 15, 17, 18. And when, at a subsequent time, it was proposed to require Gentile converts to conform to Jewish customs, Peter referred to the same fact, with equal success, in proof that "no such bondage should be imposed on "them which from among the Gentiles are turned unto God." See Acts xv. 5—29. But so inveterate were the Jewish prejudices on this subject, that it became necessary to give them line upon line, and precept upon precept. A large portion of this epistle is devoted to the proof of the fact that the Gentiles are embraced in the gospel, that they have an equal right to its privileges, and that in fact they would share more largely than the Jews, in the outset, because they would more readily believe. And here, as often before, the apostle assures his

for the same Lord over all, is rich unto all that call upon him.

Jewish brethren that this principle of the divine government had been understood and announced by their own prophets. ¶ *For the same Lord over all is rich, &c.* This phrase is capable of being rendered somewhat differently, though with a similar meaning. "For there is the same Lord of all, who is rich [in mercy] unto all them that call upon him." — *Stuart.* "Because the same [Jesus] is Lord over all, and he gives richly to all who call upon him." — *Conybeare.* The common version, however, is more literal than either of the others, and expresses the meaning with sufficient distinctness. God raised up his Son, and exalted him as Lord over all, both Jews and Gentiles. All, therefore, were subject to the same authority, and all were entitled to the same protection ; for authority to govern always carries with it the obligation to protect. It is acknowledged, almost universally, that the right to govern and the obligation to protect are inseparable. If all would faithfully apply this principle to the divine government, much confusion and much distress would be avoided. Our Lord asserts the same principle in relation to the authority bestowed on him by the Father. "The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand." "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me ; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out. For I came down from heaven not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me. And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day." John iii. 35 ; vi. 37—39. He is pledged, therefore, to protect and preserve those who are subjected to his authority, agreeably to the eternal rule of right. And the apostle gives assurance of the same fact, declaring that this "Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him." As the authority committed to Jesus is a spiritual authority, so should he be regarded as rich with respect to spiritual blessings. To be rich in this sense implies not only the possession of blessings, but the willingness to impart them. God for

13 For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.

bid that his Son should be regarded as miserly in the bestowment of spiritual gifts. Rather let his labors amidst obloquy and persecution, his submission to the death of the cross, and his dying prayer for the forgiveness of his murderers, be accepted as conclusive proof of his willingness to bless mankind. Rather let us believe, without doubting, that he who was sent to "save his people from their sins," to "take away the sin of the world," and who was clothed with power adequate to the accomplishment of the work, is rich also in mercy, and in the disposition to impart the blessing; that he will take care that none be lost; and that whoever believes on him, whether Jew or Gentile, and whenever he believes, shall know that the Lord is gracious, and shall become a partaker of salvation.

13. *For whosoever shall call, &c.* This verse is quoted substantially from Joel ii. 32. "And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be delivered." This prophecy, ver. 28—32, was cited by Peter on the day of Pentecost, and applied to the reign of the Messiah. Acts ii. 14—21. Very probably, the prophet had special reference to deliverance or preservation from temporal calamities; and in this sense Peter appears to speak, in Acts ii. 21. See the note. But the subject discussed by Paul indicates that he applied the prophecy in a spiritual sense, as a promise of deliverance from the bondage of sin and all its woes. To call on the name of the Lord is a Hebraism, equivalent to calling upon the Lord. It is implied, of course, that men shall call sincerely, and in faith. Indeed, the meaning of the verse is almost precisely similar to that of ver. 11. It is another scriptural proof of the same fact. The Lord will reject none who truly come to him, even at the eleventh hour. And that all shall finally acknowledge Jesus to be Lord, and sincerely call upon him, is evident from Phil. ii. 9—11. I cannot forbear to quote, in this place, the frank and decided language of *Livermore*: "The same generous and unrestricted

14 How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe

platform of salvation is here laid down for all who call on the name of Jesus, as elsewhere distinguishes the ministry of Paul. He is at the furthest possible remove from sectarianism, and no name is more perverted than his when used to bolster up a party. He is the advocate of the largest Christian liberty; and his Epistles are sadly tortured when they are interpreted to teach any theology less comprehensive than that of God as the universal Father, Man as the equal Brother, Jesus as the common Saviour, and Heaven as the home of mankind at last. His teachings stand justified to the highest reason, to the most impartial love, and to the brightest hope." Interpreted in this manner, the Epistles of Paul are in perfect accordance with the declared purpose of the ministry, death, and resurrection, of the Lord Jesus Christ; and it is readily seen how natural were his glorious bursts of exultation, as he contemplated the final consummation of the plan of grace.

14. *How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed?* The language last quoted from Joel naturally suggested this inquiry. "The speciousness of the objection consists in the claims of some part of it to be considered as true. We may concede, therefore, that the *reasoning* of the objector here is correct, if you allow him his promises; that is, it is true that men must first believe on a Saviour before they will call upon him; and that he must be preached to them before they can believe on him; and that, in order to this, there must be some one to preach. It is true that the Scripture recognizes the importance of such messengers. But, then, the main question here, after all, is, whether the fact assumed as a basis of this reasoning, namely, that the Jew had not heard the gospel, is true. The apostle proceeds, in the sequel, to show that this is not the case; and, therefore, the whole objection falls to the ground." — *Stuart*. In point of fact, the Jews had no excuse for their rejection of Jesus as the Christ; for the evidence of his Messiahship had been openly exhibited in presence of their priests and rulers, and had been pro-

in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear

claimed far and wide by eye-witnesses. The offer of the gospel to the Gentiles, and its acceptance by them, had also been predicted by the Jewish prophets, as well as the rejection of it by the Jews, to their own harm, as the apostle proceeds to show. So far, then, the Jew could not complain that he had not had reasonable opportunity for belief. Or, if the objection imply, as is probable, that the Gentiles could not truly call on the Lord and be saved, because they had not so heard the gospel as to believe it, even this was not wholly true; because the gospel had already been preached by Paul and his associates in every principal country of the then known world; and believers were then to be found, either scattered or in churches, in Gentile lands, as well as among the Jews. But, as has already been stated, the *reasoning* is correct, that no one can call on the Lord before he believes in him. Nay, more, before one can truly call, in the sense here indicated, he must be conscious of his need of relief, and must believe that a Saviour is able to relieve him. This was the real difficulty of the Jew. Trusting in his own righteousness, believing himself to be already a favorite of God, on account of his conformity to the law, he was not disposed either to ask or to receive assistance as an act of grace. ¶ *How shall they believe on him of whom they have not heard?* Here, also, the *reasoning* is correct. It is impossible that one should exercise faith in a Saviour until he shall first hear of him. The apostle declares, in general language, that the knowledge of a Saviour had been universally diffused, so that all had opportunity to believe, ver. 18. This was sufficient for the purpose of his argument. Yet it is unquestionably true in respect to individuals, whatever may have been the fact in regard to nations or communities, that then, as well as now, some were wholly incapable of believing or calling upon the Lord. For example, infants, and those who had not attained the age of understanding, were profoundly ignorant of even the existence of a Saviour. Very probably there were then some benighted portions of the race — there are cer-

without a preacher?

15 And how shall they preach,

tainly such now — among whom the light of the gospel had not yet shined. And it is manifest that such could neither believe nor call on the name of the Lord. But many, while yet in this condition of necessary and unavoidable ignorance, are taken out of this world by death. Is their case hopeless? Yes, if faith in Christ, in the present life, be essential to final salvation. Yet some insist that such is the fact. As if a benevolent Father would suspend the endless welfare of his children on a condition which his own providence rendered it impossible for them to perform! But we have a better word of promise. God requires of men according to what they have, and not according to what they have not; and whenever and wherever they come to a knowledge of the truth, and believe, and call upon the name of the Lord, he will hear them, and will save them. See note on Mark xvi. 16. ¶ *And how shall they hear without a preacher?* Effects are ordinarily produced by natural causes. God may undoubtedly impart knowledge by supernatural means; but this is not the usual method of his providence. That some might hear the truth, it was necessary in the apostolic age, even as now, that others should speak it. The necessity of proclaiming the gospel was recognized by the apostles, and by none more fully than Paul, for he "labored more abundantly than they all." 1 Cor. xv. 10. Hence they went into all the world to preach the gospel to every creature. Mark xvi. 15. And through their ministry the word, in general terms, went "unto the ends of the world." Ver. 18. In this connection it may be observed that, whatever lack of true enjoyment may result from ignorance of divine truth, such lack cannot be regarded a *punishment*, if the ignorance be involuntary on the part of men, because the truth has never been made known to them. Doubtless, God has a good design to be accomplished, by permitting his children to remain in ignorance for a season, and in many cases through their mortal life. But, to suppose that design embraces their endless banishment from his presence, is too monstrous to

except they be sent? as it is writ-

tain credence for one moment. Temporary inconvenience, and even sharp suffering, may be compensated by subsequent blessings. See ch. viii. 18. But endless suffering necessarily excludes subsequent benefit. Whatever will finally result in good may be regarded as consistent with the character and purposes of God: but that which is evil, without mitigation and without remedy, is utterly abhorrent to his nature. 1 John iv. 8.

15. *And how shall they preach, except they be sent? How can they preach?* The inquiry has reference not to the manner, but to the fact, of preaching. The idea is, there can be no preaching of the gospel unless preachers be sent forth. It was the direction of our Master, that the knowledge of his gospel should be communicated by human instrumentality. Accordingly, he commissioned his apostles to perform this service in all the world,—among the Jews first, and afterward among the Gentiles. Matt. xxviii. 19; Mark xvi. 15; Acts i. 8. The apostles encouraged their fellow-disciples to engage in the same work, fully recognizing the fact that the word must be preached before men could believe, and that for such preaching reliance must be had on human agents duly qualified. ¶ *As it is written.* See Isa. lii. 7. “The connection of the sentiment which follows with that which precedes I have found exhibited in no commentator so as to satisfy me. Most critics do not appear to have felt any difficulty with the passage, and have said little or nothing to the purpose upon it. But in my own mind there has always been a serious difficulty in seeing how the sequel here either illustrates or confirms the declaration immediately preceding. I am not able now to see that this is effected in any other way than the following, namely, the importance of the heralds of salvation, in order to bring men to believe on a Saviour, is implied in the high commendation which the Scripture bestows upon them. This is truly implied by the words quoted; for why should these heralds be spoken of with high and joyful commendation, if they are not important instruments in the salvation of men? So the apostle,

How beautiful are the feet of

in making this quotation (for I suppose him, and not the objector, to cite the words of Isaiah), concedes, for substance, what had been implied in the questions just asked.”—*Stuart*. It is proper to observe, however, that although such heralds be “important instruments in the salvation of men,” yet they are only instruments in the hand of a far mightier power. “The author and finisher of our faith,” Heb. xii. 2, both furnishes the message and moves the heart to receive it. Preachers are instruments, and highly honored instruments, but not the bestowers, of salvation through faith. 1 Cor. iii. 4—7; 2 Cor. iv. 5. Those preachers who assume to stand between God and his children, to shelter them from his wrath, improperly magnify their office, and arrogate to themselves a mission which was never committed to them by divine authority. This subject is illustrated by a circumstance attending Paul’s conversion to Christianity. Most of the work was purely miraculous. Yet in one portion even of this human instrumentality was used. See Acts ix. 10—18. Ananias might just as well have claimed that he restored sight to Paul, by “putting his hand on him,” as others can claim to be anything more than instruments in the conversion of others to the faith of the gospel. See also Acts iii. 12—16. The apostles uniformly disclaimed all ascriptions of praise to themselves; but they exhorted their brethren to render homage to God, as the giver of “every good gift and every perfect gift.” Jas. i. 17. It is suggested by *Locke*, and the suggestion is adopted by others, that the apostle had an object personal to himself in quoting the prophet’s testimony concerning the importance of preaching. “St. Paul is careful everywhere to keep himself as well as possibly he can in the minds and fair esteem of his brethren the Jews. May not, therefore, this, with the two foregoing verses, be understood as an apology to them for professing himself an apostle of the Gentiles, as he does by the tenor of this epistle, and in the next chapter in words at length, ver. 13? In this chapter, ver. 12, he had showed that both Jews and Greeks, or Gentiles, were to

them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of

good things!

16 But they have not all obeyed

be saved only by receiving the gospel of Christ; and if so, it was necessary that somebody should be sent to teach it them, and therefore the Jews had no reason to be angry with any that was sent on that employment." ¶ *How beautiful are the feet, &c.* The quotation is from Isaiah lii. 7. "Paul has evidently made a new translation in his quotation, but he has abridged the original Hebrew."—*Stuart*. In the common version the original passage stands thus: "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth." This chapter is generally understood as a prophecy concerning Christ and his gospel. But, without insisting on this, it is manifest that Paul regarded the language as applicable to the heralds of the cross, and descriptive of their important work. The *feet* are chosen, rather than any other part of the body, as characteristic of these messengers of salvation, because it was the office of a herald to travel from place to place to communicate his message, and in early times the ordinary manner of travelling was on foot. The idea is, how beautiful is the appearance of those who bear glad tidings. Their approach is the signal of general rejoicing. ¶ *That preach the gospel of peace.* Literally, *that evangelize peace.* See note on Luke ii. 10. ¶ *And bring glad tidings of good things.* Literally, *evangelize good things.* The same word is repeated. The meaning, however, is distinctly expressed in the common translation. It is observable how both prophet and apostle confine their commendations to the preachers of the gospel of *peace*, the gospel of *good things*. These only are to be regarded as truly sent of God, or as messengers to be gladly received by mankind. The gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ is strongly characterized by its peace-giving nature. When his advent was announced by the angels, the burden of their song was, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good-will toward men." Luke ii. 14. When our Lord sent forth his

apostles, he commanded them, saying, "Into whatsoever house ye enter, first say, Peace be to this house." Luke x. 5. When he was about to be removed from his disciples by death, he comforted them by the assurance, "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give unto you; not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." John xiv. 27. Peter described the ministry of the apostles as "preaching peace by Jesus Christ." Acts x. 36. And in this epistle, to pass over a mass of testimonies to the same effect, the apostle declares that "the kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." Ch. xiv. 17. And he invokes the choicest blessings upon his brethren, saying, "Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope through the power of the Holy Ghost." Ch. xv. 12. Let so much serve as a specimen of the manner in which the Scriptures testify the peace-giving nature of the gospel. By this test may be determined the true character of any message delivered as gospel, whether or not it be genuine. If it can be sincerely and heartily believed, and the heart be thereby filled with hope, and joy, and peace, it bears marks, thus far, of genuineness. On the contrary, if a firm and steadfast faith be accompanied with dissatisfaction; if it be not all which is essential to the peace of the soul; if the most holy emotions of nature crave something better; if hope cannot be indulged correspondent to the faith; then we may well doubt whether this be the true gospel; for that giveth perfect peace to believers. It is not every professed herald whose feet are beautiful. Only those are to be received with confidence and with joyful hearts who "preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things." Such only bear proper credentials as "ambassadors for Christ." 2 Cor. v. 20.

16. *But they have not all obeyed the gospel.* This verse seems parenthetical. The apostle had admitted, substantially, that before faith could exist the gospel must be made known to men, ver-

the gospel. For Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report?

14, 15, and he repeats the same fact in ver. 17. But here he interposes the remark that it must indeed be admitted that many who have heard yet remain in unbelief; which was notoriously true in regard to the Jews. He adds the testimony of the prophet, that it was no new thing for men to turn a deaf ear to the truth. "The connection I take to be thus: The objector, in ver. 14, 15, pleads, by way of apology for his unbelieving countrymen, that it could not be expected they would believe, without the gospel being preached to them; thus intimating that many of them had not heard it proclaimed. To this the apostle answers, (1) That many who had heard it, namely, such as the objector himself must concede had heard it, did not believe it; and he quotes Isa. liii. 1, in order to show that the great prophet had predicted this same thing. To this the Jew replies that the very quotation which he makes contains an implication of the sentiment that men must hear the gospel before they can believe it; meaning thereby to intimate that a part of his kinsmen after the flesh, at least, are not to be involved in the charge of criminal unbelief. This last intimation the apostle immediately takes up, and replies to it, (2) in vers. 18—21, by repeated quotations from the Old Testament, showing that they all had heard the glad tidings of the gospel, or at least showing that what was said in ancient times of the Jews, in respect to the warnings and promises of God, may now be said with equal truth and propriety. It is the *principle* of the apostle's assertion or reasoning which he designs to support and justify by these quotations."—*Stuart*. It is difficult to determine the true connection in these verses, or the precise train of thought in the apostle's mind. In addition, therefore, to the first interpretation, which is adopted by many commentators, and which seems to me the most natural, I have inserted another, which some perhaps will regard with more favor. But, however difficult it may be to perceive the real connection of the facts stated, the facts themselves are perfectly manifest: (1.)

17 So then, faith *cometh* by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

That none can believe until the truth is brought to their notice, which is ordinarily done by human agency. Ver. 14, 15, 17. (2.) That the office of a true herald of the gospel is important, and his approach is hailed with joy by such as are of a teachable disposition. Ver. 15. (3.) That some remain in unbelief, notwithstanding the word is plainly and faithfully preached to them. Ver. 16. (4.) That such unbelief is criminal, when it results from obstinacy. Ver. 21. The general application of these facts is also sufficiently manifest; namely, that as the Jewish nation had obstinately and willfully rejected the gospel of Christ, which had been proclaimed among them both by him and by his disciples, "in demonstration of the spirit and of power," 1 Cor. ii. 4, it was right and proper that the kingdom of God should be taken from them, and given unto the Gentiles, who would bring forth the fruits thereof. Matt. xxi. 43. And the quotations from the prophets, in ver. 19, 20, show that this result was according to the declared purpose of God. ¶ *Esaias*. The Greek form of the Hebrew Isaiiah. The passage cited is Isa. liii. 1. ¶ *Who hath believed our report?* The form of the question implies that the report was not generally believed; nay, more, that it was generally disbelieved; that the number of believers was comparatively small. The prophet is generally understood here to refer directly to the advent of the Messiah; and he assigns some of the reasons why "his own received him not," John i. 11, when he came to them. It was a vain inquiry, then, of the Pharisees, John vii. 48, "Have any of the rulers or of the Pharisees believed on him?" For their own prophet had predicted that the true Messiah would be rejected by their nation. See note on chap. xi. 8.

17. *Faith cometh by hearing, &c.* This verse is substantially a repetition, in a more compact form, of ver. 14, 15. Faith results from hearing the truth; and hearing implies a communication of the "word" to be believed, which communication is usually made by human agency. It may be observed,

18 But I say, Have they not heard? Yes verily their sound

however, that the word here translated *hearing* is the same which is rendered *report*, in ver. 16. The sense is not obscured by the change of phraseology. Faith results from the report, and the report proclaims the "word" to be believed. Such is the ordinary process of faith in the gospel. The word must be spoken; in a few cases miraculously, by direct communication from heaven, as in Acts ix. 3—6; see also Acts xxvi. 13—20; Gal. i. 11, 12; but ordinarily by human agents. The word must be heard and understood. The mind then has an object which it can grasp. If full credit be given to the word, it is received by faith. If it be heartily and joyfully received, faith is exercised by the heart, as well as by the intellect; and this is the only faith which can give the victory over the world. 1 John v. 4. It must be remembered, however, that faith does not uniformly follow the hearing of the word. Ver. 16. Some are given over to hardness of heart and obstinacy of mind, chap. xi. 8; so that the truth is rejected, although distinctly heard and understood. When the heart is under the dominion of sin, the gracious influence of the spirit is necessary to prepare it for the reception of the truth; and in this sense it is true that faith is the gift of God. Paul had heard the word of truth from the lips of the martyr Stephen, and doubtless from other disciples, before his journey to Damascus; but he did not exercise faith until the word was set home to his heart with irresistible power. Others hear it and are inattentive and careless, until in the providence of God their hearts are aroused to attention. Others hear it, and obstinately reject it, until they are moved, by some method of divine appointment, to consider the things which belong to their peace. Although, for purposes detailed in chap. xi., and for other wise and holy purposes, it is perfectly consistent with the parental and benevolent character of God that he should delay the conversion of his children for a time, yet it by no means follows that they shall forever remain in unbelief. When the purpose of their temporary blindness shall have been accomplished, the scales

shall fall from their eyes, and the veil from their hearts; for God "will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth." 1 Tim. ii. 4. He wills, also, "that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." Phil. ii. 10, 11. When this consummation of the divine plan shall be fully realized, there surely will not remain "an evil heart of unbelief" in the aural universe.

18. *But I say, Have they not heard?* That is, they have heard. It had been intimated in ver. 14, 15, that unbelief was excusable, when the facts to be believed had never been made known; which is manifestly true, and is admitted by the apostle. In this verse some suppose the writer refers especially to the Gentiles, among whom the gospel had already been preached far and wide. Others, with better reason, as I think, suppose he refers to the Jews here as well as in the following verses; because his main object is to show the propriety of taking away their peculiar privileges on account of their unbelief, and bestowing them on the Gentiles, who would more profitably improve them. ¶ *Yes verily, their sound went into all the earth, &c.* This is taken in substance from Ps. xix. 4. "That all mankind have heard the word of God, the apostle proves from Ps. xix., where it is affirmed that the works of creation, especially the heavens, that is, the luminaries placed in the heavens, by their constant and regular motions, producing day and night, and the vicissitude of seasons, with all their beneficial consequences, preach the true God to the Gentiles in every age and country. This speech, uttered by the works of creation, is as properly God's as the speech uttered by the preachers of the gospel; and has always been so universal, and so intelligible, that if any of the Gentiles have not known and worshipped the true God, they are altogether inexcusable, as the apostle affirms, chap. i. 20." — *Macknight*. This is doubtless true and important, in itself. Yet I apprehend the subject of

went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world.

19 But I say, Did not Israel

discourse here is far different from that which is discussed in chap. i. The apostle there demonstrates the guilt of the Gentiles, who had sufficient evidence of God's existence and benevolence, and yet worshipped him not as God, but abandoned themselves to idolatry and wickedness. Here, however, he speaks especially of the gospel, the extent of its publication, and the guilt of its rejection. He could only quote the language of the Psalmist, therefore, in an accommodated sense, meaning to say it was as applicable to the promulgation of the gospel by preaching as it originally was to the promulgation of natural religion by the works of creation, in which sense it was unquestionably used by the Psalmist. But it is not probable that he here applied the language, even in this sense, to the Gentiles; for he is not now discussing the means they enjoyed of attaining the truth, nor the consequences of their rejecting it. He deals particularly with the Jewish nation; showing that, by their obstinacy and unbelief, they had justly forfeited the privilege, so long enjoyed, of being the peculiar people of God, and that the gospel rejected by them was now to be freely offered to the Gentiles. To show that their unbelief was inexcusable, he declares that the gospel had been preached throughout the land, using the Psalmist's language as a convenient and expressive form of words.

19. *But I say, Did not Israel know?* "What — is not said; but it is to be gathered from the subsequent context, and if so, it is clear that the sentiment is: Doth not Israel know (as I have before said, ver. 11, 12) that the Gentiles are to be received as well as the Jews, and the Jews to be cast off for unbelief? The apostle now proceeds to quote passages of the Old Testament, which show that the ancient prophets have explicitly declared the same thing." — *Stuart*. This is fairly "gathered from the subsequent context;" and it is in perfect accordance with the general theme of discourse; namely, the unreasonable and obstinate unbelief of the Jews, and the consequent transfer of

know? First, Moses saith, I will provoke you to jealousy by *them that are* no people, and by a foolish

peculiar religious privileges from them to the Gentiles. "Especially had the Jews been abundantly forewarned of the then existing state of things, even of the adoption of the Gentiles, and of their own perversity at this time. By Moses, Deut. xxxii. 21, the Lord had intimated that he would 'move them to emulation and anger,' by adopting the Gentiles, whom they despised as a 'foolish nation,' and, indeed, as 'no nation.' And more plainly still in Isa. lxxv. 1 he had apprized them that he would be 'found by those who neither sought nor inquired' for him, that is, by the Gentiles; while, on the other hand, he had, by the same prophet, Isa. lxxv. 2, pronounced the Jews 'a disobedient and gainsaying people, to whom he had long stretched forth his hands in vain.'" — *H. Ballou, 2d.* ¶ *First.* That is, in the order of time; or, in the first place. ¶ *Moses saith.* See Deut. xxxii. 21. ¶ *I will provoke you to jealousy.* I will make you jealous. The word used here occurs in only three other places in the New Testament, ch. xi. 11, 14; 1 Cor. x. 22; in the second instance cited, it is rendered "provoke to emulation," or make emulous. It is kindred to the word often rendered *zeal*, and indicates a fervid desire of the mind. "Jealousy is a passion of the mind, excited by another's being our rival, or sharing in those honors or enjoyments which we highly esteem, which we account our own property, and which we are greatly desirous of securing to ourselves. So the Jews moved God to jealousy, by giving to idols the honor and worship due to him alone, or by acting towards God in such a manner as usually creates jealousy in a man. For which reason, it is predicted, Deut. xxxii. 21, that they should be repaid in their own coin, and be moved to jealousy; — how? By transferring from them the honors and privileges in which they gloried, to those whom they despised, to a *Lo-am, a no-people*, that is, to the Gentiles. *Lo-am, a no-people, or not a people*, is the character of the heathen world, as not interested in the peculiar covenant of God. Therefore, this text, as it lies in Deu-

nation I will anger you.

20 But Esaias is very bold, and

teronomy, is full to the apostle's purpose, and doth not relate to their being conquered by heathen nations, but to their being stripped of boasted honors, and seeing them conferred upon those whom they contemned as the vilest people. How much the Jews were irritated at the preaching of the gospel to the Gentiles, is well known. See Matt. xxi. 43, 44, &c. ; Acts xxii. 21, 22 ; 1 Thess. ii. 15, 16." — *Taylor*. ¶ *And by a foolish nation I will anger you.* The idolatrous Gentiles are here styled a *foolish* nation, idolatry being characterized as *folly* by the sacred writers. See Jer. x. 8. "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God." Ps. xiv. 1. "Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools; and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things," &c. Ch. i. 22—25. To people who had sustained this character the privilege of sonship should be transferred, by their adoption as the people of God, to the great indignation of the Jews. "In Deut. xxxii. 21, from which these words are quoted, God complains of the Jews that they had apostatized from him and gone after idols, and thus provoked his jealousy and indignation. Because they had done so, he declares that he will, at some future period, provoke them and excite their jealousy, by receiving a heathen, idolatrous people, in their stead." — *Stuart*.

20. *But Esaias is very bold.* It was a matter of no small hazard for a prophet of God to deal plainly with the Jewish people, as is manifest from their history recorded in the Old Testament. The same spirit which exhibited itself in personal violence against our Lord and his disciples is manifest also in the outrages heaped upon some of the ancient prophets. They were preëminently of that class who resort to brute force as the most effectual reply to truth which can be neither gainsaid or resisted. Nothing seemed more suddenly to arouse their indignation, than to be told that God had any regard for the Gentile races of men, whom they contemptuously denominated dogs. Yet

saith, I was found of them that sought me not; I was made mani-

Isaiah had the courage to brave their wrath, and to speak the truth, whether they would hear or whether they would forbear. He distinctly foretold the adoption of the Gentiles, and the rejection of the Jews, as the people or visible church of God, on the earth. There is a tradition among the Jews, which, if it be not true, is certainly characteristic of that nation, that the life of this prophet was sacrificed by the indignant rulers. However this be, he was afterwards universally acknowledged to have been a holy man, speaking as he was moved by the Holy Ghost, 2 Pet. i. 21 ; and to this day his authority is revered both by Jews and Gentiles. Such is the eternal distinction between truth and all which opposes it. Violence may check it for a moment ; but it rises superior to all opposition, triumphs over all obstacles, and endureth forever. In this confidence, and with a firm reliance on the God of truth, Isaiah *boldly* proclaimed his message, though he well knew it would exasperate the Jews to madness. ¶ *I was found of them that sought me not.* The quotation is from Isa. lxxv. 1, 2, though the order of the language is transposed. By those who sought not the Lord, the Gentiles are intended. They were sunk in idolatry, and did not seek a knowledge of the true God. ¶ *I was made manifest, &c.* The same idea is repeated in a different form, after the manner of Hebrew parallels. To the benighted Gentiles, absorbed in their idolatry and worldly pursuits, inattentive to the works of creation, which, rightly interpreted, demonstrate the eternal power and divinity of the Creator, ch. i. 20, and despised by the more enlightened Jews, as a foolish and altogether inferior race, God graciously sent the gospel of his Son, with the assurance that they had a Father in heaven who loved them, and who would save them from sin. The truth found more ready acceptance among them than among the Jews, and converts were multiplied abundantly. The fact was undeniable that the gospel was thus preached and believed among the Gentiles. The Jews did not pretend to deny it ; but they alleged it as a proper subject of

fest unto them that asked not after me.

21 But to Israel he saith, All day long I have stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people.

indignation that the preachers of the gospel should assert that the Gentiles were to share the privileges which they claimed as exclusively their own. The apostle therefore quotes their own prophet, to show that such was the will of God, distinctly announced in former ages; and he declares, ver. 19, that they knew, or ought to know, or had the means of knowing, this fact.

21. *But to Israel he saith, &c.* The former verse has exclusive reference to the Gentiles, and to the blessings which God would bestow on them, of his own free and abundant grace. The apostle now adds the remainder of the prophecy, which has exclusive reference to the Jews. And it is easily believed that much boldness was exhibited by the prophet, in its original utterance. It is a distinct charge against the Jews of inattention, obstinacy, and rebellion against God. The apostle makes the same charge; and he makes it the more prudently in regard to himself, and the more forcibly and effectually in regard to the Jews, by adopting the language of a prophet for whom they professed the highest reverence. It is implied in this charge that the Jews had forfeited all claim to be regarded as a chosen people; and, consequently, that they had no right to complain that their privileges were transferred to others. They had rebelled against God, by rejecting his Son, who was the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person. Heb. i. 3. They had spurned his grace by rejecting the gospel of salvation. It remained that the kingdom should be taken from them, and given to others. Matt. xxi. 43.

CHAPTER XI.

1. *I say then.* Having, in the preceding chapters, affirmed the fact that the Jews had forfeited the privileges which had hitherto distinguished them from the Gentiles, and that the Gentiles

CHAPTER XI.

I SAY then, Hath God cast away his people? God forbid. For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin.

were now adopted as children of God; in other words, that by rejecting the gospel the Jews failed to enter the kingdom which was offered to the Gentiles and accepted by them, so that the Gentiles became the true church of God; and having proved, by the testimony of the ancient prophets, that this change was in accordance with the purpose of God; the apostle proceeds, in this chapter, to exhibit the grounds of hope which remained for the Jews. He anticipates an objection which would naturally arise in the mind of a Jew; as if the doctrine taught by him implied that God had utterly forsaken his people, and had left them to perish without remedy. ¶ *Hath God cast away his people?* By *his people* is here to be understood the Jewish nation generally; for of them the apostle had been speaking in the last two chapters. Concerning these the inquiry is made; and it is made in such a form that it may be understood in either of two ways: (1.) Hath God cast away all his people? or, (2.) Hath God utterly and forever cast off his people? The reply which follows meets the inquiry, in both forms; affirming (1) that, although the rejection is general, there are gracious exceptions, a remnant being preserved; and (2) that the rejection is not final in regard to any; but that, when the purpose of their temporary rejection shall have been accomplished, "all Israel shall be saved." Ver. 26. ¶ *God forbid.* This is the apostle's favorite form of an absolute and unqualified negative. See note on ch. iii. 4. ¶ *For I also am an Israelite.* The apostle would not be understood to believe that he himself was cast off or rejected from the visible church of God. Yet he was a Jew. It followed that not all the Jews were rejected. What was true concerning himself was equally true concerning other Jewish converts. As many as embraced the gospel continued members of the visible church, whose privileges were enjoyed equally

2 God hath not cast away his people which he foreknew. Wot ye not what the scripture saith of

by Jews and Gentiles. The rejection of the Jews, therefore, though general, was not universal. There were exceptions, of which the apostle offers himself as an example. ¶ *Of the seed of Abraham.* Another form of declaring the same fact; namely, that the apostle was an Israelite, or a Jew. Some suppose this phrase is used because it so often occurs in the Old Testament, as descriptive of the Jewish nation. ¶ *Of the tribe of Benjamin.* See Phil. lii. 5. The Jews were remarkably particular in matters of genealogy; and, by naming his *tribe*, the apostle intimated his ability to trace his descent from Abraham, in a right line. The substance of his declaration thus far is, that he certainly did not believe, or teach, that God had rejected every one of the Jews; for, although he was a Jew, he did not believe that he and others of "like precious faith" (2 Pet. i. 1) were excluded from the visible church.

2. *God hath not cast away his people whom he foreknew.* From the beginning God purposed to preserve from apostasy some among the Jews, "a remnant, according to the election of grace," ver. 5; and these were not cast away. The exclusive and peculiar privileges of the nation were taken away; the nation generally was rejected from being any longer the peculiar people of God; yet he *foreknew* and purposed that some individuals of the number should be permitted to continue in the enjoyment of religious privileges, — not exclusively, indeed, but in common with the believing Gentiles. "The foreknowledge of which the apostle speaks in this passage cannot be God's foreknowledge of his people to be heirs of eternal life; for, in that case, the supposition of his casting them off could not possibly be made. But it is God's foreknowledge of the Jews to be his visible church and people on earth." — *Macknight.* Here, as throughout the two preceding chapters, the *casting away* implies no more than depriving the Jews, as a nation, of the exclusive privileges which they had so long enjoyed. Connected with this, indeed, are intimations of a terrible

Elias? how he maketh intercession to God against Israel, saying,
3 Lord, they have killed thy

national calamity impending over them, involving their political dissolution, the slaughter of vast multitudes, and the dispersion of the remainder. But even this, although connected in point of time with the transfer of their religious privileges to others, and resulting from substantially the same cause, forms no part, strictly speaking, of the rejection, or casting away, which is here discussed by the apostle. ¶ *Wot ye not.* Know ye not; an obsolete form of expression. ¶ *What the scripture saith of Elias?* Rather, what the scripture saith in Elias, or Elijah; the Greek termination here taking the place of the Hebrew, as often elsewhere. The division of the Scriptures into chapters and verses is of comparatively recent date. References are often found in the New Testament to the older books, by some descriptive epithet like this. Thus our Lord refers to what was said in Moses, "at the bush;" that is, in that part of his writings where the burning bush is mentioned. See note on Mark xii. 26. So here the apostle refers to that part of the Scripture where the history of Elijah is recorded, which section very probably was then denominated *Elijah*. The passage referred to and partially quoted is 1 Kgs. xix. 10—18. ¶ *How he maketh intercession,* &c. Rather, maketh complaint. *To intercede* is defined thus: "To pass between; to mediate; to act between two parties;" and *intercession*, "Mediation, interposition, agency between two parties; agency in the cause of another." — *Johnson.* Intercession is now used almost exclusively in a good sense, indicating agency in behalf of another, or for the benefit of another; but the Greek word here rendered *maketh intercession* is used indifferently to express agency for or against another; a public prosecutor is said to intercede for the community, and also to intercede against the criminal. In this latter sense the word is here used; and the translators properly enough rendered it *intercession*, followed by *against.* To act between two parties for the benefit of one, is intercession for him; to act between two parties for the conviction of one, or for the purpose

prophets, and digged down thine altars ; and I am left alone, and they seek my life.

of bringing him to justice, is intercession against him. Thus Elijah interceded against Israel, accusing the nation of high crimes and misdemeanors, which are specified in the following verses.

3. *Lord, they have killed thy prophets.* See 1 Kgs. xix. 10. This charge was true. Jezebel, the wife and ruler of King Ahab, had "cut off the prophets of the Lord," except one hundred whom Obadiah concealed, 1 Kgs. xviii. 4 ; and, from ver. 13 of the same chapter, it seems probable that these also were discovered and slain. ¶ *And digged down thine altars.* Besides the principal altar at Jerusalem, it was permitted to the Jews to erect altars elsewhere, to which they could have more convenient access. These altars they were required to construct either of earth or of unhewn stone ; for they would be polluted by the use of any tool. Exo. xx. 24, 25. To dig down an altar, therefore, was the most effectual way to destroy it. And to dig down or destroy an altar of God, was regarded as an act of the highest indignity to him. Very probably these altars were destroyed, when, at the instigation of Jezebel, Ahab "reared up an altar for Baal, in the house of Baal." 1 Kgs. xvi. 32. ¶ *And I am left alone.* Whether any other true prophets of the Lord had escaped destruction or not, Elijah seems to have stood entirely alone in his memorable contest with the four hundred and fifty priests of Baal, and the four hundred priests of the grove, which were maintained at Jezebel's table. 1 Kgs. xviii. 19—23, &c. He might well say he was left alone, if there were none who had courage or opportunity to stand by him in his hour of extremity. ¶ *And they seek my life.* Jezebel was filled with such rage at the destruction of her prophets, after the Lord had answered Elijah by fire out of heaven, 1 Kgs. xvii. 38—40, that, although her husband had not the hardihood to interpose, having witnessed the miracle, she "sent a messenger unto Elijah, saying, So let the gods do to me, and more also, if I make not thy life as the life of one of them by to-morrow about this time : " whereupon

4 But what saith the answer of God unto him ? I have reserved to myself seven thousand men, who

Elijah "went for his life." 1 Kgs. xix. 1—3. He despaired of protection from Ahab, who, though somewhat sobered by the miracle of fire, was still under the absolute control of that incarnation of wickedness, his wife Jezebel. Elijah fled into the wilderness, and, in utter desperation, longed for death. 1 Kgs. xix. 4. Being refreshed by miracle, he journeyed "unto Horeb the mount of God," ver. 8. There the Lord communed with him, and there he poured forth his intercession against Israel. It was indeed a season of awful degeneracy. The whole nation seemed to have rebelled against God, and to have abandoned itself to idolatry and the most gross wickedness. Yet Elijah was divinely assured that the case was not quite so desperate as he imagined. In addition to this assurance, which the apostle quotes, ver. 4, Elijah received instructions concerning other duties, which remained for him, on the Lord's behalf ; and he went forth with renewed courage to obey the divine commandment.

4. *But what saith the answer of God unto him ?* The word here rendered answer does not occur elsewhere in the New Testament. It signifies an oracle, or a divine response. The precise manner in which this answer or divine response was uttered is not here stated ; but in the history referred to, 1 Kgs. xix. 9—16, we have a full account of it. Elijah was commanded to "go forth, and stand upon the mountain before the Lord. And behold, the Lord passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks before the Lord ; but the Lord was not in the wind. And after the wind, an earthquake ; but the Lord was not in the earthquake. And after the earthquake, a fire ; but the Lord was not in the fire. And after the fire, a still small voice," which the prophet recognized as the voice of the Lord. Physical and moral convulsions, doubtless, are under the superintendence of God. But when he would speak to the heart of man, he employs rather the quiet and soothing voice of his grace. Storms, earthquakes, and fire, may

have not bowed the knee to *the image of Baal.*

awaken terror or awe ; but a manifestation of love and affection calls forth the grateful confidence of the heart. Thus came the divine response to Elijah ; and he listened, trusted, and obeyed. ¶ *I have reserved to myself.* I have preserved from apostasy. The preservation of these was an act of grace. Ver. 6. God expressly claims that he had reserved them. They had not remained faithful by their own unaided strength. By the grace of God they had been holden up, while the multitude fell down unto Baal. It would serve to cultivate and strengthen the grace of humility, if men would realize that their preservation from the more gross forms of iniquity resulted from the restraining influence of divine grace, rather than from any inherent strength in themselves. Let him alone, let him stand or fall, according to his own choice or exertions, would be one of the most awful curses which could be pronounced against man, in his present state of "vanity." Ch. viii. 20. Were this fully realized, instead of boasting their attainments in virtue, or their freedom from notorious sins, as if by their own strength they had done it, and by their wisdom, Isa. x. 13, men would rather give glory to God, and exclaim, with the apostle, "By the grace of God I am what I am." 1 Cor. xv. 10. The declaration in the text comes to us, not as the opinion of a man, inspired or uninspired, but as the voice of God, directly communicated to his prophet. And we must accept it as a divine response, or abandon all faith in prophecy ; for, if Elijah were deceived in this case, what evidence have we that all prophetic influence was not also a deception ? ¶ *Seven thousand men.* "The number seven is probably employed here in the way of a round number ; that is, a definite, instead of an indefinite number. — In like manner, seventy and forty are frequently used in the Scripture. So much, however, is to be understood by it here, namely, a very considerable number." — *Stuart.* Elijah imagined that the whole nation was given over to idolatry. His mistake was corrected by the assurance that God had preserved a number, small indeed in comparison to the whole, yet very

considerable in itself, being enumerated by thousands. In quoting this testimony here, the apostle appears to have had a two-fold object : (1.) To show that, in the darkest hour, God had never utterly forsaken his covenant people, but had preserved some sincere worshippers in the midst of general degeneracy. (2.) To show that the rejection of the Jewish nation, except a "remnant," or very small proportion, was no new thing in the providence of God, and that therefore it was in no wise incredible that far the larger part of the Jews should now be excluded from their peculiar privileges. Thus it was in the days of the prophet ; thus also it might be now, according to the same divine justice and faithfulness. God would not leave himself entirely without witness among his ancient people ; but the remnant which remained was truly small, compared with the multitude who persisted in unbelief, and were cast out. ¶ *Who have not bowed the knee to Baal.* Who have not worshipped the idol. Bowing the knee, or kneeling, and even entire prostration, was formerly, as well as now, regarded as denoting reverence and adoration. The word Baal means lord, or master. This was the name of an idol of the Phœnicians and Canaanites, and the worship of this idol was that to which the Jews were most frequently addicted. They had been specially cautioned against worshipping the gods of the land which they inherited. "Thou shalt not bow down to their gods, nor serve them, nor do after their works ; but thou shalt utterly overthrow them, and quite break down their images. — For if thou serve their gods, it will be a snare unto thee." Exo. xxiii. 24, 33. Notwithstanding this, and numerous admonitions afterwards, they were prone to forsake the true God and to follow after idols, especially the gods of the land. And at the time here referred to "there was none like unto Ahab, which did sell himself to work wickedness in the sight of the Lord, whom Jezebel his wife stirred up. And he did very abominably in following idols, according to all things as did the Amorites, whom the Lord cast out before the children of Israel." 1 Kgs.

5 Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace.

xxi. 25, 26. The particular form of idolatry which he encouraged was the worship of Baal. 1 Kgs. xvi. 32, 33. As often happens, the people were ready to justify and imitate the ungodliness of their rulers; and they lifted up their voices also unto Baal, and worshipped him. From this general apostasy God mercifully preserved a remnant.

5. *Even so.* The purpose for which the quotation was made from the ancient history of the Jews is here indicated. An example was thus exhibited of divine justice and of divine mercy: of justice, in permitting the mass of the nation to reap the reward of their own folly; and of mercy, in preserving a few from the general apostasy. ¶ *At this present time.* Namely, the time when the apostle wrote. The same method of divine providence was visible as in the days of the prophet. Although the nation generally was about to be "cast away," or excluded from their former religious privileges, yet the rejection was not universal. And, as some were preserved, the rejection of the mass was not inconsistent with the covenant of promise. It was no more than had occurred in former times, especially in the days of Elijah. The Jews did not pretend that the covenant had been broken by any previous dispensation of providence; nor could they reasonably set up the pretence that a similar act of justice, tempered by mercy, was now inconsistent with the same covenant. Thus careful was the apostle, in every step taken in unfolding this very unpalatable doctrine, to remind the Jews that any objection alleged against it was equally applicable to other events which they acknowledged to have been holy, wise, and just. ¶ *There is a remnant.* A small number, in comparison with the whole. As a general fact, the Jews rejected Christ, and would not have him to reign over them. Luke xix. 14. They spurned his gospel, crucified him, and persecuted his disciples. The kingdom was about to pass from them to a people whom they despised. Yet the defection was not absolutely total. A few thousands

6 And if by grace, then *is it* no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if *it be* of

believed, and became the nucleus of the new church of God. ¶ *According to the election of grace.* Or, according to a gracious election. As, in the days of Elijah, the few who did not become idolaters were preserved by the purpose and providence of God, so now, also, those who believed on Christ were adopted into the visible church; and they were thus adopted, and preserved from the calamities which befell the unbelieving nation, not by any independent merit of their own, but by divine grace. For the same reason that he selected Abraham from among the idolatrous inhabitants of the old world, and called his seed in Isaac rather than in Ishmael, in Jacob rather than in Esau, in the remnant of Israel rather than in those who imitated the enormities of Abah and Jezebel, God also put it into the hearts of a few to accept Christ and his gospel, while he left the mass of the Jews in their unbelief. Some of the results of this distinction are disclosed in ver. 11—15; but the cause here assigned, and into which the whole subject must be resolved in its last analysis, is, that such was the will of God. It was according to the gracious election or choice of God that a remnant was preserved. "In ver. 28, persons said to be *elect* are called *enemies*. This, I think, shows that the election here spoken of is only to outward privileges, particularly the great privilege of being the visible church and people of God. The 'remnant according to an election by grace' are the Jews who believed the gospel, and who in the first age were many thousands. This remnant is said to have been elected according to grace, because they were made the church and people of God along with the believing Gentiles, through mere grace or favor." — *Mac-knight*.

6. *And if by grace, then is it no more of works.* The fact that the choice was wholly gratuitous, a mere act of grace, sufficiently shows that it was not on account of any previous merit on the part of the chosen. But, because the Jews were so confident in the availability of legal righteousness, the apos-

works, then is it no more grace : otherwise work is no more work.

He again reminds them that pure grace in God excludes the idea of previous merit in men. He preserved this "remnant" among the Jews on precisely the same principle that was manifested in the distinction between Jacob and Esau, made and announced, "the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God, according to election, might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth." Ch. ix. 11. He did not elect, or choose them, because they had conformed to the Mosaic law ; there were among the non-elect many who were even more punctilious in these outward observances. See Matt. xxiii. 23—28 ; Luke xviii. 9—14. Nor did he elect them because they believed in Christ : but they believed because he graciously opened their hearts, and gave them a spirit of faith. Just as men now are not born in Christendom because they had previously believed and obeyed the gospel, but they are so born because such was the purpose of God ; and their faith and obedience result from this distinguishing act of grace. It may be repeated, that the election here described has reference merely to temporal privileges, especially to the privilege of membership of the visible church of God, and the consequent opportunity to attain more accurate knowledge of his will and of human duty. But, if the election to temporal privileges be not merited by men, but bestowed by an act of pure grace, how much more the purpose to bestow on mankind an endless life of purity and happiness. In the language of *Stuart*,—"Men are saved either because they have wholly obeyed the divine law, or on the ground of grace merely : that is, they are saved either because they are able to advance claims which meet the demands of the law, or else it must be on the ground of pure gratuity. Now, as all men have sinned, it is not the *first* ; of course it must be the *second*." No man who has committed sin can claim endless holiness and happiness on the ground of personal merit. If he receive it, as God has graciously promised he shall, he must receive it as a gift, not as a reward. But the election here discussed

is of a minor character, relating to privileges and advantages to be enjoyed in this present world. "If we follow St. Paul through this context, two things will be plain respecting his views of the election here illustrated : First, that it was not an election to eternal blessedness hereafter. For when he addresses the elect among the Gentiles, those 'vessels of mercy whom God had afore prepared unto glory,' and 'called from among the Gentiles,' he tells them that they held their standing by faith, that they had reason to fear lest they should lose it, that if they did not continue in the goodness which God had shown them they should be cut off ; and, on the other hand, that the blinded, or non-elect, should be adopted, if they should cease from their unbelief. See ver. 20—23. And, secondly, it is equally plain, from the verses referred to, that the continuance of the privileges to which the one class had been elected, and from which the other class had been excluded, was not irrespective, or independent, of their agency. It was conditional on their faith or unbelief. This principle is recognized in the apostle's treatment of the two classes, in his manner of addressing them, not only here, but elsewhere."—*H. Ballou, 2d*. The foregoing remarks are doubtless just and true, when the subject is viewed from the author's point of light ; which, indeed, is the practical view of the subject, so far as human duty is concerned. Yet there is another point of light, from which the subject has a different aspect. Revelation teaches that although, in one sense, the continuance of the privileges mentioned "was not irrespective, or independent, of the agency" of men, and "was conditional on their faith or unbelief," yet, in another and important sense, it was not so conditional as to imply the slightest uncertainty in the result ; because that same faith or unbelief was distinctly comprehended in the original divine purpose. The selling of Joseph into Egypt was conditional, in one sense, upon the affectionate or unfriendly disposition of his brethren ; but in the divine purpose there was no conditionality. And although it is true that his brethren sold him because

7 What then? Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for ;

they hated him, and "thought evil against him," it is just as true that "God meant it unto good—to save much people alive." Gen. 1. 20. The crucifixion of our Lord was conditional, in one sense, on the faith or unbelief, the piety or impiety, of the Jewish rulers and people; for, if the whole nation had gladly accepted and revered him, they surely would not have crucified him: but in the divine purpose there was no conditionality, as is manifest from the ancient predictions. And although it is true that the Jews crucified Jesus "with wicked hands," it is equally true that he was "delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God." Acts ii. 23. The apostle does not discuss the metaphysical question, how the divine agency overrules the human; nor need we attempt what he refrained from attempting, and what is perhaps beyond the present powers of the human mind. Let it suffice, as a matter of faith, that all the purposes of God shall infallibly be accomplished, despite the obstinacy and perversity of men; and, as a matter of practical interest, that he has in some manner connected our happiness or misery with our obedience or disobedience, and the continuance of our privileges and blessings is thus connected with our right improvement of them. Thus the kingdom was taken from the Jews according to the declared purpose of God; at the same time, they had so abused their privileges, that the deprivation was a just retribution. So the remnant was preserved as an act of pure grace, not as a reward of works, but because such was the original purpose of God: at the same time, it is distinctly intimated that their continued preservation would go hand in hand with their continued faith and obedience. ¶ *But if it be of works, &c.* This clause is rejected by many critics, who suppose it was a marginal note which accidentally became incorporated into the text. It matters little, practically, whether it be genuine or not. It is merely the converse of the preceding clause, affirming nothing which is not legitimately embraced therein.

7. *What then? What conclusion*

results from the facts already stated? The answer, which follows, is very similar to the answer given to a like question in ch. ix. 30. There are two differences, however, which deserve notice. (1.) The distinction, in ch. ix., is between the Gentiles and the Jews; here, it is between the chosen "remnant" and the mass of the Jewish people. (2.) The distinction, in ch. ix., is represented as the result of a wrong manner of seeking righteousness, on the part of the Jews; here, it is represented as the accomplishment of the divine purpose, an act of pure sovereignty, uninfluenced by the merit or demerit of men. The reason is obvious. In ch. ix. the apostle discusses the question partly, at least, on practical grounds, and in that and the following chapter urges his brethren to exercise faith as a means of obtaining the blessing. Here, his object is to show how the divine purpose embraces the conversion of some in consequence of the temporary rejection of others, the reciprocal benefit resulting to those thus rejected, and the final glorious ingathering of the whole, as the fit consummation of the vast scheme of apparent change and vicissitude. In short, in the one case he represents the subject from one point of light; in the other, from another. Doubtless, both representations are accurate and harmonious, although we may not fully comprehend their true relation, in all its bearings. See note on ver. 6. ¶ *Israel hath not obtained.* Namely, the great body of the Jews; the Israelites, generally speaking; the whole nation, in contradistinction to the "remnant," or "election," afterwards mentioned. ¶ *That which he seeketh for.* The thing sought is generally understood to be righteousness, as in ch. ix. 31. But to this view of the case the following objection is not easily answered: "Because the apostle had represented the Jews as pursuing 'the law of righteousness,' ch. ix. 31, many are of opinion that what Israel is here said to have sought earnestly was 'a righteousness of works.' But, as in the next clause the apostle says, 'the election have obtained it,' that cannot be the thing Israel earnestly sought; for no

but the election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded,

person ever obtained a meritorious righteousness of works. As little was it the righteousness of faith which Israel sought; for, in the apostle's days, the generality of the Jews did not pursue that righteousness. It is evident, therefore, that the thing which Israel sought in vain, but which the election obtained, was the honor of being the church and people of God, after that honor was taken from them for their unbelief."—*Macknight*. This certainly accords with the general theme of this portion of the discourse; namely, the present rejection of the nation from its former peculiar privileges, according to the purpose of God; not wholly with reference to the past, but with a design of benefiting the Gentiles, and even the rejected Jews themselves, in future. See ver. 11, 12, 30, 31. ¶ *The election hath obtained it.* The choice or good pleasure of God hath freely bestowed on the remnant what the nation sought in vain. Or, if we understand *the election* to be put for *the elect*, the abstract for the concrete, in grammatical phrase, then the meaning will appear to be, that the *elect*, the chosen, the preserved remnant, have obtained the blessing sought in vain by their countrymen generally. God bestowed on comparatively few what the multitude vainly sought to obtain; and this gift was of grace, not of works. Ver. 5, 6. It was a distinction made by the Sovereign of all, for a wise, and holy, and merciful purpose. ¶ *And the rest were blinded.* Namely, the whole nation of the Jews, except the "remnant," before mentioned, "according to the election of grace." Much useless effort has been made to show that God had no agency in this blindness. Some have said that the language does not describe the manner in which they were blinded, nor by whom; and that, for anything which appears to the contrary, they may have blinded themselves. But this only postpones the difficulty until the testimony of the succeeding verse is encountered. What avails it to resort to at least very questionable expedients, for the purpose of avoiding a difficulty here, which must be met there, in its full force? Far better is it, in my judgment, to deal manfully

with the case, to admit the fact, and, if it be involved in mystery beyond our clear comprehension, to rest content in an unwavering confidence that the Judge of all the earth will do right. Such a spirit is manifest in what follows: "The rest were blinded, may mean, merely, that the remainder (the unbelieving part of the Jews) were in a state of blindness. In itself, also, it is capable of designating the idea that they were made blind by the agency of another; and in this case, if this be the idea, the implication would be that the agency was God's. If there be difficulty in admitting this sentiment, there is no more than is contained in ch. ix. 17, 18.—To all those who contend vehemently against such an exegesis, and regard it as dishonorable and reproachful to God, and as utterly unfounded, I can only say: Tell us, ingenuously, whether the gloss you put on ch. ix. 17, 18, is not an *explaining away* of the text, rather than an *explanation* of it. Can the conclusion be avoided, by any candid philologist, that the text does there assert that in some sense or other the agency of God is concerned with the *hardening* of sinners? And, in the case before us, if *were hardened* merely designates *state* or *condition* (as Bretschneider, Wahl, Tholuck, Flatt, and many others, maintain), then, to what purpose, I would ask, is the quotation in the next three following verses? Do these also designate no agent? If you say these are only examples for illustration, but not predictions, I grant it. But, then, how will these examples illustrate the case before the writer, unless they exhibit a *principle* which is the same as that avowed by the writer? And can ver. 8 be construed without the supposition that an *agent* is designated, who is, in some way or other, concerned with the *eyes that see not*, that is, with the *blindness* of Israel? This is impossible, unless we do away by violence with the most obvious sense of the apostle's words."—*Stuart*. In regard to the allegation that the agency of God, in the blindness of men, is in any degree inconsistent with his character, and that the supposition of such agency is "dishonorable and reproachful to God,"

8 (According as it is written, God hath given them the spirit of

it may be inquired, (1) May not God as properly and as righteously impose moral blindness, as any other disability or deprivation, by way of penalty for sin? It is admitted, on all hands, that he excluded the Jewish nation from their former religious privileges, from their former facilities for learning the divine will and purposes, in consequence of their sinfulness? What is the moral difference between withholding the means of knowledge and granting the means, but incapacitating men from their due improvement? (2.) If the subject be considered without reference to sin and its penalty, but solely as an act of sovereignty, for the accomplishment of the wise and holy purposes of God, is there any more real difficulty in it than in many providences which no Christian pretends to arraign? When God called Abraham, he left the mass of the Gentiles destitute of the knowledge which he imparted to his chosen servant. In like manner, he left Ishmael and Esau destitute of the privileges which he bestowed on Isaac and Jacob. So, also, while he guided the Jews in the wilderness, and spoke to them from the most holy place in the promised land, he suffered the Gentile world to "sit in darkness and in the shadow of death." Matt. iv. 16; Luke i. 79. No Christian ever pretended that such distinctions were dishonorable on the part of God; but what is the moral difference between withholding light and pouring it out abundantly, but blinding the eyes so that they shall not perceive it? If it were alleged that God withheld light and knowledge, or prevented men from perceiving it, with a design to injure them; that he would not compensate the present loss by future benefit; or, plainly, that he would hold them guilty, and deserving of endless misery, for not doing what he had made them utterly incapable of doing; then I grant, it would be an exceedingly difficult task to reconcile the alleged facts with the honor and justice of God; so difficult, indeed, that I should despair of its accomplishment. But, so long as we believe that all the moral, as well as mental and physical, diversities which exist in the world, are controlled by the gracious

Governor, for the accomplishment of his vast designs, in which not one soul shall receive permanent harm, but all shall share in the unspeakable glory which shall result from the whole, I can see no real difficulty in this case, beyond what we encounter, every day of our lives, in the endless diversities of human condition by which we are surrounded. With trustful and confiding faith in God's impartial goodness, in regard to this, as in regard to all his providences, we may well adopt the language of our Lord, uttered in reference to this very subject: "Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight." Matt. xi. 26. Some, doubtless, are blinded as a retribution for their previous abuse of privileges; from others the light of truth is withheld for other and equally good reasons. It is with this as with natural blindness, which is sometimes imposed as a penalty, at other times "that the works of God should be made manifest." John ix. 1—3. In any case, we need not doubt the wisdom nor the love of God.

8. *According as it is written.* It is generally supposed that what follows is substantially quoted from Isa. xxix. 10, and vi. 9. The quotation is not literal, but the sense is preserved. From the closing words it would seem that the apostle had reference also to Deut. xxix. 4. This prophetic language, as well as the Psalmist's words in the following verses, probably had primary reference to events which occurred in ancient times. But a principle of the divine government is here asserted, which the apostle considered applicable to the events which he was describing. He, therefore, applied this testimony, if not as a prophecy, at least as a fit illustration "to the Jews of his day, to confirm his position that they had been blinded by the judgment of God. It was what was popularly called a 'judicial blindness,' inflicted, according to other scriptures, for their previous wickedness." — *H. Ballou, 2d.* ¶ *God hath given them, &c.* See note on ver. 7; "the rest were blinded." ¶ *The spirit of slumber.* God had placed them in a condition like that of sleeping men. They had all the faculties necessary to see, and hear, and understand; yet, like men upon whom

slumber, eyes that they should not see, and ears that they should not hear;) unto this day.

deep sleep has fallen, these faculties were inactive, or, at least, not beneficially and intelligently active; for they neither saw, nor heard, nor understood, aright. ¶ *Eyes that they should not see.* Or, *eyes that see not.* This phraseology is several times, in the Old Testament, applied to the Jews, who rejected the truth; as if, for their abuse of their mental and moral faculties, God had given them over to darkness, and rendered them incapable of discerning the truth. And, in the New Testament, the same language is frequently applied to the Jews then living. It is clearly the doctrine of the apostle, that this blindness was imposed upon the Jews to prevent them from embracing the gospel at that particular time, whether as a penalty for their former perversity, or as a means of extending the gospel to the Gentiles, or for both purposes combined. Such also was the doctrine announced by our Lord, in the reason given for speaking to that race in parables: "Therefore speak I to them in parables; because they seeing see not; and hearing, they hear not; neither do they understand. And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias, which saith, By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive; for this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their hearts, and should be converted, and I should heal them." Matt. xiii. 13—15. God had purposed to transfer their peculiar privileges from the Jews to the Gentiles; thus righteously recompensing the past obstinacy of the one, conferring a gracious gift upon the other, and preparing the way for the ultimate benefit of both. To the execution of this design, the continued blindness of the Jews, for a season, was necessary. ¶ *And ears that they should not hear.* Or, *ears that hear not.* This is a substantial repetition of the idea conveyed in the former clause. Both express the condition of an indi-

9 And David saith, Let their table be made a snare, and a trap, and a stumbling-block, and a rec-

vidual, or people, failing to appreciate the true meaning of God's word and works. ¶ *Unto this day.* In the common version, these words are represented as connected with ver. 7, the intervening words being marked as parenthetical. This construction is disapproved by *Stuart* and *Macknight*, and apparently for good reasons. It is certain that the similar passage, Deut. xxix. 4, embraces these words; and it is more probable that the apostle adopted them as a part of the prophetic testimony than that he added them, as indicated in the received version.

9. *And David saith.* See Ps. lxxxix. 22, 23. ¶ *Let their table be made a snare, &c.* "Let their season of enjoyment and refreshment, when they expect quietude and pleasure, and feel themselves to be safe, prove to be a season of chastisement and danger, and of righteous retribution."—*Stuart.* *Snares and traps* are used in capturing beasts and birds. *Stumbling-blocks* are impediments in the way, over which the unwary fall. The same idea of *concealed danger* underlies all these expressions. Neither bird nor beast would be captured if aware of the danger which lurks in the snare and trap. No man would strike his foot against a stumbling-block which he clearly perceived and understood. The disasters here indicated seem to grow out of apparent prosperity, and to be wholly unexpected. Even as the apostle says, "The day of the Lord cometh as a thief in the night. For when they shall say peace and safety, then sudden destruction cometh upon them," &c. 1 Thess. v. 2, 3. Many commentators interpret *table* as referring to animal enjoyments, to "fulness of bread." May it not rather refer to privileges and enjoyments in general? If this be the meaning, a very pointed application of it to the Jews, in the apostle's day, is perceptible. They prided themselves on their national and religious privileges. They boasted that God had not dealt so with any nation. They were confident of perpetual safety and prosperity; for they were a chosen people, and God would always distinguish them by pe-

ompense unto them :

10 Let their eyes be darkened,

cular blessings. Yet these very privileges proved to be a stumbling-block. By their gross misimprovement of their manifold blessings, they rendered themselves unworthy of their continuance. By a blind and bigoted reliance on ceremonial righteousness, they failed to perceive the way of true righteousness. By an overweening adherence to Moses, they rejected a greater than Moses. The abundance of their former blessings became the occasion of their exclusion from more rich and more abundant blessings. ¶ *And a recompense.* This word may indicate either a reward or a retribution. It has the latter meaning in this place. As abundance of food, imprudently used, proves injurious to bodily health, and thus gluttony receives its gratification and its retribution from the same source, so, when the misimprovement of political or religious privileges results in exclusion from them, such privileges become, in a like sense, a retribution.

10. *Let their eyes be darkened.* Here the same figure of partial or entire blindness occurs; and for this reason in particular the quotation was probably introduced. The main object here seems to be a representation of that "judicial blindness" which had befallen the Jews. ¶ *And bow down their back always.* Whether this language be understood literally or figuratively, it indicates a condition of deep distress. Mental anguish, as well as bodily pain, will make the eye dim, and bow the body towards the earth. These two verses, quoted from the Psalmist, have occasioned difficulty to many, who have regarded them as a prayer, or an imprecation. They have found it not easy to reconcile the spirit which they seem to breathe with that spirit of universal love and good-will which the gospel requires. Some have attempted to cut the knot which they could not untie, by denouncing both the language and the spirit of the Psalmist as utterly unchristian and unjustifiable. Others have more reverently suggested that, as David was King of Israel, and bound by his oath of office to administer justice, he might lawfully and properly express a desire that the

that they may not see, and bow down their back always.

wicked should be adequately punished. It has also been suggested that men in private life, who love righteousness and hate iniquity, may cherish and express a desire that the disturbers of the public peace, incendiaries, robbers, murderers, and the like, may be detected and duly punished; and that such a desire is not wholly contrary to the spirit of Christianity. It is certain that God does punish iniquity, if we may believe the divine testimony and our own experience. It would not seem to be very wrong to desire the execution of God's will. We may and should pity the criminal, who sins and suffers; at the same time we may lawfully desire the triumph of justice. Especially are these two desires not inconsistent, if we believe the administration of divine justice, though often painful in its process, is designed, not only for the protection of the innocent and the honor of the law, but for the highest good of the very persons who suffer. See Heb. xii. 9—11. It was probably under the influence of this belief that the apostle ventured to say concerning "Alexander the coppersmith," who had deeply injured him, "The Lord reward him according to his works." 2 Tim. iv. 14. While it is not probable that the apostle entertained unchristian and revengeful feelings towards Alexander, there cannot be much doubt that he expresses a wish that divine justice might be administered. It is easy to conceive that those who consider endless misery to be the proper punishment of sin should recoil from cherishing a desire for its infliction, and be absolutely ashamed to give utterance to any such desire. The reason is obvious. Endless punishment would be an unmitigated curse, and could not, by any possibility, be advantageous to the sufferer; a wish for its infliction, therefore, would be utterly abhorrent to that spirit of benevolence and love which we are commanded to cherish towards all men, even the evil and unthankful. Far different is the retribution which results in good to the sufferer; and such, the Scriptures assure us, is the retribution which God renders unto the disobedient. These

11 I say then, Have they stumbled that they should fall? God

considerations may divest the Psalmist's language of its apparent harshness, if we regard it as a prayer, or as an imprecation. But there is no absolute necessity for thus regarding it. It may be understood merely as a prophetic declaration that the judgments of God will surely overtake the wicked, even when they are confident of security and assured safety. "As the Hebrews used the imperative mood for the future, this passage may be translated, 'Their table shall be for a snare,' &c., and so may be considered as a prophecy."—*Macknight*. However this be, and whether the language of David be understood as an imprecation or as a prophecy, the object of its introduction here is well stated by *Stuart*, who understands it in the former sense. "The apostle, in making this quotation, need not be supposed to design anything more than to produce an instance from the Psalms where the same principle is developed as is contained in the assertions which he had made; that is, the ancient Scriptures speak of a part of Israel as blind and deaf, as in deep distress and under heavy punishment, because of their unbelief and disobedience. What happened in ancient times may take place again; it has, in fact, happened at the present time."

11. *I say then*. The question which follows is generally regarded as the language of an objector. There can be no doubt that it embraces an objection likely to arise in the mind of a Jew, whether a believer or a disbeliever. Thus far, no very plain intimation is given of any recovery from the exclusion and degradation of the Jews, or of any beneficial purpose to be accomplished in regard to themselves or to others. The inquiry was natural, whether the rejection was final and irreversible, and whether no good purpose was connected with this act of divine justice. ¶ *Have they stumbled that they should fall?* The peculiar phraseology of the inquiry may have been occasioned by the occurrence of the word *stumbling-block* in the preceding quotation. "The form of the question is ambiguous, so as to leave room for it to suggest two inter-

forbid: but *rather* through their fall salvation is come unto the Gen-

rogatories: (1.) Are they utterly to fall? and (2.) Was it the object or purpose of their stumbling that they should fall? 'By no means,' says the apostle, in answer apparently to both of these interrogatory suggestions. And here he gives intimation of the glorious result, which he has hitherto kept out of sight, except that he has cast one or two glances at it. As to the object of their stumbling, or 'falling away' (the original word is different from that translated 'fall'), he says it was the occasion of salvation coming to the Gentiles. Had the Jews, instead of crucifying Christ, received him as their Messiah, the gospel would not have been driven out, as it were, from them to the Gentiles; nor would these have accepted it under the character which it would then have seemed to bear, of a Jewish institution. Indeed, it is easy to see that, had not the Jews 'fallen away,' the entire action of Christianity would have been changed. It would have been robbed of all the power it derived from 'Christ crucified.'—*H. Ballou*, 2d. ¶ *God forbid*. See note on chap. iii. 4. The apostle denies, in the most emphatic manner, that the Jews have "stumbled that they should fall." This denial applies to both points which seem included in the inquiry. The reason on which the denial is founded, in one aspect of the case, immediately follows: it is hinted in verse 12, and more plainly stated in verses 26—32, in regard to the other. ¶ *But rather through their fall salvation is come unto the Gentiles*. It should be remembered that, throughout this chapter, although the apostle recognizes and even enforces the truth that God renders a just recompense of reward to every transgression and disobedience (Heb. ii. 2), yet his main object is to exhibit the controlling sovereignty of God, the benevolence of his purpose, and the certainty that his purpose shall be fully accomplished. Thus, in ancient times, when the chosen people had abandoned themselves to idolatry, God reserved unto himself a considerable number, who bowed not down unto Baal. So, also, when the nation

tiles, for to provoke them to jealousy.

generally rejected the Lord Jesus Christ, there yet remained a *remnant*, comparatively small, but nevertheless embracing many thousands, Acts ii. 41 ; iv. 4 ; v. 14, according to the election of *grace*. His purpose, thus far, had been accomplished, without hindrance. The unbelief and rejection of the mass was comprehended in the same purpose which secured the fidelity and preservation of the "remnant." Of the various evidences of this truth, it is needless to specify many. Yet it may not be wholly impertinent to say, (1) That, from the character of God, as a universal and absolute sovereign, whose will is done "in the army of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth," Dan. iv. 35, it may be reasonably concluded, that all the actions of all men are under his control and circumscribed by his purpose. (2.) The fact being conceded, that he controls the exceptions, it would be unreasonable to deny that he controls the general current of human affairs. This would be equivalent to saying, either that his power was insufficient to control all, and was only effectual to the preservation of an exceptional remnant, or that his benevolence was so limited and partial that he was content to allow the many to plunge into destruction, if he might succeed in rescuing a few from the common ruin. The contrary is directly asserted by the apostle, who recognized the operation of general laws. See ch. ix. 15—18. And to the same effect he declares, in ver. 7, that while some were made partakers of the divine gift, "the rest were blinded." (3.) The obstinacy of the Jewish nation, their stubborn unbelief, and their rejection and crucifixion of the Messiah, were distinctly predicted by holy men of old, speaking as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. 2 Pet. i. 21. Instead of quoting predictions, I refer the reader to the language of our Lord himself. When apprehended by his enemies, he intimated that he might, if he chose, obtain deliverance by the ministry of angels. "But," he added, "how then shall the Scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be?" Matt. xxvi. 53, 54. So, when his disconsolate disciples were mourning what they regarded as his un-

timely death, "he said unto them, O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken ! Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory ?" Luke xxiv. 25, 26. Is it for one moment to be believed that God would inspire his servants to predict events concerning which there was any uncertainty or contingency ? And how could such certainty exist as would justify an absolute divine prediction, except by the controlling influence of the divine purpose ? The apostles manifestly regarded the subject in this light. See Acts ii. 23 ; iv. 27, 28, and note on ver. 6. The real point of the inquiry in the text, therefore, in this aspect of the case, is this : has God purposed the present blindness of the Jews ? In other words, have they *stumbled* at this stumbling-stone, merely that they might suffer the penalty of being rejected and disowned as the peculiar people of God ? Has the divine purpose its full accomplishment in this manifestation of retributive justice ? This inquiry is met by the apostle's most decided and unqualified negative. He asserts, in the first place, that God had another and far higher purpose than this ; and afterwards he declares that this fall, or falling away, is not final and irretrievable. The higher purpose to which the apostle refers is the *salvation of the Gentiles*. In order that the Gentiles might come unto the knowledge of the truth and be saved, 1 Tim. ii. 4, it was necessary that the Jews, to whom the gospel of truth was first offered, should reject it. The reasons are well expressed by a judicious commentator : — "The rejection of the Jews, the destruction of their church, the abrogation of their law, and the driving of them out of Canaan, all comprehended in the expression, *their fall*, were absolutely necessary to the Gentiles obtaining the knowledge and means of salvation. For, first, the worship of God in the Jewish church being confined to Jerusalem, it was impossible for the whole Gentile world to find the knowledge and means of salvation in the Jewish church ; and yet, while that church subsisted, no other church could be introduced. Wherefore, that all the Gen-

12 Now, if the fall of them be the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of

tiles might have the knowledge and means of salvation given them, it was necessary that the Jewish church should be removed, and the law of Moses abolished, that the Christian church might be erected, in which the spiritual worship of God can be performed by all the Gentiles, in all places and at all times acceptably. Secondly, the unbelief and rejection of the Jews, with their expulsion from Canaan, contributed greatly to the introduction of the Gentiles into the Christian church," &c. — *Macknight*. See further from the same author, in note on ver. 15. ¶ *To provoke them to jealousy*. Or, to emulation. See note on ch. x. 19. The kingdom was transferred to the Gentiles, Matt. xxi. 43, for a two-fold purpose: (1.) That the Gentiles might have access to spiritual life; that they might believe and be saved; and (2) That the Jews, seeing the blessing bestowed on the Gentiles, and their beneficial improvement of it, might be stimulated to seek the same blessing for themselves. God subdues a stubborn heart of unbelief by various methods; and this was one of the methods adopted to overcome the obstinacy of the Jews.

12. *Now, if the fall of them*. Namely, the stumbling of the Jews at that stumbling-stone, ch. ix. 32, and their exclusion from former privileges, as before described. ¶ *Be the riches of the world*. Be productive of rich blessings to those who are not Jews, by opening the gate of light and life to them, or enabling them to attain that salvation which is of faith. ¶ *And the diminishing, &c.* This clause is a repetition of the former, in different words, and is an example of what is called Hebrew parallelism. ¶ *How much more their fulness?* We have here an intimation of that vast system of causes and effects which is embraced in the divine purpose. (1.) The Jews are excluded not merely on account of their unbelief and sinfulness, which richly merited such retribution, but to make room, or to give opportunity, for the Gentiles to enter the visible church of God. (2.) The blessedness thus attained by the Gentiles should stimulate the Jews to

the Gentiles; how much more their fulness?

13 For I speak to you Gentiles,

emulation, and induce them to seek the same blessedness. So that, in process of time, not only a remnant, to which the faithful of the nation was now reduced, but the whole body of the Jews, should acknowledge the Messiah, and enter into life. (3.) If the rejection of the mass, *diminishing* it to a mere *remnant*, was the occasion of such rich blessings to the Gentiles, how much greater would be the beneficial effect of their restoration to *fulness*, or their universal ingathering! See ver. 15. If multitudes of Gentiles became believers in consequence of the casting out of the Jews, well might it be expected that a universal turning to God should result from his regathering his ancient people into the fold from which they had so long been excluded. And here, it should not be overlooked, the apostle answers the interrogatory in ver. 11, in its other aspect. He would have his brethren understand, not only that the fall of the Jews was not the ultimate purpose of God, because he had a far higher purpose to be accomplished by it, even the salvation of the Gentiles, but also that the fall was not final and irrecoverable in regard to the Jews, because God would raise them up again, and restore them to favor. And this raising up, this ingathering, this fulness, I apprehend, relates not exclusively to the remote descendants of those who stumbled and fell, but also to the very individuals through whose fall salvation came to the Gentiles. If the judgment meted out to them was productive of great benefit to the Gentile world, which benefit should be reflected back on the future representatives of their own nation, and thence again to the whole world, it would seem altogether inconsistent with the divine administration, if those who were "excrcised thereby" received no benefit. "The apostle did not think they were so blinded, or given up to a spirit of slumber, but that they might still be saved." — *Whitby*. But he speaks more plainly in the subsequent part of the chapter, and does not leave us merely to *infer* his belief that in due time "all Israel shall be saved."

inasmuch as I am the apostle of the Gentiles, I magnify mine office :

14 If by any means I may pro-

13. *For I speak to you Gentiles.* "As St. Paul was specially the apostle to the Gentiles, he would glorify that office by his zeal in their behalf; and he hoped, also, by the example of heathen believers, to move his own countrymen, the blinded Jews, to emulation, so that he himself might, in this way, be the means of saving some of them. Here is another proof that he regarded their rejection as but conditional on their unbelief, and that he looked forward to their salvation." — *H. Ballou, 2d.* "The connection seems to be this: When I speak of the riches of the Gentiles, and in so doing magnify my own office, inasmuch as I am the apostle of the Gentiles, still I do not so speak altogether for your sakes; in doing this I have a design to excite the attention of the Jews to the things of the gospel." — *Stuart.* ¶ *The apostle of the Gentiles.* Paul was not the only one of the apostles who labored among the Gentiles; for Peter also preached the gospel to them. See Acts, ch. x. Nor did Paul confine his ministry exclusively to the Gentiles; for he not only addressed his brethren in Judea, Acts xxvi. 20, but it was his ordinary custom, in Gentile cities, to deliver his message first to the Jews and afterwards to the Gentiles, as is manifest from the whole history of his ministry. Nevertheless, he properly styles himself the apostle to the Gentiles, because he received a special commission for that service, at his conversion, Acts xxvi. 16—20; he was afterwards solemnly set apart for the same service, under the direction of the spirit, Acts xiii. 1—4; Gal. ii. 1—9; and he actually labored more among the Gentiles, so far as the history is recorded, than among the Jews, and more than all the other apostles. ¶ *I magnify mine office.* He claimed the right to speak freely and plainly, by virtue of his office, as an apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ. By such faithfulness and plainness, and by his zealous exertions to instruct the ignorant, to reclaim the sinful, to establish churches of the faithful, in a word, to establish the gospel firmly among the Gentiles, he honored his office, and exemplified

voke to emulation *them which are my flesh*, and might save some of them.

its importance. While he claimed no extraordinary respect to himself as a man, he vindicated the dignity of his office as an apostle.

14. *If by any means, &c.* The apostle here discloses his double object, in describing so vividly the blessedness of Gentile believers, and the miserable estate of the Jews who obstinately persisted in their unbelief: it was not only to animate and encourage the Gentiles, but to awaken and benefit the Jews also, who might possibly be thus induced to seek the same blessings. ¶ *I may provoke to emulation.* See notes on ch. x. 19, and ver. 11. The same Greek word occurs here which is found in the passages referred to; though the translation is varied from *jealousy to emulation.* ¶ *Them which are my flesh;* or, my kindred according to the flesh; namely, the Jews. Notwithstanding their hatred of him, as an apostate, and their persecution of him, not only in Judea, but in the cities of the Gentiles, wheresoever they came in contact with him, the apostle truly loved his brethren, and was willing to labor and suffer on their behalf. See ch. ix. 1—3; x. 1. ¶ *And might save some of them.* This expression must be understood with the proper qualification. Paul would by no means represent himself as the Saviour of men. But he desired to become the *instrument* of salvation to his brethren, by inducing them to acknowledge the true Messiah, to embrace his gospel, and to trust in him who "is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him." Heb. vii. 25. If he could be instrumental in their conversion to God, his highest wish was gratified. 1 Cor. iii. 4—7; 2 Cor. v. 20. In this qualified sense, he trusted that he might save some of his brethren, by some of the methods which he adopted for that purpose; among which was the one here employed; namely, the exhibition of the blessings which accompanied the belief of the Gentiles, and the miseries about to befall the "disobedient and gainsaying" Jews. For the same purpose, apparently, he proceeds to speak of the future ingathering of those **who**

15 For if the casting away of them *be* the reconciling of the

world, what *shall* the receiving of them *be*, but life from the dead?

were now rejected, and to show how the reciprocal influence of Jews and Gentiles upon each other should finally result in the benefit of all.

15. In this verse the sentiment of ver. 12 is repeated in stronger terms. ¶ *If the casting away of them.* That is, of the unbelieving Jews. See note on ver. 12. ¶ *Be the reconciling of the world.* Equivalent to the riches of the world, and the salvation of the Gentiles, in ver. 11, 12. ¶ *What shall the receiving of them be.* Equivalent to their fulness, ver. 12. ¶ *But life from the dead?* The apostle here gives form to the idea embraced in the interrogatory at the close of ver. 12. He there intimates that, as the exclusion of the Jews was the occasion of great benefit to the Gentiles, their reādmision to their former spiritual privileges, not exclusive, as before, but to be shared in common with others, should result in still greater blessedness. This greater blessedness is here described as *life from the dead*. Some have understood this as an intimation that the general resurrection shall immediately follow the conversion of the Jewish race to Christianity. It is much more probable, however, that the apostle refers to the reānimation of the Gentile church from a state of spiritual lethargy or deadness, or rather to the great joy which will then be diffused throughout the whole church, like that which a literal return of the dead to life might be expected to produce. The material fact, in regard to the Jews, is here again exhibited; namely, that their exclusion is not final and irreversible, but that they are again to be received, and to become joint-partakers with the Gentiles of gospel privileges and benefits; through which exhibition of divine grace new life shall be imparted to the whole church. The importance of the fact, assumed as the foundation of the argument in this verse, to wit, that the temporary casting away of the Jews was the reconciling of the world, may justify the insertion of some further remarks by the writer cited in note on ver. 11. "In this passage the unbelief and rejection of the Jews is justly represented as the means of the reception of the Gentiles.

For, although the unbelief of the Jews may seem to have been an obstacle to the conversion of the Gentiles, it hath greatly contributed to that event. Besides the reason mentioned in the note, ver. 11, it is to be considered that the rejection of the Jews was the punishment of their unbelief, and that both events were foretold by Moses and by Christ. Wherefore, these events, as the fulfilment of prophecy, have strengthened the evidences of the gospel, and thereby contributed to the conversion of the Gentiles. This, however, is not all. There are many other predictions in the writings of Moses and the prophets which demonstrate the divine original of the gospel, but which derive their strength from their being in the possession of the Jews. This people had the oracles of God committed to them from the beginning; and these oracles have continued in their hands ever since. They have preserved them with the greatest care; and in their dispersion they carry them with them, wherever they go. Wherefore, in all countries the Jews are living witnesses to the antiquity and genuineness of the whole of the prophecies by which the gospel is confirmed. And their testimony, which is always and everywhere at hand, cannot be called in question. Because, having shown themselves from the beginning bitter enemies of Christ and of his gospel, no suspicion can be entertained that they have either forged these prophecies, or altered them to favor us. As little can it be suspected that we have forged or altered these prophecies. For, however much any of us may have been disposed to alter the copies of the Jewish Scriptures in our own possession, it would have served no purpose while our enemies, the Jews, maintained the integrity of their copies. The truth is, the testimony of the Jews to the antiquity and genuineness of the prophecies which have been fulfilled in Christ is of such strength in the proof of the divine original of the gospel, that, from what the apostle hath written in this chapter, we understand that, for the very purpose of bearing testimony in every age and country to the antiquity and genuineness of their own

16 For if the first fruit *be* holy, the lump is also *holy*: and if the root *be* holy, so *are* the branches.

Scriptures, and of strengthening the evidence of the gospel, God hath decreed that this people, contrary to the fate of all other conquered and dispersed nations, shall subsist distinct from the rest of mankind, and continue in unbelief, till the fulness of the Gentiles be come in; after which when their testimony is no longer needed, they themselves will embrace the gospel. Wherefore, in surveying this with the other wonders of the divine dispensations, well might the apostle cry out, as he has done, 'O, the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and of the knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out.' Ver. 33." — *Macknight*. If such be the purpose of God, and the Jews be blinded in order that the Gentiles may more effectually be brought to a knowledge of the truth, we may be assured that the same purpose has secured them against final loss thereby; for it is abhorrent to a spirit of benevolence that some should suffer endless damage for the benefit of others. God is impartial; and, although he causes his children to share unequally in temporary privileges and advantages, yet he makes that very inequality the means of reciprocal benefit, as is illustrated in this chapter. But, beyond all earthly distinctions, his great purpose has its final accomplishment. His mercy triumphs over all apparent obstacles, and secures the lasting good of all his children. The key to the whole is indicated by the apostle in ver. 32.

16. *For if the first fruit be holy, &c.* The apostle here refers to a requisition of the law, that the first fruits should be set apart, or offered in sacrifice unto God. When this was done, the mass was legally sanctified to the use of him who made the offering. The word here used, however, especially indicates the piece of dough first mixed for bread from the grain of each year, which was to be offered in sacrifice. "Ye shall offer up a cake of the first of your dough for an heave-offering: — of the first of your dough ye shall give unto the Lord an heave-offering in your generations." Numb. xv. 20, 21. The

17 And if some of the branches be broken off, and thou, being a wild olive-tree, wert grafted in

lump, in like manner, refers particularly to the mass of dough, or prepared bread, from which the heave-offering was selected. The apostle would hereby signify that the mass of the Jewish nation, of which the first fruits, the patriarchs and prophets, were sanctified, was not to be cast away as an unclean thing; but that, in due time, it should be cleansed from all impurity, and made acceptable unto God. The same grace which called Abraham from among the Gentiles, to become a believing and faithful servant of God, is effectual to "turn away ungodliness from Jacob," and to secure the salvation of "all Israel." Ver. 26. ¶ *And if the root be holy, &c.* The natural relation between the root and branches, and their similarity of character, the apostle mentions as an illustration of the same great truth. This clause may be not improperly regarded as parallel with the former, after the manner of the Hebrews. The introduction of this figure, namely, of the relation between the root and the branches, naturally gives occasion for the metaphorical description, in the next eight verses, of the incorporation of Gentiles into the church of God.

17. *And if some of the branches be broken off.* The general process of *grafting*, to which the apostle here refers, is sufficiently familiar; the first step in which process is to remove a part of the branch on which the operation is to be performed. Thus the Jews were removed, that the Gentiles might be grafted into the original stock. It may be observed, however, that this illustration, as is often said of parables does not "run on all fours;" that is it is not applicable in all its minute particulars. For example, if a pear be grafted on a quince-stock, the fruit produced is pears, not quinces; and so in all other cases; the fruit is according to the nature of the graft, and not according to the nature of the stock on which it is grafted. But, in the case illustrated by this figure, the fruit to be produced by the process was not according to the nature of the graft, so to speak, but according to that of the

among them, and with them partake of the root and fatness of the

stock. In other words, the fruit was not that which was proper to heathen Gentiles, but that which was proper to the church of God. Nevertheless, the illustration is sufficiently applicable, and exhibits in a graphic manner "the mutual benefit derived from the process, both by the stock and the branches." The branches, namely, the Gentiles, were benefited by being brought under the influence of the truth; and the stock was reanimated, as it were, by this insertion of fresh branches; even as a tree which has begun to decay may be revived, and may become flourishing again, if the useless branches be removed, and new ones grafted in. ¶ *And thou.* That is, the Gentiles. ¶ *Being a wild olive-tree.* "Paul, in his epistle to the Romans (xi. 24), distinguishes two kinds of olive-trees: (1) the wild and natural; (2) those under care and culture. The cultivated olive-tree is of a moderate height, its trunk knotty, its bark smooth and ash-colored; its wood is solid and yellowish; the leaves are oblong, almost like those of the willow, of a green color, dark on the upper side, and white on the under side. In the month of June it puts out white flowers, that grow in bunches. Each flower is of one piece, widening upwards, and dividing into four parts: the fruit oblong and plump. It is first green, then pale, and when it is quite ripe, black. In the flesh of it is enclosed a hard stone, full of an oblong seed. The wild olive is smaller in all its parts."—*Calmet.* The general idea, in this distinction by the apostle, is, that the Gentiles were a wild olive-tree, having had no particular care or culture; while the Jews, adopted as the people and church of God, had been cultivated by the labor of prophets and holy men of old. They had at length become unfruitful; and new grafts were inserted, from the wild olive-tree, that the stock might flourish and produce fruit. ¶ *Wert grafted in among them.* Naturally, grafts are inserted under the bark of the stump left by cutting off a branch. Figuratively, the Gentiles were grafted into the church of God by being admitted members, through faith; the Jews having been excluded,

olive-tree:

18 Boast not against the branch-

through unbelief. ¶ *And with them.* Not all the natural branches were removed. A "remnant" of the Jews became the nucleus of the reorganized church of God. With these the believing Gentiles were incorporated, and they shared together the animating and sustaining influences of divine grace. ¶ *Partake of the root and fatness of the olive-tree.* Namely, of the spiritual blessings flowing from covenant relationship to God, from the adoption by which they became the children of God. The Jews had long had exclusive enjoyment of these blessings. Now, the Gentiles became joint-partakers with them. Some have supposed the apostle denominates the sap or juice of the good olive-tree *fatness*, because oil is expressed from the fruit produced by it. Perhaps, however, he may employ this epithet only because the nature of that juice is productive, fruit-bearing.

18. *Boast not against the branches.* This is the practical lesson enforced on the Gentiles by the metaphor in ver. 17—24. The facts had already been stated distinctly, that the Jews were rejected, and the Gentiles accepted in their place, as the people and church of God. To guard his Gentile brethren against such pride and superciliousness as the Jews had formerly exhibited, the apostle reminds them that even the Jews are not utterly rejected, but may again be grafted into the parent stock. Ver. 23. The Gentiles were not for one moment to believe that they were the favorites of heaven, to the exclusion of the Jews; but they were to remember that they held their present privileges by the same tenure as the Jews. Ver. 20, 21. All occasion for boasting was excluded, and a spirit of humility was to be cultivated with all diligence. ¶ *But if thou boast, thou bearest not the root, &c.* If any were so "high-minded" as to boast of their privileges, and to look with contempt upon the Jews, the apostle solemnly admonishes them that their boasting is vain: for the Jews derived not their spiritual advantages through the Gentiles, but the Gentiles through the Jews. Indeed, none could properly boast; for these privileges and advantages were not the reward of

es. But if thou boast, thou bearest not the root, but the root thee.

19 Thou wilt say then, The branches were broken off, that I might be grafted in.

human works, but the gift of divine grace. Ch. iii. 27. But if the ancient people of God might not lawfully boast, much less might the Gentiles, who had so recently been adopted as joint-partakers with them.

19. *Thou wilt say then.* That is, the Gentiles would say. Those who were inclined to exult over the Jews would attempt to justify themselves thus. ¶ *The branches were broken off, &c.* This fact the apostle does not deny. He had already asserted that, according to the purpose of God, salvation had come unto the Gentiles through the falling away of the Jews; that their fall and rejection was the riches of the Gentiles and the reconciling of the world. Ver. 11, 12, 15. See note on ver. 15. And he repeats the same idea in ver. 25, 30. Of course he would not deny that the Jews were broken off that the Gentiles might be grafted in; or that it was the original purpose of God, plainly predicted in the ancient Scriptures, that the Jews should reject the Messiah, and be broken off; and that the Gentiles should consequently have the gospel preached among them, be converted, and be adopted as joint-heirs of the kingdom. Yet, in the succeeding verse, the apostle assures his brethren that this furnished no occasion for boasting; no occasion for trusting in themselves that they were the peculiar favorites of God, and for despising others.

20. *Well.* Admit this to be true, what follows? Does this justify boasting? By an act of sovereignty God has transferred certain spiritual privileges from the Jews to the Gentiles. But this is not the only light in which the subject is to be regarded. It is true that this distinction is agreeable to the purpose of God. But it is just as true that the execution of this purpose operates as a righteous retribution to the unbelieving Jews. ¶ *Because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith.* Their own condition was not so securely permanent as to justify

20 Well; because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. Be not high-minded, but fear:

21 For if God spared not the

boasting. Although the Jews were broken off, so that the Gentiles might be grafted in, they were so broken off because of their unbelief; and in like manner might the Gentiles expect to be broken off, if they should abuse or misimprove their privileges. The admonition is repeated in even more pointed terms in ver. 21. As in this practical point of light the rejection of the Jews was the penalty of their unbelief, the Gentiles might well refrain from boasting, lest they should fall under the same condemnation. It is here to be observed, (1) That the rejection of the Jews, and the election of the Gentiles, cannot be understood as an appointment severally to endless happiness and endless misery; because the Jews were not so rejected or broken off as that they might not be restored, ver. 23, 24, and the Gentiles were not so elected as that they might not fall away, ver. 21, 22. The distinction was temporary only, — one which might be reversed, or might be entirely abolished, ver. 30—32. (2.) The execution of the divine purpose does not exclude the rendering of a just recompense to mankind for their works, whether good or evil. On the contrary, such retribution is often, not to say always, subservient to the execution of that purpose. If we would duly consider that the design of God in rewarding good or evil is not bounded by the individual act of retribution, but that it has respect to a general and vast system of providence; that he has other and higher purposes to accomplish than merely to grant one man so much happiness for so much virtue or faith, and to cause another to suffer so much misery for so much unbelief or disobedience; if we would view the dispensations of his providence, not as isolated facts, but as parts of a general system, established by an eternal purpose, and gradually receiving its visible development; we might be spared much confusion and perplexity. We might then perceive that the two facts maintained by the

natural branches, *take heed* lest he also spare not thee.

apostle in this chapter are not only undeniably true, but are perfectly consistent with each other; namely, that the Jews were broken off and rejected because of their obstinate unbelief; and that they were thus broken off for the purpose, long before announced, of bringing the Gentiles into the church of God. Regarded merely as the execution of the divine purpose, this event was an act of great mercy to the Gentiles, as well as of severity to the Jews. Ver. 22. Regarded merely as a retribution to the unbelieving Jews, it was a solemn admonition to the Gentiles to beware lest a similar fate should befall them. The apostle would not have his brethren unmindful of either aspect of the case; but, while he calls on them to acknowledge and glorify the great purpose of God, he reminds them that a just retribution is coincident with the execution of that purpose. See note on ver. 6. ¶ *Be not high-minded, but fear.* Such is the practical lesson deduced by the apostle, and enforced in the succeeding verse. "See thou stand in awe of God, modestly and carefully. By *fear*, he meaneth not a fear of diffidence or distrust, but a fear of watchfulness and circumspection."—*Assembly's Annot.*

21. *For if God spared not the natural branches.* Namely, the Jews, who were broken off because of unbelief. They had long been a chosen people, selected from the whole world, and had been partakers of privileges such as were granted to no other nation. The founders and early fathers of their race had been devoted worshippers of God, and had received promises which embraced the welfare of their posterity. The posterity had degenerated, and were now broken off, notwithstanding they were still "beloved for the fathers' sakes." Doubtless, the great purpose of God embraced their degeneracy and unbelief, as a means of blessedness to others; hence they were blinded for a season, until the purposed benefit should be accomplished. Ver. 25. Yet the apostle, having elsewhere exhibited the subject from this point of view, here presents it in that other form, which is just as true and important;

22 Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them

namely, that a just and righteous retribution goes hand in hand with the execution of the divine purpose. The Jews were broken off, according to the purpose of God, that the Gentiles might be incorporated into the church. And they were just as truly, in another aspect of the case, broken off "because of unbelief." All the fidelity of their ancestors, their lineal descent from the fathers who received the covenants, whereby, as "natural branches," they were heirs of the promises, and even the "zeal of God," which the apostle bears witness that they possessed, ch. x. 2, did not preserve them. They were not spared; but judgment was executed upon them according to their deserts. ¶ *Take heed lest he also spare not thee.* Namely, the Gentiles, who had been grafted into the good olive-tree. They should be mindful that a like degeneracy, on their part, would involve a like excision. They were not to regard themselves as the peculiar favorites of God, because he had dealt thus mercifully with them. The Jews had even more reason than the Gentiles to cherish such a flattering belief, founded on the past history of their race. Yet equal and exact justice had been meted out to them by the impartial Ruler of all. How, then, could the Gentiles expect to escape, if they should neglect so great salvation, and become partakers of the sin for which the Jews were punished? They could not plead the merit of a long line of pious ancestors. They were but grafts recently inserted into an ancient stock. Their position was in no respect more secure than that of the natural branches, but apparently less secure. It became them, therefore, not to be high-minded, but to be humble.

22. *Behold, therefore, the goodness and severity of God.* It is here to be observed, first of all, that the same act of providence may be regarded as merciful or severe, in other words, as an act of pure grace, or an act of retributive justice, accordingly as it is viewed from either of two points of light, both of which are proper and legitimate stand-points. Regarded simply as a fitting recompense of human desert, the rejec-

which fell, severity; but towards thee, goodness, if thou continue in

tion of the Jews appears to be an act of retributive justice. Regarded as an incident in the vast and comprehensive purpose of God, to secure the highest happiness of all his children by the best means, it appears as an act of grace, conducing to the more firm establishment, and the more rapid and extensive promulgation, of the gospel of grace. By fixing attention entirely on either of these aspects, and entirely overlooking or disregarding the other, we obtain only a "one-sided" view of divine providence; and although what we do perceive be true, it is not the whole truth, and, in consequence of its deficiency, it practically becomes almost, if not quite, equivalent to error. ¶ *On them which fell.* On the Jews who fell away, and were cut off, or rejected. ¶ *Severity.* "Αποτομιαν (apotomian), severity, literally a cutting off. But cutting off, the effect, is put for severity, the cause." — *Macknight.* "The word severity now suggests sometimes the idea of harshness, or even of cruelty. But nothing of this kind is conveyed in the original word here. — It refers to the act of God in cutting off or rejecting the Jews as useless branches; and conveys no idea of injustice, cruelty, or harshness. It was a just act, and consistent with all the perfections of God. It indicated a purpose to do right, though the inflictions might seem to be severe, and though they must involve them in many heavy calamities." — *Barnes.* Severity, in the sense of harshness or cruelty, is necessarily excluded from the judgments which God inflicts on transgressors, inasmuch as it is utterly inconsistent with his own nature. "God is love;" he loves all the souls he has made; and love works no real or absolute evil to its object. In the case now under consideration, it is expressly declared that the rejected Jews are still "beloved," ver. 28; of course, it is not supposable that God treated them with harshness or cruelty. The simple fact is, he executed justice. He rendered to them a just recompense of reward. But divine justice is not unmerciful or cruel. It demands that the guilty shall suffer what they deserve: it equally demands that they

his goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off.

shall not be punished beyond their deserts. It demands that just punishment shall be inflicted: it equally demands that punishment shall cease when its object is accomplished; for its longer continuance would be unjust. As the administration of retributive justice is designed for the benefit of "them who are exercised thereby," Heb. xii. 11, it necessarily implies their final deliverance from its "grievous" penalties, that they may afterwards enjoy "the peaceable fruit of righteousness." And such, the apostle assures us, in the sequel, is to be the result of that severity which was executed upon *them which fell.* An act of justice may properly be distinguished from an act of mercy; but it is a sad mistake to suppose that divine justice is unmerciful, or that the attributes of God are in conflict with each other. ¶ *But towards thee.* Towards the Gentile believers who had been grafted in, after, and in consequence of, the excision of the Jews. ¶ *Goodness.* The same dispensation which involved the Jewish nation in present calamity and distress was an act of pure grace and goodness to the Gentile world. The manner in which salvation was thus brought to the Gentiles, and they became incorporated with the visible church, has been sufficiently illustrated in the preceding notes. ¶ *If thou continue in his goodness.* The apostle renews the caution previously given to his Gentile brethren; namely, that the continuance of the privileges bestowed upon them should be commensurate with their faithfulness. The Jews once enjoyed such privileges, but became unfaithful and fell. The Gentiles had no reason to expect that a different rule would be applied to themselves. The form of expression seems designed to intimate the increased responsibility which now rested on the Gentiles. The privileges granted would be a pure blessing, if they duly appreciated and improved the gift. Otherwise, their guilt would be greater than before, according to that righteous law which graduates the responsibility of men by their opportunities and capacities. See Luke xii. 47, 48. ¶ *Otherwise thou*

23 And they also, if they abide not still in unbelief, shall be grafted in : for God is able to graft them in again.

also shall be cut off. The distinction now made was no more perpetual in its nature than that which had before existed. The Jews had long been a chosen people, in regard to religious privileges, while the Gentiles were excluded. The Jews had already forfeited these privileges, and had been cut off. In like manner should the Gentiles be cut off, if they should justly forfeit the privileges now transferred to them, notwithstanding their present election, to the general exclusion of the Jews. Indeed, the apostle expressly declares that the present distinction is not to be perpetual ; for, notwithstanding the certain *cutting off* of the Jews, and the hypothetical cutting off of the Gentiles, he speaks with joyful confidence of the period when "the fulness of the Gentiles shall be come in," and "all Israel shall be saved." Ver. 25, 26. Then there will be no distinction between men, as broken off or grafted ; but all shall equally "partake of the root and fatness of the olive-tree."

23. *And they also.* Namely, the Jews, who are now broken off, "because of unbelief." ¶ *If they abide not in unbelief, shall be grafted in.* "They too shall be adopted, if they cease from their unbelief ; for God is able to make them his children again. The rejection was not final nor unconditional while it lasted." — *H. Ballou, 2d.* Whether viewed as retributive justice, or as the accomplishment of the divine purpose, it might naturally be expected that the Jews were not cut off finally, utterly and forever rejected for their unbelief. As a retribution, they were cut off "because of unbelief." Whenever they should believe, the reason for the cutting off would cease, and their restoration would follow as a matter of course. As an accomplishment of the divine purpose, just as surely as the fall of the Jews was the riches of the world, just so surely shall their restoration be productive of even richer benefit ; just as surely as the casting away of them was the reconciling of the world, just so surely shall the receiving of them be

24 For if thou wert cut out of the olive-tree which is wild by nature, and wert grafted contrary to nature into a good olive-tree ; how

like life from the dead. Ver. 12, 15. If the divine purpose required their temporary blindness to produce the smaller or more limited benefit, how much more does it require their restoration for the accomplishment of the greater and universal benefit? ¶ *For God is able to graft them in again.* He has not placed them beyond the reach of his grace. He has not cut them off by an irrevocable decree. He has not rendered himself incapable of restoring all the blessings which they had forfeited, and even bestowing richer blessings than they had before enjoyed. Moreover, it has been forcibly observed, that "here, as in other passages of scripture, *Αυρατος* (*dunatos*), *able*, signifies willing as well as able ; because it was to no purpose to mention God's ability to graft the Jews in, unless it had been accompanied with willingness." This fully accords with what the apostle says in ver. 25, where the intimation is palpable that the blindness and rejection of the Jews is only temporary ; and that, when the purpose for which it was designed shall be accomplished, they will again see, believe, and be saved, which is plainly asserted in ver. 26. Hence it appears that God is not only able, but willing, to graft the Jews again into the stock from which they were broken off ; nay, that it is according to his eternal purpose so to do ; for in this way only, according to the plan which he has graciously revealed, can the great object of that purpose be fully consummated.

24. *For.* What follows in this verse is designed to exhibit both the ability and the willingness of God to restore his ancient people to favor, and moreover that it is his purpose to do so. In this manner the apostle enforces the admonition to his Gentile brethren to be humble in the enjoyment of their privileges, and to refrain from despising those who were cut off ; because (1) the reinstatement of the Jews is quite as easy as was their own conversion ; and (2) the former is certainly not less desirable to God than the latter.

much more shall these, which be the natural *branches*, be grafted into their own olive-tree?

¶ *If thou wert cut out, &c.* God had called the Gentiles and incorporated them into his church, adopted them as children, and granted them the gracious influences of his spirit, although they had previously been "aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world." Eph. ii. 12. The argument is that the conversion of the Jews was no less easy, inasmuch as they had been trained up in the knowledge of God, and had been accustomed to regard his authority, and to trust in his goodness. If, then, God was able to convert the Gentiles under all their moral disadvantages, it was absurd to doubt his ability to restore the Jews, whose moral condition was more favorable. Moreover, if God was willing (see note on ver. 23) to extend his mercy to the Gentiles, who had worshipped "the creature more than the Creator," who were abandoned to idolatry, and guilty of the most vile and scandalous sins, chap. i. 18—32, it was absurd to doubt his willingness to restore the Jews, who, though they did not believe the gospel, were most devout believers in Moses, and who were zealous worshippers of God, after their fashion. If God had already converted those who had the less apparent hope or prospect of conversion, much more should the same favor be extended to the others. "If God had mercy on the Gentiles, who were outcasts from his favor, and strangers to the covenant of his promise, shall he not have mercy on the people whom he has always distinguished as being peculiarly his own, by the bestowment of many important privileges and advantages upon them?" — *Stuart*. "This reasoning is very just. The conversion of the Jews, though it hath not yet happened, appears more probable than did the conversion of the Gentiles before that event took place. The truth is, since the Jews are the posterity of Abraham, since the oracles of God were committed to them, and since they still continue to believe Moses and the prophets, in whose writings the coming, and charac-

25 For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, (lest ye should be wise in

ter, and actions, and death, and resurrection, of the Christ are foretold, we might justly be surprised that they have not been converted long before this time, were it not for the reasons mentioned in the note on ver. 15." — *Macknight*. The Jews were blinded, not only as an act of retribution, but as one of the appointed means for the accomplishment of that divine purpose which embraces the general and the highest spiritual benefit of mankind. The fact that the fulness of the Gentiles has not yet been gathered, ver. 25, is a sufficient reason why the Jews are not yet enlightened; so that we need not be surprised at the continuance of their blindness. But it would be irreverent to suppose that God has kept the veil on their hearts for these eighteen hundred years in order that his purpose concerning the Gentiles might be accomplished, and then doomed all these blinded generations to endless misery. As well might we suppose that all the Gentiles, from the beginning of the world to the rejection of the Jews, were consigned to hopeless misery, because God did not grant unto them the spiritual advantages necessary to their becoming his true and intelligent worshippers, as to adopt a similar conclusion concerning the Jews during their judicial blindness. Perhaps some may find it easy to believe that the countless generations of Gentiles utterly perished during the first four thousand years of the world, and that all the Jews for the next two thousand years, or perhaps more, will in like manner perish, for lack of knowledge. God be praised, we have not so learned his purpose concerning his children. Thanks be unto him for the assurance that he will have mercy on all, notwithstanding their temporary unbelief. Ver. 32. He hath "made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure, which he hath purposed in himself, that in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth." Eph. i. 9, 10.

25. Having pursued the metaphor-

your own conceits,) that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until

ical argument and illustration of the root and branches to a satisfactory conclusion, ver. 16—24, the apostle, in plain language, without metaphor, announces the glorious fact to which his argument tends in this and the two preceding chapters. He now declares distinctly, what he has previously foreshadowed, that the temporary distinctions among men, in regard to spiritual advantages, are only steps in the gradual unfolding of that stupendous purpose of divine grace, which comprehends and secures the final salvation of the race from ignorance, unbelief, and sinfulness. Hence it follows, that all apparent partiality, or favoritism, in the bestowment of higher present advantages on some than on others, is only apparent, not actual. The long-continued blindness of individuals, or of whole races, by no means indicates a lack of affection on the part of the universal Parent. By the reciprocal influence of spiritual light and darkness, he secures the result embraced in his own purpose, consistently with the final benefit of every individual. "Thus God's object has been, not to reject any, but to show mercy upon all mankind. His purpose has been to make use of the Jewish unbelief to call the Gentiles into his church; and by the admission of the Gentiles to arouse the Jews to accept his message, that all might at length receive his mercy."—*Conybeare*. ¶ *For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant. I desire that you should know.* A negative form of expression, but affirmative in its import. ¶ *Of this mystery.* "Namely, the fact about to be stated, that the blinded Jews were to remain in their condition only till all the Gentiles should be converted; and that all the Jews were then to be saved. In the New Testament, *mystery* is not something unintelligible, but something not yet commonly known; as in the present case."—*H. Ballou*, 2d. By many, a mystery is supposed to be a matter incomprehensible by the human mind; but such is certainly not its ordinary signification in the Scriptures. The word occurs thrice only in the Gospels, Matt. xiii. 11; Mark iv. 11; Luke viii. 10; in all which cases our Lord assures his disciples that they were ena-

bled to know or to understand the mysteries of the kingdom. So, in the Epistles, we read of "the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began, but is now made manifest," ch. xvi. 25, 26; "Behold, I show you a mystery," 1 Cor. xv. 51; "Having made known to us the mystery of his will," Eph. i. 9; "The mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints," Col. i. 26. The word properly denotes a thing hidden, or concealed, not generally known, but which may be understood whenever revealed or explained. When the Bible was translated, this word was often applied to different trades, as the mystery of goldsmiths, and the like. The master taught his apprentice the mysteries of his trade; that is, he taught him the principles upon which its various operations were performed. These principles were unknown to the unlearned; but were easily understood, when taught. So Christ and his apostles explained the mysteries of the kingdom, or made their disciples acquainted with the principles of the divine government, so far as it pleased God to make them known. These had been hidden from human view; and, perhaps, the human mind, by searching, might not have been able to find them out. But they might easily be comprehended, when once they were made known. See note on Matt. xiii. 11. ¶ *Lest ye should be wise in your own conceits.* "Paul communicated the truth in regard to this, lest they should attempt to inquire into it; should speculate about the reason why God had rejected the Jews; and should be elated with the belief that they had, by their own skill and genius, ascertained the cause. Rather than leave them to vain speculations and self-gratulation, he chose to cut short all inquiry, by stating the truth about their present and future state."—*Barnes*. This interpretation seems natural enough, if the text be considered without reference to the general scope of the apostle's argument. But he was laboring, not so much to caution his brethren against the conceit of overmuch wisdom, as to guard them against spiritual pride, on account of their present

the fulness of the Gentiles be come in.

26 And so all Israel shall be saved : as it is written, There shall

advantages over the Jews. He admonished them not to "boast," ver. 18; not to be "high-minded," but to be humble, ver. 20; and, as an incentive to humility, he assured them that they were actually no more the objects of divine favor than the Jews, whom they were inclined to despise. Having intimated, in a figurative way, that the Jews should again be restored to their former privileges, he here declares the mystery in plain terms, and more absolutely, that "all Israel shall be saved." And this he would have them distinctly understand, lest they should be wise in their own conceits. In this view of the subject, I think the following interpretation is to be preferred, notwithstanding it may seem less literally explanatory of the form of words in the text. "Lest you should be puffed up with a view of your own importance, I am going to tell you, more plainly still, that you are not the exclusive objects of God's favor." — *Stuart*. ¶ *That blindness in part is happened to Israel.* The blindness of the Jews, though general, was not universal. Amidst the general mass of unbelievers, a few comparatively, though numbering many thousands, were found faithful. As, in former times, God reserved some true worshippers, when the nation was given to idolatry, "even so," says the apostle, "at this time, there is a remnant according to the election of grace," ver. 5; but "the rest were blinded," ver. 7. Such was the "blindness in part," which is here mentioned. ¶ *Until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in.* The Jews were blinded, doubtless, as a retribution for their stubborn unbelief; they suffered what is often called a "judicial blindness," or a blindness judicially inflicted. But, as has been repeatedly observed heretofore, there was yet another and a higher purpose to be accomplished by their blindness; and to this purpose the apostle here refers. They were blinded, they stumbled, they fell, that "through their fall salvation might come to the Gentiles," ver. 11; their fall was "the riches of the world," ver. 12; they were broken off that the Gentiles might be grafted in, ver. 19, or incorporated into the church. The

apostle here declares that this blindness shall continue until the purpose for which it was designed shall be fully accomplished. It is necessarily implied, as it is subsequently asserted in direct terms, that when that purpose shall be accomplished the blindness shall be removed; so that, with the blind man in the gospel, to whom Jesus had given sight, the subject of that blindness might exclaim, "Whereas I was blind, now I see." John ix. 25. The Gentiles, therefore, had no occasion for pride, when they compared themselves with the Jews. They might, indeed, give glory to God for his great mercy to them, in adopting them as children. But they were to remember that, although the Jews, for the present, were blinded, though the gospel was taken from them, that the Gentiles might embrace it (see note on ver. 15), yet they were the natural heirs of the covenant which God made with their fathers, Acts iii. 25; and after the Gentiles had received the benefit purposed by their blindness, they also should be turned away from their iniquities.

26. *And so all Israel shall be saved.* "Here is the salvation of the world ultimately complete: first, the salvation of the *elect* Jews and Gentiles; then, of *all* the Gentiles; and, finally, of *all* the Jews. This universal ingathering is the end to which the entire plan of election aims, and in which all seeming partiality, or favoritism, is obviated." — *H. Ballou*, 2d. God's ways are higher than man's ways, and his thoughts than man's thoughts. To human view it might appear desirable that the Gentiles should not for so many centuries have been destitute of a divine revelation; that the Jews should not have rejected the gospel, and thus have been excluded from its immediate benefits for so long a period; and that the gospel should now make more rapid progress in the world, and be universally embraced. It might seem, if God desired the happiness of his children, it were better that he should have granted them light and grace from the beginning, and thus have spared them many sorrows; in

come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from

short, that it were better to have created them holy, so that their happiness might not be delayed or diminished. But all such speculations are met by the solemn questions of the apostle in ver. 34, 35, and by the equally solemn questions in chap. ix. 20. It is enough for us that God hath conducted the affairs of the universe according to the counsel of his own will. And, unless we would arrogate to ourselves wisdom superior to his, we are bound to believe that his method is the best method. The delay may seem tedious to us; but we should remember that God has no occasion for haste; eternal duration gives sufficient scope for the most deliberate action. "Beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day." 2 Pet. iii. 8. Such was the admonition of the apostle to his brethren, when it was suggested by scoffers that the fulfilment of the Lord's promise was not sufficiently prompt; and it applies as well to the execution of the divine purpose in general, as to the fulfilment of a particular promise. If we may believe the testimony of geology, the earth existed for uncounted ages, and underwent a great variety of changes before it became fit for the habitation of men. Or, if any reject that testimony, it is distinctly stated by Moses that God created the earth which we inhabit before he placed man upon it. Whether by this we understand that he created the materials of the earth, or fashioned them into an organized form, bringing order out of chaos, the result is the same. so far as the present argument is concerned. In any case it is clear that there was a period when the earth was neither inhabited nor habitable. But God had existed from eternity. As well might we say, if he designed to bestow life and happiness on mankind, to diffuse enjoyment by bestowing blessings on intelligent beings, it were better that he should have commenced the work earlier, as to make a similar suggestion concerning the process of redemption. If the inquiry were made why God, existing from eternity, and designing to create man, delayed the

full accomplishment of that design until within the last six thousand years, no answer can be given, except that "so it seemed good in his sight." Matt. xi. 26. And the same answer is sufficient, and the only possible answer, when it is inquired why God did not create men holy at first, or convert them more speedily; or why he has permitted some to go down to the grave in utter ignorance of the gospel, and blinded others, so that they perceive not the evidence of its truth. He has given assurance that not one soul shall suffer absolute harm in consequence of the delay. In his own time, and agreeably to his own method, he will bring all to the knowledge and acknowledgment of the truth. And every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. Phil. ii. 11. As sin hath reigned unto death, even so shall grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ, our Lord. Chap. v. 21. What though present inconvenience results from a gradual instead of an instantaneous consummation of the divine purpose? Eternity will furnish ample opportunity for compensation. "The sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us." Chap. viii. 18. The long night of ignorance which brooded over the Gentiles before the Sun of righteousness arose, and the blindness of the Jews to that light which shone upon them, so that they "comprehended it not" (John i. 5), need not occasion any doubt concerning the divine benevolence and impartiality. Rather may we join with the apostle in his triumphant expression of confidence and trust in God (verses 33—36), believing He will accomplish the best result, in the best time, and by the best method. If it were true that millions were utterly ruined in this process, that the benighted Gentiles and benighted Jews were doomed to endless misery in consequence of the temporary darkness which prevailed according to the purpose of God, then I grant that the attempt to reconcile the divine benevolence and impartiality with such a result would be utterly hopeless. But not so, when the result

Jacob :

27 For this is my covenant unto

embraces the salvation of all men, both Jews and Gentiles, which is manifestly the doctrine here taught by the apostle. I know many commentators fancy that the language of the apostle will have its entire fulfilment by the general conversion of the Jews to Christianity, at some future period, although the intermediate generations go down to hopeless despair. But such an interpretation falls far short of the full import of the terms used, especially when taken in connection with the preceding argument, and with the subsequent assurance that God will have mercy on the very same individuals who had been estranged from him by unbelief. Ver. 32. ¶ *As it is written.* As the apostle had appealed to the ancient Scriptures in proof that God would transfer his kingdom to the Gentiles, that he would cast off his people for a season, and adopt the Gentiles in their stead, so he now appeals to the same Scriptures to show that the restoration and final salvation of the covenant people was secured by the divine purpose, and had been predicted by the word of inspiration. Thus the Jews were taught that their rejection was no new doctrine advanced by the apostle, but that their own prophets had foretold it; and the Gentiles were taught that the same word of prophecy which had been fulfilled in the rejection of the Jews also foretold their subsequent restoration and salvation. So that the Gentiles, which is the point of the argument here, had no occasion or excuse for "boasting" against the Jews, as if they were less beloved of God than themselves; but they were admonished to regard them as brethren, under a cloud, indeed, for the present, but destined to become joint partakers with themselves hereafter of the full effulgence of divine glory. Spiritual pride was incompatible with such a view of the divine purpose, which indicated equal affection in the universal Parent to all his children. The apostle's appeal to the Jews, iii. 29, might be urged on the Gentiles with equal force, the terms being reversed: "Is he the God of the Gentiles only? Is he not also of the Jews? Yea, of the Jews also." Neither were special favorites, to the exclusion

of the other; but, though alternately subjected to vicissitudes, all had a common origin, all were objects of a common and impartial love, and all were destined to a common end. ¶ *There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer.* Some regard this as a quotation from Isa. lix. 20; and others, as designed to combine the sense of that text with Jer. xxxi. 33, 34. In either case, the quotation is not literal, but according to the sense. "It is a very striking instance of free quotation as to the general sense of a passage, while the particular costume of it is disregarded. Whether Isaiah, lix. 20, had respect to the salvation of gospel times, has been called in question. But the context seems to me very clearly to indicate this. And, even if he had respect to temporal deliverance, there can be no difficulty in the apostle's using his words as the vehicle of conveying his own thoughts, with regard to spiritual deliverance." — *Stuart.* It seems almost superfluous to remark that by the Deliverer is to be understood the Lord Jesus Christ. Sion, or, in the Hebrew form, Zion, originally denoted one of the hills within the city of Jerusalem. The name was afterwards given to the city itself, as the place where the temple of God was erected, and where the people congregated for worship. It was also used to denote the church, or the people of God. The meaning of the prediction is, that the Messiah should be born among the Jews; that, according to the flesh, he should be of their kindred. ¶ *And shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob.* Or, from the Jews, who are indifferently styled children of Abraham, Israelites, Israel, or Jacob. The special ungodliness which the apostle has noticed in this chapter was their persistent, obstinate unbelief. But the testimony quoted is of more extensive application, corresponding with the apostle's assurance that "all Israel shall be saved;" that is, not only from unbelief, but from all iniquity. To turn away ungodliness is to deliver men from it, or to save them from sin. To the same effect Peter declared concerning this same Deliverer, "Him hath God exalted with his right hand, to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to

them, when I shall take away their

sins.

Israel and forgiveness of sins." Acts v. 31. "Unto you first (namely, the Jews, who were the children of the covenant) God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities." Acts iii. 16. It is immaterial which phrase be used, as either is sufficiently descriptive of the blessing. To turn men away from ungodliness, to turn them away from their iniquities, and to bestow on them forgiveness of sins, are terms equivalent to each other. In ver. 27 is found still another phrase of the same import, namely, "take away their sins." As the testimony is introduced to corroborate the declaration that "all Israel shall be saved," we must understand that declaration to be of like extensive nature; implying not only deliverance from present blindness and unbelief, but also entire deliverance from sin. This is precisely the work which our Lord Jesus Christ came into the world to perform. Matt. i. 21.

27. *For this is my covenant unto them.* The covenant here referred to is understood to be that which is found in Jer. xxxi. 33, 34, and which is quoted at length, Heb. viii. 10—12: "This shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts, and will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbor and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord; for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord; for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more;" or, as the apostle has it, "I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more." It would be difficult to frame language more fully descriptive of purification from iniquity, or salvation, than that which is here used. The divine law is to be impressed on the heart, the mind filled with the knowledge of God, past iniquity forgiven, and sin no more remembered. And this work is to be accomplished through the ministry of that Deliverer,

who came to "turn away ungodliness from Jacob," and "to be the Saviour of the world." 1 John iv. 14. ¶ *When I shall take away their sins.* This is another form of words to express the idea of salvation from sin. And let it be remembered that this salvation awaits the most unpromising race on earth. No other people have enjoyed and abused such privileges. No other people have resisted such clear evidence of divine truth. They heard the Lord Jesus speak as never man spake; they witnessed his miracles, which no man could perform except God were with him; yet they rejected and crucified him. These aggravations of their unbelief and opposition were forcibly stated in Peter's address to them, Acts ii. 22—24. Yet he assured these same stubborn unbelievers, these murderers, Acts iv. 23; iii. 15, that they were the children of the covenant, and heirs of the promises. Acts iii. 25, 26. In like manner, Paul asserts that God will take away the sins of this same class of men, whose continued blindness and hostility to the gospel he has already described. If God will have mercy on such high-handed sinners, we may well believe that mercy will embrace all. It is to be observed, moreover, — and this is what renders salvation practicable even in the most obstinate and apparently hopeless cases, — that this salvation is accomplished, not by human effort, but by divine power. "I shall take away their sins," saith the Lord. The Deliverer "shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob." "I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts. — I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more." Heb. viii. 10, 12. This is what God declares he will do. And who shall tempt God, and limit the Holy One of Israel? Ps. lxxviii. 41. If salvation were wholly dependent on human exertion, we might well despair of the great mass of men; and even the most favored would have much cause for fear and anxiety. But God hath not so purposed. He hath not thus perilled the endless welfare of the children whom he has created. He hath reserved in his own hand the power to guide them through such vicis-

28 As concerning the gospel, *they are enemies for your sakes*: but as touching the election, *they*

are beloved for the fathers' sakes
29 For the gifts and calling of God *are without repentance.*

situdes as his wisdom hath ordained, to the final enjoyment of the blessing prepared for them. If he blind them for a time, it is equally easy to restore their sight. If he subject them to vanity, it is equally easy to deliver them "from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God."

28. *As concerning the gospel, &c.* "As it respects their present relation to the gospel, the blinded part of the Jews are indeed treated by God as enemies; that is, they are rejected *for your sakes*, or, that salvation might come to you Gentiles; but, as it respects the purposes of election, they are nevertheless beloved, or favored, of God, on the ground of the covenant with their fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in which the blessings of the gospel were secured to them."—*H. Ballou, 2d.* ¶ *They are enemies for your sakes.* They are blinded and cast out for the present, that the gospel might be preached to you Gentiles. See notes on ver. 11, 15, 19. "While the apostle admits that the Jews, the once beloved people of God, have now become alienated and enemies, he still maintains that this evil, exceedingly great in itself, has been overruled for the accomplishment of very important purposes, in respect to the salvation of the Gentiles.—The rejection of the gospel by the Jews has been the occasion of its being more widely diffused among the Gentiles; so that, in this respect, the loss of the Jews has been the gain of the Gentiles."—*Stuart.* Yet the apostle is careful to put his Gentile brethren on their guard against the supposition that the Jews were beyond the pale of divine mercy. Lest they "should be wise in their own conceits," or elated with the extravagant idea that God had utterly destroyed his covenant people, and made themselves the exclusive objects of his favor, the apostle assures them that this blindness is only temporary, and that it is designed for a special object; that when this object shall be accomplished, the blindness shall be removed, and "all Israel shall be saved;" because, although they be now rejected,

and treated as enemies, for the sake of advantage to the Gentiles, nevertheless the Jews are beloved by their heavenly Father, who will in due time make them partakers of the blessing, according to his promise. ¶ *As touching the election.* Or, the choice or purpose of God. ¶ *They are beloved.* That is, by the Lord, who hath now blinded them, but will hereafter give them light. ¶ *For the fathers' sakes.* Not so much because they were the lineal posterity of the fathers, as because they were the children of the covenant made with the fathers. "How *Tholuck* can find here only an election to external privileges, I am unable to see. Is the question, then, which the apostle is here discussing, one which concerns the external privileges of Christianity, merely; or does it go deep to the very foundation of the whole, namely, to the spiritual blessings of the gospel? It does seem to me impossible to doubt here what the answer must be, unless one is led to do so by other considerations than those of simple exegesis."—*Stuart.*

29. *For the gifts and calling of God.* The form of the language here used apparently grows out of the previous reference to the fathers, whom God called from among the Gentiles, and with whom he made a covenant, or, which is the same thing, to whom he gave promises. But what is affirmed in respect to those promises is equally true in regard to all the divine promises, and to all the divine purposes, concerning mankind. ¶ *Are without repentance.* Some have strangely supposed that the apostle refers to repentance in men; as if he had said, the gifts and calling of God are irrespective of human repentance. They might add, with equal propriety, that those gifts exclude such repentance. The mere statement of an opinion at such utter variance with the uniform current of the divine testimony is a sufficient refutation, without argument. The manifest import of the apostle's language is, that there can be no change in the eternal purpose of God, and that his gifts and calling can never be repented of, or made void. Whatever he hath promised he will

30 For as ye in times past have not believed God, yet have now obtained mercy through their unbel-

surely perform. Whether he hath spoken to the fathers by the prophets, or whether he hath in later times spoken by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, Heb. i. 1, 2, not one of his promises shall fail of accomplishment. He hath given assurance that, "As the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower and bread to the eater; so shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth; it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it." Isa. lv. 10—11. Whatever untoward circumstances may occur, therefore, no doubt should be entertained of the final accomplishment of all God's purposes, and the fulfilment of all his promises. The temporary condition of the Jews gave occasion to the Gentiles to imagine that they were excluded from the divine favor. This mistake the apostle was careful to correct; and to assure them that, as God had said it, he would do it; as he had spoken, he would make it good; as he had blessed, and given commandment to bless, nothing should reverse the blessing.

30. *For.* The apostle enforces his doctrine by an appeal to the past experience of his Gentile brethren. He calls their attention to the unpromising appearance of their own condition before they became believers; and intimates that their own conversion should lead them to a favorable hope of the Jews. ¶ *As ye in times past have not believed.* Namely, before the gospel was preached to them. They were, at that time, in darkness and in the shadow of death; "aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world." Eph. ii. 12. Their benighted and hopeless condition is more fully described in ch. i. ¶ *Yet have now obtained mercy through their unbelief.* Namely, the unbelief of the Jews, through whose fall salvation was extended to the Gentiles.

lief;

31 Even so have these also now not believed, that through your

See notes on ver. 11, 12, 15. They had learned by experience that temporary unbelief and estrangement from God was not necessarily followed by endless exclusion from divine mercy. And this fact was urged by the apostle, that they might not suppose the Jews to be utterly cast off because they were now blinded. They were in danger of spiritual pride. See ver. 18—25. They were in danger of imagining themselves to be the peculiar favorites of God, on account of the distinction now made between them and the Jews. Hence the apostle admonishes them, by several arguments, to refrain from this folly. Among the other arguments is this, which is addressed to their past experience. From this they might naturally conclude that it is easy for God to enlighten the ignorant, to reclaim the vicious, to give faith to the unbelieving, and piety to the impious. And, admitting the impartiality of divine benevolence, they could not well doubt that the Jews should share with them in its abundant fruits. But the apostle does not leave them to their own conclusions. He distinctly states the result in the next verse.

31. *Even so have these also.* That is, the blinded portion of the Jews. ¶ *Now not believed.* Their unbelief, and its causes and results, had been already described. ¶ *That through your mercy they also may obtain mercy.* See notes on ver. 11, 14. This partial blindness which had befallen them should not be perpetual, as is plainly intimated in ver. 25, and positively asserted in ver. 26, 32. In the great purpose of God it had its object; which object being accomplished, it should cease. "Here are two cases presented, parallel in some respects, but differing in others. (1.) The Jews reject the gospel, and occasion its being preached to the Gentiles, who thus become believers. (2.) The Gentiles, by the blessings bestowed on them in consequence of their faith, provoke the Jews to jealousy, and occasion their seeking to be restored to their former place as the people of God. Comp. ver. 13, 14. The parallelism consists in

mercy they also may obtain mercy.

32 For God hath concluded them

this, namely, that each party occasions the blessings of salvation to come to the other; that is, each is the cause of salvation to the other. The difference is, that the Jews give occasion to this by their unbelief; but the Gentiles by their belief, which provokes the Jews to jealousy, and leads them to seek after the privileges of the gospel." — *Stuart*. Such are doubtless the true points of similarity and of difference in the comparison here made by the apostle. But for what purpose is the comparison introduced? Surely, not merely to show the reciprocal influence of the Jews and Gentiles upon each other; for this had already been fully stated, ver. 11—14. It is rather to confirm the declaration in ver. 25, that the blindness of the Jews is only temporary, and shall be succeeded by light, faith, and salvation. The possibility and probability of this result are enforced on the Gentiles by reminding them that they had been called out of similar darkness into marvellous light, and that the same grace which had wrought this change in them was sufficient to produce a similar change in the Jews. Because some are benighted and besotted, many are prone to doubt whether the grace of God will reach them, and to exclaim, How can such sinners be saved? It might correct their apprehensions if they would diligently consider the doctrine announced by the apostle here and in the next verse. They might then understand that present subjection to vanity shall in no wise exclude men from final deliverance into the glorious liberty of the children of God.

32. *For God hath concluded them all in unbelief.* Namely, both Jews and Gentiles, or all mankind. The word here rendered *concluded* occurs only three times elsewhere in the New Testament: Luke v. 6; Gal. iii. 22, 23. It properly signifies to comprehend, enclose, or shut up. The English word *conclude* formerly had a similar meaning; but it is now obsolete in that sense, except in legal phraseology, where it still retains a place. The meaning here is, that, agreeably to the purpose of God, all men are at one time or another in a state of unbelief. They

are thus comprehended, enclosed, or shut up together in one category ¶ *That he might have mercy on all.* I. argues no lack of benevolence on the part of God that he has subjected his children to vanity, and suffered them for a time to remain in unbelief. On the contrary, the display of his goodness thus becomes more conspicuous. If he left them to perish everlastingly, the case would be different. But since he extends mercy to all unbelievers, which is the manifest doctrine of the text, the abundance of his grace is disclosed by means of the very circumstances which to short-sighted man might seem to obscure it. See note on ver. 26. "God hath left both Jew and Gentile to fall into unbelief or disobedience, in order that the true nature of sin might fully appear, and that he might thus magnify the riches of his grace, in pardoning multiplied and aggravated transgressions; comp. ch. v. 20, 21, where the very same sentiment is developed. — The whole verse, and also ch. v. 20, 21, seems plainly to teach that God had a special purpose to answer, in giving man over to the power or dominion of sin and unbelief, namely, to expose the 'exceeding sinfulness of sin,' and to magnify the riches of his pardoning mercy." — *Stuart*. To those who cavil against this view of the divine administration, and who insist that it would have been wiser and better to create men holy and happy at once than to subject them to vanity and sinfulness, that grace might be manifested in their deliverance, I have no answer to give, at present, except this: God created men, and he governs them according to his own purpose; and I have never yet perceived satisfactory evidence that any man would devise a more benevolent or a wiser plan, if he were empowered to create a new world, according to his own fancy. It is sufficient to satisfy every humble Christian, who is not "high-minded," nor "wise in his own conceit," that the God who has created men will be guided by his own purpose in all that concerns their welfare. They are ready to glorify him for his mercy, without questioning the propriety of his first comprehending

all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all.

them all in unbelief. "Mercy is favor shown to the undeserving. It could not have been shown to the Jews and the Gentiles unless it was before proved that they were guilty. For this purpose proof was furnished that they were all in unbelief. It was clear, therefore, that, if favor was shown to either, it must be on the same ground, — that of mere undeserved mercy. Thus, all men were on a level; and thus all might be admitted to heaven without any invidious distinctions, or any dealings that were not in accordance with mercy and love." — *Barnes*. The same writer adds, indeed, but I confess myself unable to perceive on what ground, that this "does not prove that all men will be saved." If none are able to obtain salvation by their own merits, but are equally dependent on divine mercy; if all men are thus on a level, and may all be admitted to heaven through grace, without any invidious distinctions; and if God be truly impartial in his benevolence; I see not how the conclusion is to be avoided, that he will have mercy on all, and will save all. This conclusion was drawn by *Adam Clarke*, from the same premises, in regard to the design of God, however much he may have doubted its full accomplishment. He says that all men "are equally helpless and guilty; and, as God is no respecter of persons, all human creatures being equally his offspring, and there being no reason why one should be preferred before another, therefore his endless mercy has embraced all." — Note on chap. iii. 23. Others also have distinctly apprehended the conclusion of the apostle's argument. They have admitted its full force, and rejoiced in hope that the mercy of God will embrace all his children, dispel their unbelief, turn away their ungodliness, and remember their sins and their iniquities no more. "As the previous verses suggested considerations of reciprocal benefit as motives to love and good-will between the two great parties, so this one presents views to humble their pride, and reduce them to one level. The Jews had no reason to assume any superiority over the Gentiles on account of their earlier position in the majestic plan of revela-

tion; nor the Gentiles any cause to despise the Jews because they had welcomed Christianity more cordially than the mass of the children of Abraham. The lesson to both sides was humility, solicitude to be faithful, gratitude to God, and mutual fraternity. — The word *all* is not, indeed, to be urged in such cases beyond its natural and easy import, into an extreme literalness; but one cannot help remarking that the mercy is spoken of as commensurate with the unbelief, and keeping even step with it in the unfolding of the glorious scheme of salvation. Gal. iii. 22. It is difficult to understand the force of such passages, unless they contemplate, in the boundless range of the future, a final and entire restoration of all the human family, Jews and Gentiles, and all the individuals of each class, under the educational and disciplinary nurture of God, to holiness and happiness. But, with such a belief, they become truly a gospel, glad tidings of great joy, and they furnish the most encouraging and heart-cheering motives to exertion in the cause of human redemption." — *Livermore*. "First or last, all have been included in unbelief, by the counsel of God; the Gentiles first, and the Jews last; but the grand object of this divine economy was the more effectually to bestow mercy upon all, in the result to bring in the fulness of the Gentiles, and to save all Israel, as stated in ver. 25, 26. The apostle has followed out this wide-embracing and wonderful arrangement of God to its glorious result. All meets, at last, in a consummation worthy of the divine sovereign, and fulfilling, to the utmost, the demand of every Christian desire. Even those measures which, at the commencement and in their progress, were so painful, are seen to end in the blessedness of all, and to have been but means of attaining this object." — *H. Ballou, 2d*. Here ends one of the most irresistible arguments which was ever addressed to the human understanding. The skill with which it is conducted has been a theme of admiration in all ages of the church. Carefully avoiding any shock to the moral feelings of either party, the apostle shows both Jews and Gentiles their

33 O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge

helplessness and need of mercy; their reciprocal benefit to each other in the vicissitudes which had befallen both; the intimate connection between the fulfilment of the grand purpose of God and a righteous present retribution to all; and, as the general result, often hinted and at last fully disclosed, the perfect and entire salvation of mankind, through the abounding grace of God, as the ultimate design of his moral government.

33. *O the depth, &c.* In view of this glorious consummation of the divine purpose, the apostle utters an exclamation of wonder, and admiration, and praise. He magnifies the saving attributes of God as an unfathomable deep, abundant beyond mortal comprehension. All the unbelief and ungodliness of men are overcome and put away by that grace which superabounds over all obstacles, and accomplishes its work by methods which human sagacity could never have devised. "Thy righteousness is like the great mountains; thy judgments are a great deep," says the Psalmist. Ps. xxxvi. 6. The same idea of vastness is expressed by the apostle. Philosophy had never grasped this mighty scheme of salvation. Human wisdom had not discovered it. But God had revealed it through his Son. "I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man: for I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by revelation of Jesus Christ." Gal. i. 11, 12. The contemplation of the exceeding glory thus revealed filled the apostle's soul with rapture; and as often as he described it, the flame of his gratitude and adoring admiration burst forth. ¶ *Of the riches.* It is generally conceded that the common version does not express the full idea of the text. *Stuart* translates, "O the boundless riches, and wisdom, and knowledge, of God!" *Conybeare* thus: "O depth of the bounty, and the wisdom, and the knowledge, of God." *Riches* is here used, not in reference to material possessions, but to the manifold spiritual gifts of God. "A reference to ver. 12 shows that the apostle had in his mind the abundant blessings of the gospel bestowed on the Gentiles, when I chose

this term."—*Stuart.* Both Gentiles and Jews were in a perfectly helpless condition, as is fully described in ch. i., ii., iii. All had sinned, and come short of the glory of God. But the grace of God was sufficient for them. His grace would turn the hearts of believers to the love of holiness, in the life that now is; and it would finally deliver the whole creation from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. Where sin abounded, grace superabounded; as sin reigned unto death, even so shall grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ. Well may such abundant and efficient grace be styled *riches*. ¶ *Of the wisdom.* The wisdom of God, in the adaptation of means to ends, is as wonderful as the abundance of his grace. To human view, it might not seem the readiest way of securing the final holiness and happiness of mankind, to give them existence under such circumstances, and to subject them to such vicissitudes, as are described in this epistle. But out of all this seeming confusion and chaos God brings order; out of all their apparently imminent dangers he delivers mankind; reclaims them from their wanderings; enlightens their minds, purifies their hearts; makes them mutual helpers to each other, even by methods which might seem to be of opposite tendency; and crowns the whole work, by turning away their ungodliness, redeeming them from iniquity, saving them from sin, and making them "heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ" to an "inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven." 1 Pet. i. 4. All this was the result of the plan devised by divine wisdom, which fully provided the means of overcoming all apparent obstacles. "The end which God had in view was to bestow mercy on all; that is, to save men by *grace*, and not by their own works. Ver. 32. He intended to establish a glorious system that should present his *mercy* as the prominent attribute, standing out in living colors in all the scheme of salvation. This was to be alike shown in relation to Jews and Gentiles. The wonderful wisdom with which this was

of God ! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past find-

ing out !

34 For who hath known the

done is the object of the apostle's profound admiration." — *Barnes*. ¶ *And knowledge of God*. *Stuart* distinguishes between *wisdom* and *knowledge*, as used in this verse, thus : "The *wisdom* of God, namely, the wisdom displayed in thus making the unbelief of the Jews subservient to the purpose of bringing salvation to the Gentiles, in thus educating good out of evil ; and also in finally bringing the Jews back to their filial relation, through the mercy granted to the Gentiles ; important ends, which no human foresight or wisdom could have accomplished. Boundless *knowledge* ; for what less than omniscience could foresee the effects to be thus produced, — the good effects that would flow from present and apparent evil ? What human or angelic foresight could divine that such consequences would follow from such means ?" Some refer the apostle's exclamation exclusively to the divine mercy displayed in the final result. To me their opinion seems more correct who refer it, not merely to the crowning act of salvation, but to all the steps in the process, as it has been described ; not less to the original subjection to vanity, than to the deliverance from the bondage of corruption ; not less to the comprehending of all in unbelief, than to the having mercy upon all. If men had not been in a condition to receive mercy, how could it have been bestowed ? If they had not been sinners, how could they be saved from sin ? One part of the process was as necessary as the other to the full development of the attribute of mercy. And the whole scheme was formed by infinite wisdom and knowledge. In some faint degree we may appreciate the wisdom of that scheme, now that it has been revealed ; but no human wisdom could have devised it. ¶ *How unsearchable are his judgments*. Judgments often indicate the administration of divine justice ; particularly the retributions rendered to ungodliness. But such is not its meaning here. It refers rather to God's moral government generally, and the full and perfect accomplishment of the scheme of salvation in particular, which is the subject under

discussion. These judgments are unsearchable ; they cannot be fully comprehended. "Men are not capable of penetrating into the depths of divine wisdom, because revelation hath made known only what God hath willed, and said, and done, without disclosing the reasons either of his general or of his particular conduct. The knowledge of whatever is above our present childish conceptions is to be sought for, not here, but in the future state." — *Macknight*. ¶ *And his ways past finding out*. The same idea is expressed by a figure taken from the footprints left by men or animals. "How unsearchable his paths !" — *Conybeare*. We may believe, on the faith of revelation, or by the contemplation of "the things that are made," that God exists, and that he controls all things ; yet we cannot trace his way. In the language of the Psalmist, we may exclaim, "Thy way is in the sea, and thy path in the great waters, and thy footsteps are not known." Ps. lxxvii. 19. We cannot trace his designs, except so far as he is pleased to make them known. Human wisdom is not far-reaching enough to "find out the Almighty to perfection." Job xi. 7. One general idea runs through the whole verse ; namely, that the scheme of salvation by grace, in all its parts, and in its whole extent, is a vast exhibition of divine wisdom, which mortals cannot fully comprehend. They can only believe, rejoice, wonder, and adore.

34. *For who hath known the mind of the Lord, &c.* This is quoted substantially from Isa. xl. 13. "Who hath directed the spirit of the Lord, or, being his counsellor, hath taught him ?" The whole scheme of salvation was devised by one omniscient mind, without prompting, and without advice. To that mind, therefore, was due all the glory of the result. There is, perhaps, also a reference to the unity of that design, so that what might appear to an observer as obstacles are in fact but part of the vast machinery through whose complicated movements the grand result is wrought out. The apostle may be understood, moreover, to admonish his brethren, Jews as well as Gentiles, that

mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor?

35 Or who hath first given to

it did not become them to find fault with any portion of this scheme ; for it was devised by the Supreme Ruler, and it was their duty to trust implicitly in his wisdom. Mysterious and inscrutable, doubtless, were some of its parts, to human comprehension ; nevertheless, such was the plan ; and they should distrust their own mental power rather than the wisdom of God. And most assuredly they should glorify him for the result revealed, rather than carp at the method of its accomplishment.

35. *Or who hath first given unto him, &c.* A similar sentiment is found in Job xli. 11 ; but it may be doubted whether the apostle designed his language as a quotation. He "very properly asks the Jews if God was in their debt for any obligation they had conferred on him ; or if he was, let them say for what, and they should have an ample remuneration made to them."—*Macknight*. Whether this implied rebuke were originally designed for the Jews in particular, or whether it was administered for the benefit of the Gentiles also, lest they should be wise in their own conceits, it deserves the serious consideration of all who have named the name of Christ. The Jews, doubtless, regarded the admission of the Gentiles into covenant relations with God as an encroachment on their ancient privileges. They felt that a wrong had been done to them, who had so long preserved the knowledge and worship of the true God, if those who had been idolaters and sinners were to be admitted to an equality with them. But, the apostle inquires, had they given anything to Him? Had they rendered any service which was not due, on account of previous blessings enjoyed by them? Had they not been fully rewarded for all their obedience and truly good works? Was God, in any possible sense, a debtor to them? If, in any manner, they could substantiate a just claim, they might be sure of full payment. If, on the other hand, their consciences witnessed that they were unprofitable servants, and that they had no valid claims on the score of justice, they ought to remem-

him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again?

36 For of him, and through him,

ber that it was proper for God to extend mercy to the Gentiles as well as to themselves ; for all had sinned and come short of his glory, and all were equally dependent on his grace for salvation. The Jews, however, were not the only people who have felt the workings of this exclusive spirit. There are those who insist that final salvation is made dependent on human effort ; and, while they fondly imagine that they have performed the conditions and secured the prize, they cannot abide the idea that others, who have been less diligent and successful, shall share the same blessing. And even among those who admit and verily believe that salvation is wholly of grace, there are many who imagine that God ought to make a distinction among his children, and to confer the blessing only on such as comply seasonably with certain conditions of faith and obedience. They trust that they have complied. They think that others have not. Having borne the burden and heat of the day, they imagine that others, who have as yet not performed a single hour's service, ought not to be made equal with them. By all such the apostle's question should be pondered seriously and earnestly. Let them seriously question their own consciences, whether they have performed more than their duty to God, Luke xvii. 9, 10 ; whether they have made him indebted to them ; whether all their faith and obedience have not been fully rewarded already ; whether they can justly claim salvation on the ground of merit ; whether they are not utterly dependent on divine grace for that crowning blessing. They may then, perhaps, realize that while God, of his free grace, bestows on them a blessing which they have not earned, he may with equal propriety bestow the same blessing on others, who are equally dependent and equally unprofitable. It may serve to keep them humble, to remember that God is not indebted to them ; and true humility will prevent them from objecting to the impartial distribution of the fruits of his free grace.

36. *For of him.* "The design of this

and to him *are* all things : to whom *be* glory forever. Amen.

verse is to show that no creature has any *claim* on God. Jews and Gentiles must alike receive salvation on the ground of his *mercy*. So far from having a claim on God, the apostle here affirms that *all* things have come from him, and, therefore, all must be derived to us. Nothing has been produced by chance, or hap-hazard ; nothing by created skill or might. All has been formed by God ; and, therefore, he has a right to dispose of all." — *Barnes*.

¶ *And through him*. By his own agency, mediate or immediate. All the affairs of the universe are directed and controlled by his purpose. All the vicissitudes of human life, all present distinctions between individuals and nations, all the processes for the ultimate accomplishment of that glorious purpose which he purposed in himself before the world began, are ordained by him, and by his energy are they made effectual. He has not made the execution of his designs dependent on the faithfulness of human agents ; but he makes even their unfaithfulness subservient to his own purpose. "The wrath of man shall praise thee ; the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain." Ps. lxxvi.

10. What men design for evil he designs for good. The accomplishment of his purpose is therefore sure, in spite of all apparent obstacles ; for, through him, by his own agency, the universe is controlled. ¶ *And to him*. To his glory ; to the full execution of all his designs ; to the precise end which he purposed from the beginning. "For his honor, praise, glory ; he is the sovereign Lord and possessor of all, and all exist because he wills it, and exist for the accomplishment of purposes which the Maker of all has in view. The sentence seems equivalent to saying, God is the beginning, continuance, and end, of all things." — *Stuart*. A similar idea is expressed in Rev. iv. 11. "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory, and honor, and power ; for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created." This was the conclusion to which the argument of the apostle tended, through this epistle. Human agency is recognized to its proper extent ; and human accountability, com-

mensurate with that agency. Yet the supreme control of the Almighty is constantly asserted, overruling and directing human agency in such a manner that the divine purposes were carried forward by the very means which apparently obstructed them. And, while human accountability involved a just recompense of reward, the purpose of God secured for all his children a blessing, which they were utterly unable to attain by their own exertions, but which he would freely bestow as a gracious gift. The creation of the human soul, all its powers and frailties, its subjection to vanity, and its final deliverance into the glorious liberty of the children of God, were purposed by him, in all their particulars of time and circumstance. He controlled the whole process, and secured the result beyond possibility of failure. "All things come from God at first ; all things are governed and directed by him ; and to his ends they all arrive at last." — *H. Ballou, 2d*.

¶ *To whom be glory forever*. As the whole work of creation, providence, and grace, is his, to him preëminently belongs the glory of the result. He is not an unconcerned spectator of the actions of mankind. He has not left the success or failure of his designs to chance or accident. By his own energy, he causes all things to work together for good, and makes all subservient to the grand result. Most rightfully, then, should all glory be ascribed to him. And happy are they who can recognize his hand in all things, and believe, without doubting, that he will bring good out of all which appears to be evil, and finally crown all his intelligent offspring with endless holiness and happiness. The ascriptions of glory, rendered by such believers, will not be mingled with regrets that the blessing is not more widely diffused. The most benevolent desires are fully satisfied, and adoration and thanksgiving without alloy may be offered as an acceptable offering. ¶ *Amen*. See note on Matt. vi. 13. In concluding the consideration of this passage, the question presses upon the mind, what could fill the apostle's heart with such a spirit of devout and joyful exultation, short of a firm faith that the abounding grace

CHAPTER XII.

I BESEECH you therefore, brethren,

of God would be effectual to the salvation of all his children? Would he, whose heart's desire was that all Israel might be saved, and who had hope for the resurrection of the dead, both of the just and of the unjust, ch. x. 1; Acts xxiv. 15, thus rejoice with fulness of joy, if he believed that, while some should enjoy the bliss of heaven, others should wail in endless and hopeless anguish? Believe it, who can. Such was not the character of Paul, as it is portrayed in the New Testament. *Ols-hausen*, as quoted by *Livermore*, well observes, that "This whole contemplation of the wonderful ways of the Lord, who knows how to gather his flock unto himself out of all languages, kindreds, and tongues, was assuredly fitted to excite a feeling of amazement and admiration. To this feeling, then, the apostle gave vent in an exclamation, which is, indeed, short, but deeply felt, and full of great ideas. — This bold and powerful flight seems, however, to have a foundation only on the supposition of an entire restoration. If only some, or but a few in all, are blessed, how is God's wisdom to become manifest in the result? But if all become blessed, without prejudice to free-will or justice, this, assuredly, appears as a miracle of God. The doctrine of a restoration has very many passages of St. Paul's Epistles apparently in its favor." To which *Livermore* adds his own evangelical testimony: "A spirit of energetic hope and of boundless love heaves in the breast of the apostle; and we cannot reconcile his large and general terms with the supposition that there will not be a final restoration of the human family to virtue and eternal life."

CHAPTER XII.

1. "The apostle, having now finished the doctrinal part of his epistle, judged it fit, in this and the following chapters, to give the Roman brethren a variety of precepts respecting their behavior, both as members of the church and as subjects of the state. — Some of these precepts are of universal and perpetual obligation, and others of them were

ren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto

sued to the circumstances of the brethren at the time they were written: such as the precepts concerning meats and holy days; which, though they may seem less necessary now that the disputes which gave rise to them no longer subsist, are, nevertheless, of great use still, as they may be applied for directing our conduct in other points, of equal importance to society and to the church." — *Macknight*. In this general view of the remainder of this epistle, all, or nearly all, commentators fully coincide. ¶ *I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God*. The form of this exhortation is worthy of notice. The apostle appeals to the gratitude of his brethren, not to their fears. He did not attempt to terrify them into obedience, by denouncing punishment as the penalty of neglect. He did not attempt to kindle a flame of love in their hearts, by applying the fire of hell. But rather he urged them to remember the *mercies* of God, to be grateful for those mercies, and to manifest the sincerity of their gratitude by obedience to his commandments. This was sound theology; and it was also sound philosophy. Doubtless, some men may be restrained from overt criminal acts, by fear of punishment, who would otherwise transgress with a high hand; and it is certainly better that they should be so restrained than not restrained at all. Doubtless, also, the best men feel a salutary restraint from crime in the fact that God will assuredly render to every transgression a just recompense of reward. Heb. ii. 2. But it is only a negative virtue, so to speak, which is thus produced. Genuine piety, love, gratitude, confidence, trust, and a fervent desire to obey God in all things, never resulted, and never can result, from mere dread of punishment. Such fruit is produced only by a realizing sense of divine goodness and mercy. Hence we find our Lord and his apostles denouncing the judgments of God as a motive for avoiding or abandoning iniquity, but never as a motive for loving God, and cultivating the graces of his spirit. For the latter purpose they appeal,

God, *which is* your reasonable ser-

vice.

uniformly, to his benevolence, to his mercy and grace, manifested in the works of providence, and emphatically in the work of redemption. Such is the character of the appeal in the text. Having recounted the *mercies of God*, displayed in his vast purpose, embracing the final salvation of all mankind, the apostle beseeches his brethren, by a consideration of these mercies, to cherish the spirit and perform the acts of obedience, which are characteristic of Christian disciples. It should be further observed that the apostle manifests no fear that any injury could arise from confidence in the divine mercy. He well understood the objection that the doctrine of free, and unbounded, and universal grace was licentious in its tendency. He had heard the specious objection, that if God would pardon sin, if his grace would abound over sin, if, indeed, his grace were rendered more conspicuous by the existence and forgiveness of sin, then men should sin that grace might abound. That objection he met and silenced, ch. vi. 1—7. He was not deterred by it from directing the attention of his brethren renewedly to the mercy of God, when he would excite their love and obedience. He fully concurred with the beloved apostle John in the sentiment that "We love him, because he first loved us." 1 John iv. 19. If all exhortations from the Christian pulpit were of like character, better results might be anticipated than are now witnessed. Let the open transgressor, and him who meditates iniquity, be admonished by "the terror of the Lord," 2 Cor. v. 11, if his stony heart be not melted by the influence of divine love. But, to beget in the soul a spirit of fervent love and gratitude, a spirit of piety and true devotion, an ardent desire for spiritual conformity to the "good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God," let the *mercies of God* be presented as the chief object of meditation. When the devil tempted our Lord to cast himself down from "a pinnacle of the temple," because it was "written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee, and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone," he

replied, "It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God." Matt. iv. 6, 7. So, when the wily adversary tempts a true disciple of Christ to sin, because God has promised to overcome all sin by the power of his grace, the gracious spirit which is imparted to him enables and constrains him to forbear tempting the Lord. Love to God never yet induced wilful disobedience. But love to God results from a confidence in God's love to men. It follows, that a firm and unwavering confidence in the mercies of God, instead of inducing licentiousness, is the most powerful incentive to obedience which can be addressed to the human heart; its immediate result is love to God, of which obedience is the fruit. I have dwelt the longer on this point, because a misapprehension of it is so wide-spread and inveterate, and because the apostle here makes it the basis of all his exhortations. ¶ *That ye present your bodies a living sacrifice.* Devotion to the service of God is here described by the apostle, under the figure of a sacrifice prescribed by the ritual law. The word rendered *present* is the same "word by which the bringing of an animal to the altar to be sacrificed was expressed."—*Macknight*. The *bodies of men* are here specified particularly, because the *bodies of animals* were offered in sacrifice. Yet, as the animals were brought alive to the altar, and the whole was sacrificed, so here the idea is, that Christians should devote themselves wholly, body, soul, and spirit, without any reservation, to the service of God. Perhaps the apostle may have had a further purpose in thus specifying *bodies*. He had previously shown the abominable use which the idolatrous Gentiles made of their bodies; and, moreover, that the body is the seat of those lusts and passions which war against the soul. He may have intended to contrast the duty of Christians with the practice of idolaters in regard to the body, and to enforce the obligation of crucifying the flesh, with its affections and lusts, that the body, thus purified, might be an acceptable offering. However this be, the general scope of the exhortation is manifest; namely, that, in consideration of the

divine mercy, and as a proper expression of gratitude, it is the duty of all believers to devote themselves wholly to the service of God ; or, as it is elsewhere expressed, that they should yield themselves unto God as alive from the dead, and their members as instruments of righteousness unto God. Ch. vi. 13. ¶ *Holy*. Pure ; free from spot or blemish. The Jews were forbidden to offer in sacrifice animals which were diseased, maimed, or otherwise imperfect. So Christians are exhorted to make a whole, an entire, offering of themselves ; not that fragmentary service which some purpose to offer in sickness, or in old age, but the steady devotion of the whole life ; not that partial devotion, which consists in outward acts of reverence, while the heart is stubborn ; in professedly worshipping God in the sanctuary on the Sabbath, and in cheating and defrauding mankind through the remainder of the week ; in a rigid observance of one class of duties, as an offset against the habitual disregard and violation of others ; but an entire devotion of all the powers and energies to know and obey the perfect will of God. There were those in old time who devoured widows' houses, and for a pretence made long prayers ; and they had a meet reward in the greater damnation which they incurred. Matt. xxiii. 14. We read of an almost Christian, who cheerfully obeyed many divine commandments, but sorrowfully departed from Christ because he had not sufficient faith to render entire obedience. See note on Matt. xix. 22—24. Such is not the obedience which the apostle beseeches his brethren to render. It is rather that of which our Lord speaks, when he says, " My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work," John iv. 34 ; and of which the apostle speaks, in view of the persecutions which he encountered in the performance of duty, " Neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy," &c. Acts xx. 24. Human frailty, doubtless, will prevent the completeness of the offering ; yet we should earnestly strive to approach as nearly as possible to that pattern which is exhibited in Eph. v. 25—27, as the ultimate result of the divine influence on the human heart :

" Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it ; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word ; that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing ; but that it should be holy and without blemish." Just so far as we come short of this, just so much the sacrifice lacks of completeness, and is not absolutely *holy*, or set apart unto God. But, where there is a willing mind, it is accepted according to the ability which God hath given unto us. And if we honestly and earnestly strive to be obedient in all things, the spirit will help our infirmities, and witness with our spirits that we are children of God. ¶ *Acceptable unto God*. A devotion of our best exertions to be obedient children is acceptable to our heavenly Father. He requires of men according to what they have, and not according to what they have not. He has made us men : he does not require us to conduct as angels. He has made us subject to vanity : he does not require of us that sinless obedience which is rendered by glorified spirits, until he shall deliver us from this bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. But he has made us capable of gratitude to him for his abundant mercies ; and such gratitude he requires us to render. He has made us capable of an earnest and habitual desire to conform to his will, and to obey his commandments ; and such a desire he requires us to cherish and cultivate. He has made us capable of approximating holiness, by resisting temptation, and striving to obey the law of the mind ; and such approximation he requires of us. If we obey his requirements, if we habitually strive for perfection, such service, such devotion of ourselves, is *acceptable* unto him, notwithstanding the law in our members render us in some measure captive unto sin. Ch. vii. 18—25. Our remaining imperfections should keep us humble, and sensible of our need of mercy. Our progress in holiness cheers us, inasmuch as we know that such progress is *acceptable* unto God. ¶ *Which is your reasonable service*. " Which is your rational service." — *Stuart*. " Which is your reasonable worship." — *Macknight* and *Conybeare*. The word here ren-

2 And be not conformed to this world : but be ye transformed by

dered *service* properly denotes worship, or religious homage. "According to *Beza*, the presenting of our bodies to God a living sacrifice is called a reasonable worship, because it was a sacrifice of a rational creature, whereas the sacrifices of birds and beasts were sacrifices of irrational animals. But *Locke* says this is called a reasonable worship, because it is opposed to the irrational worship of the heathens." — *Macknight*. The word rendered *reasonable* has not its full expression in the common version. It "denotes that which pertains to the mind; and a reasonable service means that which is mental, or pertaining to reason. It stands opposed not to that which is foolish or unreasonable, but to the *external* service of the Jews, and such as they relied on for salvation. The worship of the Christian is that which pertains to the mind, or is spiritual: that of the Jew was external. *Chrysostom* renders this phrase, 'Your spiritual ministry.' The Syriac, 'That ye present your bodies, &c., by a rational ministry.'" — *Barnes*. What is here said of the Jewish sacrifices is equally true of the idolatrous rites practised by the Gentiles. The service or worship required of Christians is not external, but internal. They are required to "worship the Father in spirit and in truth." John iv. 23, 24. And such worship is equivalent to that entire devotion of themselves to God which the apostle urges.

2. *And be not conformed to this world.* Let not your disposition of heart or your conduct be fashioned after the manner of this world. The word here rendered *world* is generally used in the Scriptures to denote a particular age or dispensation. Hence the age of darkness and iniquity which preceded the reign of the gospel, and the age of light and comparative holiness during that reign, are often denominated "this world," and "the world to come." In this place, the apostle probably refers to the time then present, or to the customs of thought and action which then prevailed among men, the great majority of whom were yet unbelievers; and the meaning is, Be not conformed to the existing evil

customs; imitate not the character or conduct of the men of this corrupt and wicked age. We need not suppose he made any invidious distinction in this matter between Jews and Gentiles; for the mass of both races was corrupt. See chap. iii. 9—18; Eph. iv. 17—19. The apostle exhorts his brethren not to act in conformity with such a pernicious example. ¶ *But be ye transformed.* They had hitherto partaken, in a less or greater degree, of the general corruption. They ought now to "bring forth fruits meet for repentance." Matt. iii. 8. They should adopt a new form both of thought and conduct. Heretofore they had loved and practised sinfulness: henceforward they should love and practise holiness. Chap. vi. 12—19. The form of the expression here used without qualification might seem to indicate a mere change in the external appearance; but the words which follow clearly demonstrate the internal nature of the transformation. It should affect the heart itself, the affections, the desires, the intentions. A more full description of this change is found in Eph. iv. 20—32. See also chap. viii. 1—14. By a consideration of the *mercies of God* the heart should be filled with love and gratitude; the affections should be weaned from sin, and strongly attached to holiness; and, in accordance with this new state of feeling, there should be a corresponding change of conduct: sinful practices should be renounced and utterly discontinued, and the divine commandments should be strictly and conscientiously obeyed. Acts xxvi. 18. ¶ *By the renewing of your mind.* The same idea is expressed in Eph. iv. 23, by the phrase "renewed in the spirit of your mind." Something more than an external change is required. The mind, the heart, the affections, must be purified from evil thoughts and desires, and a spirit of genuine love to God, and of devotion to his holy will, must take their place. A change of external conduct, lacking this basis, has no promise of permanence. When the circumstance which occasioned it has passed by, a relapse into unrighteousness may be expected. Even while it lasts it would be of

the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and

little real benefit, as resulting from an improper cause; hypocritical, as denoting an inward purity which does not exist. But, if the heart be purified, a permanent reformation of conduct may be expected. If "that which is within the cup and the platter" be cleansed, "the outside of them may be clean also." Matt. xxiii. 26. "The whole new creature doth consist in the renewal of the mind, the will, the affections and actions of men (1 Thess. v. 23); but because this renewal doth begin with the change of mind, discerning and approving what is acceptable to the Lord, and upon that follows the choice of what is so by the will, and the inclination of the affections to what the mind doth thus approve of, and the regulation of our outward actions is according to what we thus approve, choose, and affect, this renewal of the mind is put for the renovation of the whole man, and we are said to be renewed in the spirit of our mind, and to put on the new man (Eph. iv. 23, 24), which is renewed in knowledge, according to the image of him that created him. Col. iii. 10."—*Whitby*. It is well observed by *Barnes* that "the word translated *mind* properly denotes *intellect*, as distinguished from the will and affections. But here it seems to be used as applicable to *the whole spirit*, as distinguished from the body, including the understanding, will, and affections. As if he had said, Let not this change appertain to the body only, but to the soul. Let it not be a mere external conformity, but let it have its seat in the spirit." The utter hollowness and unprofitableness of external conformity to the rules of right, without a corresponding internal purity, is vividly exhibited by our Lord. Luke xviii. 9—14. Yet how many vainly imagine that this comprehends the whole duty of man; and, on this unsubstantial foundation, trust in themselves, and despise others. Such is not the entire devotion which the apostle urges. Outward conformity, resulting from fear, from a desire to secure the applause of men, or from anything except gratitude to God and love of holiness, is doubtless better for the individual and for the community than

open and high-handed iniquity; but it does not come up to the standard of the gospel, which requires a consecration of the heart as well as a well-ordered life and conversation. ¶ *That ye may prove*. "That ye may learn."—*Stuart*. "That ye may discern."—*Comybeare*. "That ye may search out."—*Newcome*. The word here rendered *prove* properly denotes the process of trying or testing metals, to ascertain the degree of their purity. In the Scriptures it is generally used to denote the mental process by which the truth or falsity of doctrines is tested, or the moral process by which virtue is distinguished from vice, or holiness from sinfulness. See 2 Cor. viii. 8, 22; xiii. 5; Gal. vi. 4; Eph. v. 10; 1 Thess. v. 21; 1 Tim. iii. 10. The same word is used in a similar sense and rendered *try*, in 1 Cor. iii. 13; 1 Thess. ii. 4; 1 Pet. i. 7; 1 John iv. 1. It is translated *examine*, retaining the same sense, in 1 Cor. xi. 28. In Luke xii. 56, and xiv. 19, it is applied to a different subject, but with the same general import, being there translated *discern*, and *prove*. In a very few cases, it seems to denote approval, implying a previous trial or examination, as in ch. ii. 18; 1 Cor. xvi. 3; Phil. 1—10; and a similar meaning is conveyed in ch. xiv. 22, where it is rendered *alloweth*. In the text, it denotes that a renewed mind will prove, try, closely examine, every doctrine which is presented, and every precept which is called a divine command, to ascertain whether it be according to the holy will and purpose of God, as manifested in his works and revealed in his word. While it rejects all which is spurious and will not abide the test, it acknowledges the genuineness and binding authority of all which is manifestly in conformity to the character and declared will of God. ¶ *What is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God*. Or, "the will of God, even that which is good, and acceptable, and perfect."—*Comybeare*. Many critics concur in this construction of the phrase. The *good* is that which is right in itself, which promotes human happiness, and thereby manifests the glory of divine grace. The *acceptable* is that which is in conformity with the holy

acceptable, and perfect will of God.

3 For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that

nature and purposes of God. The *perfect* is that which lacks nothing, and is free from any spot or blemish. Such is the will of God, as expressed in his holy law. See Ps. xix. 7—10 ; 1 Tim. ii. 1—6. "The will of God relates to his commands in regard to our conduct, his doctrines in regard to our belief, his providential dealings in relation to our external circumstances. It means what God demands of us, in whatever way it may be made known. They do not err from his ways who seek his guidance, and who, not confiding in their own wisdom, but in God, commit their way to him."—*Barnes*. It is equally true that the will of God, in its largest sense, indicates his purpose in regard to the final destiny of mankind ; in which sense his will is *good*, securing the happiness of men, and thus exhibiting the abundance of his grace ; *acceptable*, being perfectly consistent with his own affectionate regard for his offspring ; and *perfect*, being universal in its scope, and triumphant in its execution. This is appreciated by those who are truly renewed in the spirit of their mind, and who are the children of God, through the influence of his spirit. In the text, the apostle has particular reference to the duty of Christians to bring their belief and conduct into conformity with the will of God ; and he intimates that the renewal of the mind enables them to discern that will, and to bring their belief and conduct to this test.

3. *For I say, through the grace given unto me, &c.* Namely, the grace or favor of apostleship. Ch. i. 5. As Paul was personally unknown to the brethren at Rome, it was proper that he should appeal to his authority, when uttering moral precepts, as well as when announcing the doctrine of the gospel. In either case, he was duly authorized to speak in the name of his Master. ¶ *To every man that is among you.* His exhortation was general and comprehensive. He made no exceptions. He did not recognize any such purity among men in the flesh as would render his exhortation inappropriate. None had yet attained perfection. None were free

is among you, not to think of *himself* more highly than he ought to think ; but to think soberly, accord-

from temptation and liability to fall. 1 Cor. x. 12. He therefore admonished all to be circumspect, and to take heed to their ways. ¶ *Not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think.* Not to over-estimate himself ; not to entertain an extravagant opinion of his own importance, whatever his gifts or acquisitions, but to remember that all distinctions among men are made by the Sovereign Ruler, not as a matter of special favoritism to them who are placed in the more honorable stations, but for the common good of all. Pride is one of the most easily besetting sins. Pride of birth, of station, of wealth, of beauty, of intellectual endowments, and of almost every adventitious circumstance in which men differ from each other, is one of the most common, and at the same time one of the least excusable, of human vices. Especially is spiritual pride denounced by our Lord and his apostles ; and to this the writer seems, from what follows, to refer particularly in this place. At Corinth, at Philippi, and at Thessalonica, the church was early infected by such pride ; against which the apostle bears testimony. He cautions the brethren at Rome, lest they fall into the same condemnation. In ch. xi. 20, he exhorts the Gentiles not to over-estimate themselves in comparison with the Jews, saying, "Be not high-minded, but fear." In this place he exhorts all, both Jews and Gentiles, to banish pride from their hearts. This exhortation, in the language of *Macknight*, is of "eternal obligation ;" that is, its importance will not diminish as long as any remain under bondage to corruption. Would that all professed Christians might give diligent heed to it ! How much haughtiness and disgusting superciliousness would vanish away ! Instead of saying to others, "Stand by thyself, come not near me, for I am holier than thou !" (Isa. lxv. 5), those who have shared largely in spiritual gifts would earnestly endeavor to improve the condition of their less distinguished brethren, so that the difference between them might be diminished, if not entirely obliterated. It might abate somewhat

ing as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith.

their spiritual pride, if they would duly consider the divine testimony concerning such as indulge it: "These are a smoke in my nose, a fire that burneth all the day." Isa. lxxv. 5. That pride, which makes men an offence unto God, and an object of disgust to their fellow-men, is surely unbecoming a Christian. Those who are proud of their holiness have need to be heartily ashamed of their pride. ¶ *But to think soberly. To be humble.* "To think modestly, prudently, in a rational way, of himself, not being puffed up with his own attainments and gifts." — *Stuart.* That there are differences among men in regard to external advantages of person, position, and possessions, is undoubtedly true; and it is just as true that a similar difference exists in respect to the degree of moral purity, and of spiritual light and knowledge, to which men have attained. But what occasion is there for pride? Who hath made them to differ? The most wise and devout Christian will not hesitate to say, "By the grace of God I am what I am;" and if his labors have been highly blessed, he will humbly acknowledge, "Yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me." 1 Cor. xv. 10. Humility may be cultivated by the consideration of our entire dependence on him who exalteth and abaseth his children, as seemeth good in his own sight. All which we enjoy, possess, or hope for, depends on his will alone. We should be grateful for what he bestows; but should not be proud of it, as though we had attained it by our own strength or worthiness. On the contrary, we should be sober and humble, remembering that for the least of our advantages we are indebted to the divine bounty. Moreover, instead of comparing ourselves with others, and exulting in any supposed superiority to them, it would serve to keep us humble, if we would carefully compare ourselves with him whom we acknowledge as our Master; our strength of intellect with his; our position or station with his; our moral attainments with his. Our consciousness of inferiority would beget humility, instead of pride. The wisest and most devout Christian excels the most besotted sinner far less than he

falls short of that perfect pattern of wisdom and holiness exhibited by Jesus Christ. Men are not required to be insensible of their advantages. If God has bestowed a gift on an individual, he is not bound to overlook or conceal it; on the contrary, it is his duty to improve every talent committed to him for the benefit of himself and his fellow-men, and thus to promote the divine glory on earth. He should make a fair estimate of his natural powers and faculties, of the spiritual gifts which he has received, and of the position in life which has been assigned to him; and he should faithfully improve all his powers and opportunities, with a cheerful and grateful heart. At the same time, if he will remember how much he yet lacks of perfectness, he will not think more highly of himself than he ought to think, but will think soberly. ¶ *According as God hath dealt to every man.* The source of faith and all spiritual gifts is here recognized. "As God has measured to each one, or apportioned to each one. In this place the faith which Christians have is traced to God as its giver. This fact, that God has given it, will be itself one of the most effectual promoters of humility and right feeling. Men commonly regard the objects on which they pride themselves as things of their own creation, or as depending on themselves. But let an object be regarded as the gift of God, and it ceases to excite pride, and the feeling is at once changed into gratitude. He, therefore, who regards God as the source of all blessings, and he only, will be a humble man." — *Barnes.* ¶ *The measure of faith.* Some commentators understand *faith* in this place as equivalent to *grace*, and suppose it to denote the substance of religion, or Christianity. Others understand it to denote the spiritual gifts which are indicated in ver. 6—8. But I prefer the more plain and obvious interpretation given by *Stuart*: "That is, according to the measure of Christian belief and knowledge, which God has imparted. In other words, let each one estimate his gifts by the principles which the gospel has revealed. — The apostle is not exhorting men to prize their gifts according to the diverse na-

4 For as we have many members in one body, and all members have

ture of them ; — but he is exhorting all, whatever may be their gifts, to demean themselves modestly and humbly. All belong to one body, and no invidious distinctions are to be made. Consequently, it is more congruous to explain the *measure of faith*, as indicating the measure of Christian belief, faith, that is, of Christian knowledge, which is the object of faith." The apostle had taught, in this epistle, that, for the accomplishment of his vast purpose, God has established distinctions among men : not only those great national distinctions which are more prominently exhibited, but also other and minor distinctions among men of the same nation, such as are indicated in ver. 6—8, and often elsewhere ; that these distinctions are made, not for the exclusive benefit of the apparently more favored classes, but for the general good of all ; that none can claim to be the peculiar favorites of God, inasmuch as he is equally the God of both Jews and Gentiles, and of all the individuals embraced in each class ; and, that whatever diversities may temporarily exist, in regard to the extent of knowledge or holiness, all will be overruled for good, and for the display of the divine glory. God hath concluded all in unbelief, that he might have mercy on all ; and where sin abounded, grace shall much more abound. Who embraces this form of Christian faith will be constrained "to think modestly, prudently, in a rational way, of himself, not being puffed up with his own attainments and gifts."

4. For as we have many members in one body. The exhortation of the apostle is not only general, as has been observed in the preceding notes, but specific in reference to the relative station of brethren in the Christian church ; see ver. 6—8. In either case, it is to be remembered that all are parts of the whole : all Christians of the church, and all men of the human family. The relationship of individuals to each other, and to the whole, is illustrated by the figure of the human body, composed of many members, some apparently more important than others, but all necessary to the perfection of the

not the same office :

5 So we, *being* many, are one

whole. The same figure is used and amplified in 1 Cor. xii. 4—31. The human family, the "whole creation," as it is styled in ch. viii. 22, like the human body, is composed of many members : some, indeed, are "more feeble," and apparently "less honorable," than others, yet all "necessary" to the proper compactness of the whole. 1 Cor. xii. 22, 23. One God created the whole race, and bestowed on all a common nature. "Have we not all one Father? Hath not one God created us?" Mal. ii. 10. God "giveth to all life, and breath, and all things ; and hath made of one blood all the nations of men, for to dwell on all the face of the earth." Acts xvii. 25, 26. The figure used by the apostle aptly applies, therefore, not only to the company of believers, gathered in one particular organization, and to all of "like precious faith," however widely scattered abroad, but to all mankind. The diversities which everywhere exist may be fitly compared to the different offices assigned to the several members of the human body ; and the welfare of the whole depends on such diversity. ¶ *And all members have not the same office.* Each is fitted for its own office ; as the eye for seeing, the ear for hearing, the tongue for speaking, the feet for walking. Some of the most important members, on whose regular performance of their allotted duty the very existence of the body depends, are out of sight, and their operations entirely invisible ; as the brain, the heart, the stomach, and the like. The several members are mutually dependent on each other. The heart may throb in vain, if the lungs inhale not the air to vitalize the current of blood which the heart sends through the body ; and equally vain are the inhalations of the lungs, if the heart cease to dilate and contract. In vain may the stomach receive food, if the nervous influence necessary to digestion be not furnished by the brain. The feet would stumble if not guided by the eye ; and the eye is dependent on the feet for a change of prospect. The tongue may make more noise than the other members, and more loudly proclaim its own importance ; yet if its utterances be not

body in Christ, and every one members one of another.

guided by a discreet brain, it only the more plainly manifests its own folly. So in the church; so in the great human family; the members are many, mutually dependent on each other, and each has its particular use and office.

5. *So we being many.* This is probably said especially of the visible church; yet it is true in regard to the race of mankind. ¶ *Are one body in Christ.* The Lord Jesus Christ is "head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all." Eph. i. 22, 23. Equally true is it that "the head of every man is Christ," even as the "head of Christ is God." 1 Cor. xi. 3. Our Lord recognized this relationship, this headship of humanity, in that prayer which he offered up, in presence of his disciples: "Thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him." John xvii. 2. As the head of the human body is the seat of the governing power, so Christ is the governing power over mankind; and "he must reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet." 1 Cor. xv. 25. This is the leading idea here expressed. Sympathy and affection between the head and the members is of course implied. 1 Cor. xii. 26, 27. But the prominent fact indicated is, that all the members are subject to the guidance and control of the head. ¶ *And every one members one of another.* Mutually dependent and necessary to the general good of the whole. "The meaning of the figure is, that Christians depend on one another for their mutual edification and comfort, as the members of the human body depend on one another for nourishment and assistance." — *Macknight.* This mutual dependence is of far wider extent than the visible church. It pervades the whole race. From the moment of birth, when all are utterly helpless and dependent, until the last sad offices are rendered to the dying, each is dependent on others for much which is essential to present comfort and happiness. What occasion is there for pride in such a state of being? for it is against pride that the apostle is

6 Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given

here cautioning his brethren. If we have been enabled to render assistance to others, we should remember that we also have been assisted, and that we shall hereafter need further assistance. If we have been able to instruct others, we should remember that we have been learners, and that our knowledge is yet far from perfect. If we have been so far turned away from ungodliness as to become examples to others of piety and uprightness, we should remember that "Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example that we should follow his steps." 1 Pet. ii. 21. Above all, whatever of benefit, whether of a temporal or spiritual character, we may impart to others, we should remember that we have not accomplished the work by our unaided wisdom or strength, but that "it is God that worketh in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure." Phil. ii. 13. If we duly consider our mutual obligations and our mutual dependence, and chiefly our entire dependence on the Father of our spirits, and on his Son, whom he hath made head over all, we shall be grateful for the assistance we have received, and perhaps more grateful for the privilege of assisting others; for "it is more blessed to give than to receive," Acts xx. 35; but surely we shall not think of ourselves more highly than we ought to think; we shall rather think soberly and humbly, according to the measure of our faith in the mutual and universal dependence and common inheritance of mankind.

6. *Having then gifts.* The apostle proceeds to a special application of the truth which he has previously announced. He exhorts his brethren to recognize the distinctions which existed in their ecclesiastical body, and to be diligent and faithful, each in his allotted station. Some understand gifts to relate wholly to spiritual or miraculous endowments; but the word seems rather to denote both spiritual and temporal gifts; applying not only to the prophetic impulse, but to the wisdom, prudence, and devotedness, necessary to an acceptable ministry; aptness to teach and exhort; ability to give assistance to the needy; capacity and diligence

to us, whether prophecy, *let us prophesy* according to the propor-

to rule; and the true benevolence which makes a cheerful giver. All these are gifts from God, which should be gratefully received, and humbly and faithfully employed for the common good. ¶ *Differing according to the grace that is given to us.* Although all which men enjoy is to be regarded as a gift of divine grace, and to be recognized as flowing from the same source, yet an infinite diversity characterizes the gifts. Life itself is a common gift to all: yet to some it is given under the equator, to others near the poles; to some, where the fruits of the earth grow spontaneously, and sustenance may be had for the plucking; to others, where a scanty subsistence is obtained, by severe labor, from a barren and unwilling soil. Life is given under physical varieties: to some is given a white skin; to others, black; to others, almost all possible shades between the two extremes. The same diversity exists in mental endowments. Some are intellectual giants, others pigmies; while the mass occupy every degree of the graduated scale which extends from one to the other. In social life, and in every organized body, the same gradation between the most humble and the most exalted station exists. It was so in the church at Rome. Yet the apostle exhorts that none should be proud, inasmuch as all which any had received was a gift; and that all should use their gifts in a proper manner, remembering that the responsibility of each was measured by the abundance which he had received. See Luke xii. 47, 48. "God exercises a sovereignty, and bestows his favors as he pleases, injuring no one by conferring favors on others; and holding me responsible for the right use of what I have, and not for what may be conferred on my neighbor." — *Barnes.* To this should be added, that God not only "injures no one by conferring favors on others," but that he injures no one by the disabilities he imposes, or by withholding the same gifts which he confers on others. In the end, he will make existence a blessing to all, and all shall be grateful for the unspeakable gift. True honor or shame does not arise from the social or ecclesiastical

position which a man is fitted to occupy; but from his own faithfulness or unfaithfulness in the performance of his duties. The most exalted has no occasion to be proud, nor need the most humble be ashamed of his station. It is according to the purpose of God that such variety should exist; and he will cause that variety to be beneficial to the whole body, even as the different offices of the several members of the human body mutually contribute to its well-being. ¶ *Whether prophecy.* The apostle specifies sundry gifts, which had been imparted to the early Christians, and probably to some of the brethren at Rome. The first which he names is *prophecy*. To prophecy is to predict future events. This gift was imparted to some of the early Christians. See Acts xxi. 10. But, besides this, the word has a more large signification, denoting the interpretation of the divine will, and such is generally understood to be its meaning here. "To prophesy means not merely to predict, which is rather the predominant signification of the word, but also to preach, as we say, to warn, to threaten, to utter devotional sentiment, to utter praise; in short, to speak anything by divine inspiration or afflatus. *Prophecy* in our text, therefore, does not of course refer to those who predicted; it may have another meaning. More probable is it — indeed, it is almost certain — that here it has a more general sense, referring to those who publicly uttered anything, by special divine aid or inspiration, which had respect to the subject of religion." — *Stuart.* ¶ *Let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith.* Literally, the *analogy of faith*. By analogy of faith is generally understood that which is in accordance with the general doctrine of faith, or with the gospel as revealed. It is clear that any doctrine which is inconsistent with the general current of the gospel is not according to the analogy of faith. And to this test private Christians should always subject the particular doctrines which are proposed for their belief. Some have understood the apostle to admonish those who possessed the prophetic gift to beware lest they should prophesy anything inconsistent with the analogy of faith. But,

tion of faith ;

7 Or ministry, *let us wait on our ministering* : or he that teacheth,

if they spake by a divine afflatus, by special divine aid or inspiration, such an admonition would seem to be unnecessary ; forasmuch as the spirit would not probably contradict itself. A more probable, and, indeed, the general interpretation, is, that the apostle exhorted the prophets, in their interpretation of the divine will, to confine themselves carefully to what was made known to them by the spirit ; to prophesy according to the proportion or measure of the faith, or of the knowledge of divine truth, which was imparted to them ; and not to mistake their own impulses for the impulses of the spirit.

7. *Or ministry.* This word properly denotes the service appropriate to those who were styled *deacons* in the primitive church. This was an order of officers established by the apostles, who were hindered in the ministry of the word by serving tables. Acts vi. 1—6. It was their duty to take charge of the common stock of the church, and to make such distribution as was necessary. Yet they were not absolutely confined to this duty ; for they occasionally preached the word. Thus Stephen, one of the deacons, preached at Jerusalem, Acts vi., vii. ; and Philip, at Samaria, Acts viii. 5—40. Three classes of teachers are named, as of grades inferior to the prophets, or those who taught by inspiration ; namely, ministers, teachers, and exhorters. It is confessedly difficult now to discriminate accurately between these, and to assign the appropriate duties of each. That the deacons both preached and administered the sacraments, is evident from Acts viii. 5, 12, 38, where it is recorded that Philip preached effectually at Samaria, and that he instructed and baptized the eunuch. From the manner in which the word is used here, it seems to denote the duty of deacons as instructors rather than their other duty of receiving and distributing alms ; there being a regular gradation of offices, in some respects similar, from prophets down to exhorters. ¶ *Let us wait on our ministering.* Let us faithfully perform the duties appertaining to

on teaching :

8 Or he that exhorteth, on exhortation : he that giveth, *let him*

our station. Let us be devoted to the ministry appointed for us, and discharge its offices with fidelity and zeal. It is implied in the general scope of the apostle's exhortation, that *ministers* should not assume the station or duties of *prophets*, but be content with their own. Indeed, the same fact is implied in the specific admonition to wait on their ministry, or to devote their whole attention to the duties required of them. They should not think of themselves more highly than they ought to think, nor aspire to offices for which they have not the proper gifts. They should rather think soberly, and cheerfully occupy the station, and perform the duties designated by the measure of spiritual illumination granted to them. ¶ *Or he that teacheth, on teaching.* Teachers, without authority to govern, or to administer the ordinances of religion, were known in the early church as a distinct class. Their duties seem to have been somewhat similar to that of the seventy disciples whom Jesus sent forth to proclaim the glad news of the kingdom, and to whom he communicated extraordinary powers, without granting them perfect equality with the apostles. Luke x. 1—20. These teachers had already been instructed in the truth of the gospel, and it was their duty to instruct others in like manner. We may not be able to perceive the precise characteristics by which they were distinguished from ministers, on the one hand, and from exhorters, on the other ; yet that the distinction did exist, and that the several grades were recognized in the primitive church, is manifest. Here, also, it is to be observed that the *teacher* should confine himself to his appropriate duty of teaching, instead of aspiring to the duties proper to the superior grade of office. He should exercise his own gift faithfully and cheerfully, believing that if God had required of him any higher duty he would have bestowed a corresponding gift.

8. *Or he that exhorteth, on exhortation.* The same difficulty attends the attempt to distinguish precisely the class of officers here denoted from those previously

do it with simplicity; he that rul-

described. A difference, however, clearly appears: the one was chiefly engaged in announcing and explaining the truth of the gospel, so that men might understand and believe; the other, in applying that truth, and in persuading men to conform themselves to it; in other words, in exhorting men to be holy and humble, to trust in God, to obey him, to submit with cheerfulness to all his requirements, and to all the dispensations of his providence. Generally speaking, the duties of ministering (so far as preaching pertained to the office of minister), of teaching, and of exhorting, have been confided by the church to a single class of officers, styled ministers, pastors, or presbyters. But in the primitive church the several grades here named were recognized. When the Pilgrims sought a refuge in New England, and attempted to restore the forms of worship to their original purity and simplicity, some of their churches ordained two classes of ministers, whom they styled *pastors* and *teachers*. If, as is probable, they adopted this practice on the authority of what the apostle says here and elsewhere concerning different grades in the ministry, it does not clearly appear why they selected only two from the four or five grades which he recognizes. This practice, however, soon ceased, and the duties of both offices were assigned to one minister. Indeed, in a majority of the churches established by the Pilgrims, only one officer was ordained to the ministry, at the beginning. ¶ *He that giveth*. This admonition is important to all who bestow gifts from their individual possessions. * But the apostle is here speaking of certain official duties in the church, and probably refers specially to those who were charged with the duty of distributing alms to the necessitous. In regard to the early appointment of officers for this purpose, see Acts iv. 34, 35; vi. 1—6. "But in what respect the *distributor* differed from the *deacon*, above mentioned, we are now unable to ascertain with precision. That there was a difference, is plain from the manner in which the whole of this paragraph is constructed. May it not have been that the *deacon* was the general overseer, the collector

eth, with diligence; he that show-

and provider of alms; while the *distributor* was the *actual* distributor of them among the needy? This seems quite probable from the nature of the case, and from the fact that here are two distinct offices, both having a relation to the same class of duties." — *Stuart*. ¶ *Let him do it with simplicity*. The word here rendered *simplicity* has two classes of signification in the New Testament: it denotes *liberality*, 2 Cor. viii. 2; ix. 11, 13, in which places it is variously translated *liberality*, *bountyfulness*, and *liberal*; in 2 Cor. i. 12; xi. 3; Eph. vi. 5, and Col. iii. 22, it denotes purity of purpose, directness and honesty of intention, and it is there translated *simplicity*, and *single-ness*. These are all the places in which this word is found. The corresponding adjective occurs in Matt. vi. 22, and Luke xi. 34, in both places rendered *single*; and the corresponding adverb, in Jas. i. 5, rendered *liberally*. The word in the text may properly enough be understood in either of these senses, or in both; for it was the duty of those who distributed alms to distribute with liberality in proportion to their ability, and also to distribute with a sincere, impartial, and single design to impart blessings to others. They were not to withhold more than was meet, in order to convert it to an improper use; they were not to make partial distribution, to the neglect of any, Acts vi. 1; nor were they to distribute with reference to their own popularity, that they might have praise of men, Matt. vi. 1—4. The same rule which applies to private alms applies also to official alms; namely, that the benefit of the recipient, and not the praise of the giver, is the object chiefly to be sought. ¶ *He that ruleth*. Reference is had especially to such as had authority in the church; for it is of ecclesiastical offices that the apostle here speaks. "Whether this refers to a permanent office in the church, or to an occasional presiding in their assemblies convened for business, &c., is not settled by the use of the word. It has the idea of ruling, as in a family, or of presiding, as in a deliberative assembly; and either of these ideas would convey all that is implied in the original word." — *Barnes*.

eth mercy, with cheerfulness.

9 *Let love be without dissimu-*

¶ *With diligence.* With careful attention. Let him be intent on the proper performance of his duty. ¶ *He that showeth mercy.* He that ministers to the wants of the destitute and distressed. In the early age of the church, when a profession of Christianity exposed the faithful to persecution, to the spoiling of their goods, and even to martyrdom, special means were adopted for the relief of widows, orphans, and all such as were in need. Acts iv. 34, 35. "The churches made collections for the relief of the afflicted, and appointed persons of both sexes, whose dispositions and gifts fitted them for the office, to visit and take care of the distressed of their own sex, and to supply their necessities out of the church's funds. And, as in the great cities, where there were many poor, it might be necessary to employ a number of persons in taking care of them, we may suppose the persons employed acted under the inspection, and according to the direction, of the president, who supplied them with money necessary out of the church's funds, and took care that what they received was properly applied. The person who supplied the wants of the poor was called the *distributor*; but the person who attended the destitute, the sick, and the distressed, was called the *shower of mercy*." — *Macknight*. ¶ *With cheerfulness.* With willingness; with sympathetic kindness; not as of constraint, but with a manifest desire to impart comfort. Unwilling services rendered to the sick and the afflicted, moroseness, or ill-temper, in the discharge of simple duty to the helpless, indicate a disposition sadly at variance with that spirit of benevolence which our Lord requires his disciples to cherish. Kindly offices are doubly valuable when rendered with a kindly spirit. And such a spirit should be manifested especially to those who are in distress. Hence the apostolic exhortation to those who were charged with this official duty.

Thus far I have followed the general method of interpretation, in regard to the several classes mentioned in this verse, regarding them all as holding certain official grades in the church.

lation. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good.

But it may certainly be doubted whether the last three, "he that giveth," "he that ruleth," and "he that showeth mercy," should not be regarded as private Christians, rather than as officers of the church. Somewhere, certainly, between ver. 6 and the end of the chapter, the apostle passes from officers to private brethren, in his exhortation. And it would be difficult to give any good reason why the change should not be understood as made at the place indicated. That it is made here, is, at the least, exceedingly probable. *Stuart* is almost the only commentator who adopts this interpretation; but he justifies it in a very satisfactory manner. His note, however, is much too long for quotation.

9. *Let love be without dissimulation.* *Love* here indicates that benevolence, or good-will, which we are commanded to exercise towards all men. The special love of Christians to each other is separately mentioned in ver. 10. In this place a more general benevolence is indicated, extending to them who are without as well as to them who are within the church, — to enemies as well as to friends. It is the same love which our Saviour exhorted his disciples to cherish. Matt. v. 43—48. *Love without dissimulation* is an honest, sincere, hearty love; not a hypocritical pretence, but a genuine affection; not a love which desires the good of men on certain conditions, while it would not be grieved to see them ruined beyond remedy if the conditions were not performed, but a love which desires and which prompts sincere endeavors to secure the benefit of all, even the most abandoned; not a love which seeks to make the good better, and the bad worse, but a love which seeks the moral improvement of all, which desires not only that just men may become perfect, but that the wicked may be turned away from their ungodliness, and that they may become fruitful in righteousness. In short, it is such love as the Father of the spirits of all flesh cherishes and manifests towards his children. If we would become perfect, even as our Father in heaven is perfect, we must cherish such universal and

10 *Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in*

unfeigned love to all men. Matt. v. 48. ¶ *Abhor that which is evil.* This admonition is applicable to every species of evil, whether consisting in thought, word, or action. It is the duty of Christians to depart from every form of iniquity. Yet the apostle probably has special reference to the immediate subject of discourse, namely, the duty of loving all men. In this respect, evil consists in cherishing a spirit inconsistent with such love. "Between the direction to love all men, and the particular direction about brotherly love, he places this general direction to abhor that which is evil; that which is evil in relation to the subject under discussion, that is, *malice or unkindness.* The word *evil* is not unfrequently used in this limited sense, to denote some particular or special evil. Matt. v. 38, 39."—*Barnes.* ¶ *Cleave to that which is good.* Adhere closely and steadfastly to goodness. For the reason above stated, it is probable that the apostle specially refers to that good of which he had just spoken; namely, love to all mankind. Well might he exhort men, "by the mercies of God," to cherish such love. God hath manifested the earnestness and sincerity of "his love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." Ch. v. 8. "Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another." 1 John iv. 11. If God has been so affectionate to us, it is good that we cherish a like affection to all. If he has loved all men, how shall we imitate him, if we fail to love all? In every possible view of the case, the great *mercy* he has exhibited to all the children of his creation affords the strongest inducement to universal benevolence. If we be destitute of this *good*, we have not yet attained the perfectness which our Lord demands of his disciples.

10. *Be kindly affectioned.* The word used here occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. "The force of the original word can hardly be reached in any translation. It is compounded of a word signifying that affection which animals by instinct bear to their young, and so teaches us that Christian charity must be warm and strong, like

that which near relations bear to each other."—*Macknight.* ¶ *Brotherly love.* Love as of natural brethren. "As the whole body of Christians are the children of one Father, even of God, this naturally establisheth among themselves the mutual and endearing relation of brethren and sisters, and they are obliged to regard and love each other accordingly."—*Taylor.* While a genuine and sincere love to all men is required, yet a special degree of it towards different classes is both recognized and enforced in the Scriptures. For example, the mutual love of parents and children, of husbands and wives, brethren and sisters, intimate associates and friends, is more vivid and intense than a spirit of universal benevolence. The love of kindred and near friends should not engross the whole heart, to the exclusion of kind feelings towards all, and a sincere desire for universal happiness; much less should it induce us to seek the injury of any for the exclusive benefit of a few. The social position in which God has placed us, the relations of families and communities, could scarcely be maintained, were it not that such special love is super-added to universal benevolence. Of a kindred character is that "brotherly love" of which the apostle here speaks, and which Christians should cherish towards each other. It is the same in kind as that which should be cherished towards all, but more intense in degree. This peculiar affection for natural kindred and for Christian brethren is frequently recognized by the sacred writers. "If any man provide not for his own, and especially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel." 1 Tim. v. 8. "As we have opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith." Gal. iii. 10. Our obligation to love, and to do good, therefore, is both general and special: general, in regard to all men; special, in regard to our own kindred and our brethren in Christ. ¶ *In honor.* In rendering honor, not in claiming it, as is manifest from what follows. ¶ *Preferring one another.* The word used here signifies "to take the lead, to go before, to set the example. The mean-

honor preferring one another ;

11 Not slothful in business ; fer-

vent in spirit ; serving the Lord ;

12 Rejoicing in hope ; patient

ing is, that so far from being averse to pay that respect which is due to others, each should strive to excel the other in the performance of this duty. Christianity, therefore, is so far from banishing all civility and good manners from society, that it enjoins the greatest attention to this subject."—*Stuart*. This exhortation is in perfect accordance with that in ver. 3, to be humble, and not to think too highly of one's self. Whoso cultivates this spirit is preserved from much of the dissatisfaction and heart-burning which those endure "who love to have the preëminence among" their brethren, but fail to attain it. 3 John 9.

11. *Not slothful in business.* That is, be diligent ; be actively engaged in your proper avocations. This exhortation is understood to be of a general character, and to be applicable to the various duties of men. Whatever station we may occupy, official or private, it has its appropriate duties ; and these should be performed, not lazily or negligently, but promptly and energetically. The spirit of this exhortation is much like that which was uttered by the preacher in ancient days, "Whosoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might." Eccles. ix. 20. See also Prov. vi. 6—11. Life is short. To spend it idly indicates an unconsciousness of duty, or an unwillingness to perform it ; either of which is wholly inconsistent with the character of a true disciple of him who continually went about doing good to the souls and the bodies of men. ¶ *Fervent in spirit.* Ardent ; glowing. The quaint note by *Trapp* has good sense in it : "Greek, seething hot. God, who is himself a pure act, loveth activeness in men ; the very rest of heavenly bodies is in motion in their proper places." The word used here is applied to the heating of metals until they melt, and of water until it boils. Fervency is contrasted with the slothfulness mentioned before. Instead of a cold and lifeless spirit, manifesting itself in sloth and inactivity, the apostle exhorts his brethren to cherish a warm, glowing spirit, which will result in active exertions to do good. No man can expect to accom-

plish much unless his heart be engaged in the work ; nor can he influence others to activity while he manifests no enthusiasm. The abundant "mercies of God" should kindle a flame of gratitude in the heart, finding expression in devotion to God and benevolence to mankind. When we consider what our Lord has done for us and for all men, we should be fired with a godly zeal to imitate him according to our ability and opportunity. In all our duties, whether in the ordinary business of life, in efforts for our own improvement, or in exertions for the good of others, we should be earnestly engaged ; warm, not cold ; alive, not dead. ¶ *Serving the Lord.* Faithful performance of duty is service of the Lord ; in other words, to serve God is to obey him. This is the special service to which the apostle here refers. A similar exhortation is found in Eph. vi. 6, 7, where the apostle encourages his brethren to serve those who have authority over them, "not with eye-service, as men-pleasers, but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart ; with goodwill doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men." Such service can only spring from warm and ardent gratitude. The fear of the lash cannot produce it. If a man serve God merely through fear of punishment as the penalty of neglect, there can be no heart in the service. He will render just as little as he considers to be consistent with safety. It is only when his heart is warmed by a grateful appreciation of the "mercies of God" that his service becomes free and ardent. He does not then stop to inquire, What shall I have therefor ? but, overpowered with a consciousness of his obligations to divine grace, he realizes that he cannot love God too ardently, nor perform his duties to God's children too faithfully and earnestly. With fervency of spirit, he will seek to love God with the whole heart, and to serve him by loving and doing good to all his children.

12. *Rejoicing in hope.* "That is, in the hope of eternal life and glory, which the gospel produces."—*Barnes*. A similar idea is expressed in ch. xv. 13 : "Now the God of hope fill you

in tribulation ; continuing instant in prayer ;

with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost." The hope inspired by the gospel is productive of the highest joy possible to man on earth. It fully satisfies all his desires for the good of himself and of others. As to the value of the blessing hoped for, the Christian believes it exceeds his most vivid conceptions of it ; and as to the certainty of its bestowment, he remembers that it is a gift of divine grace, and God is faithful who hath promised. Under the influence of such well-grounded hope, he rejoices "with joy unspeakable and full of glory." 1 Pet. i. 8. If any man be unable to rejoice in hope, either because that which he hopes for is not so good as he desires, or because he fears the blessing will not be bestowed according to the extent of his own benevolence, let him diligently examine the grounds of his faith. Let him rather distrust the accuracy of his own opinions, than the abundance or impartiality of divine grace. Let him remember that true Christian hope fills the heart with joy. A hope that fails to do this may well be suspected as spurious. See note on ch. xv. 13. ¶ *Patient in tribulation.* In the present life, all are subject to tribulation. Happy for us that it is so ; else we should never be willing to depart hence. Afflictions, for the present, are not joyous, but grievous. Yet a true Christian hope will inspire patience under the severest pressure of tribulation. The Christian looks forward with cheerful hope to the period when all tears shall be wiped from all faces ; when there shall be no more sorrow, nor crying, nor death. In prospect of this blessed consummation, he can heartily adopt the language of the apostle : "I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us." Ch. viii. 18. But, besides this, there is another consideration which inspires patience in the Christian's heart, when oppressed by tribulation. He remembers that the Ruler of the universe, he who dispenses joy and tribulation, is his father and friend ; that his mercies are abundant ; that he loves

13 Distributing to the necessity of saints ; given to hospitality.

the souls whom he has made ; that he will suffer no affliction to befall them except such as shall be beneficial to them ; that he as truly consults the benefit of his children, when he sends affliction, as when he makes their cup of joy overflow. With a confident trust that present tribulation is mercifully designed, and that it shall prove to be beneficial, shall it not be borne patiently ? We repine at tribulation only when we fail to realize the divine goodness. Well might the apostle beseech his brethren, by the mercies of God, to be patient in tribulation. ¶ *Continuing instant in prayer.* "Persevere in prayer." — Stuart. Pray often, and pray earnestly. Pray for such blessings as are needed. In tribulation we may properly pray for the removal of the cause of distress, if we only pray with submission to the will of God ; and we have the example of our Lord for our encouragement. Luke xxii. 42. We are encouraged also by his precept to ask the Father, in his name, for all things which we need. John xvi. 23, 24. If we lack wisdom, or aught else necessary to our welfare, we may "ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and withholdeth not," in full faith that, if what we seek would be truly beneficial to us, "it shall be given." Jas. i. 5, 6. Above all, we should pray for a spirit of reconciliation to the divine will. If this be granted, we shall patiently bear all our tribulations, and rejoice in hope of the glory hereafter to be revealed.

13. *Distributing to the necessity of saints.* "The word used here denotes having things in common. It means that they should be communicative, or should regard their property as so far common as to supply the wants of others." — Barnes. Hence Macknight paraphrases the passage, "Communicate your riches for relieving the necessities of the brethren." ¶ *Given hospitality.* Be hospitable ; be ready to minister to the wants even of strangers. While it was the duty of Christians to take special care of the household of faith, they were also required by the spirit of the gospel to do good to all men. The duty of being hospitable,

14 Bless them which persecute you ; bless, and curse not.

15 Rejoice with them that do

that is, of being kind to strangers and ministering to their wants, is repeatedly urged in the Scriptures. Matt. xxv. 35—46 ; Luke x. 30—37 ; Heb. xiii. 2 ; 1 Pet. iv. 9. In the early age of the church, when believers were subject to sharp persecution, being obliged to flee from one city to another, Matt. x. 23, when they were spoiled of their goods, Heb. x. 34, and were cast forth utterly destitute, the duty of hospitality, and of communicating to the necessities of others, was even more urgent than it is now. Yet in all ages the poor are with us, Matt. xxvi. 11 ; and it is always our duty, according to our ability, to relieve the distressed, especially them of the household of faith. As the *mercies of God* are so abundant to us, how shall we be his children, if we impart not mercies to others ? No precise measure of almsgiving can be prescribed, as of universal application. We owe duties to the poor ; we also owe duties to those whom God has made dependent on us, and we owe duties to ourselves. Each must judge for himself in what proportion his means are to be distributed among the several classes of claimants. But, if he would be a true disciple, let him beware of selfishness, and of that charity which not only begins at home, but is never seen abroad.

14. *Bless them which persecute you.* See note on Matt. v. 44. ¶ *Bless, and curse not.* “The repetition of the word *bless* shows the importance of this precept.” — *Macknight.* “Bless only ; or, continue to bless, however long or aggravated may be the injury. Do not be provoked to anger, or to cursing, by any injury, persecution, or reviling. This is one of the most severe and difficult duties of the Christian religion ; and it is a duty which nothing else but religion will enable men to perform.” — *Barnes.* It is not required by this precept that we tamely submit to all the injuries which others may be disposed to heap upon us, if God has given us the means of self-defence and protection ; but only that we shall not cherish towards our persecutors, and them who would injure us, a spirit of ill-will and cruelty simi-

rejoice, and weep with them that weep.

16 *Be of the same mind one tow-*

lar to their own. Whatever we do for their restraint should bear the marks of kindness, as well as of justice. We should so treat them as to overcome their enmity. See ver. 20. In the mean time, we may lawfully protect ourselves and our dependants against harm, according to our ability.

15. *Rejoice with them, &c.* Sympathize with others, in the various conditions of life. Our Lord manifested this spirit while he dwelt on earth. In the parables of the lost sheep and the lost money, Luke xv. 1—9, he indicated the joy which filled his heart when men rejoiced in the hope of the gospel. He manifested the keenness of his sympathy with the distressed by weeping at the grave of Lazarus. John xi. 32—35. Such should be the spirit of his disciples. They should rejoice at the happiness of their brethren, and be grieved at their grief. Thus, and thus only, is manifested that true spirit of brotherhood which characterizes the children of God. If all are *one body*, and *members one of another*, ver. 4, 5, such sympathy is natural. See 1 Cor. xii. 25, 26. It has been often and truly said that happiness is increased, and affliction diminished, when others share with us. If we would imitate our blessed Master, and obey the Father, whose *mercies* are abundant, we should assiduously cultivate a spirit of sympathy with our fellow-men. We should not be wrapped up in self ; but, regarding others as our brethren, we should feel a lively interest in their joys and sorrows, an interest inseparable from a spirit of true and hearty love towards them, which it is our duty to cherish. Matt. xxii. 39. It will not harm us to remember that sympathy is one of the Christian graces, which will become perfect in heaven. Its exercise will then consist in sharing each others' joy. There will be no occasion to weep, for there will be no sufferings to commiserate. It might be profitable for such as believe their dear friends, or indeed any of the human family, will endure perpetual anguish, to consider whether their own happiness will be without alloy while weeping with *them* who weep. It

ard another. Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate.

Be not wise in your own conceits.
17 Recompense to no man evil

is by no means probable that God requires more benevolence, or more sympathy, of imperfect Christians on earth, than will be required of glorified saints in heaven.

16. *Be of the same mind one toward another.* This phrase is variously interpreted; but the general idea of agreement with each other is universally recognized. "Think mutually the same thing."—*Stuart*. "Be of one mind among yourselves."—*Conybeare*. "Be of the same disposition towards one another."—*Macknight*. "Be entirely united in your regards for each other."—*Doddridge*. The spirit of the exhortation is well expressed by *Clarke*: "Live in a state of continual harmony and concord, and pray for the same good for all which you desire for yourselves." ¶ *Mind not high things, &c.* Be not proud, but humble, seems to be the general theme of this exhortation. Some understand by *high things* honors and dignities; and by *men of low estate*, or by *things* of low estate, as the phrase may be rendered, the humble position of mankind generally. According to this interpretation, Christians ought not to aspire eagerly to the places of high official dignity and power, but to be content in a lower sphere. Others understand by *high things* those men who occupied the more dignified and honorable positions in life, as contrasted with *men of low estate*. According to this interpretation, Christians ought not to be over-anxious to associate with the proud and haughty, but rather to imitate their Master, who consorted chiefly with the common people, and recognized them as brethren. In this view, the exhortation inculcates a lesson similar to that contained in James ii. 1—4. The Pharisees of old regarded high things exceedingly, John vii. 47—49, and despised men of low estate in a corresponding degree. So should not Christians. If called to stations of responsibility and honor, they should discharge their duties faithfully, as being themselves responsible to God. If they occupy a private station, they should not inordinately seek dignities, but adorn their own station by humility, and by deeds of usefulness. ¶ *Be not*

wise in your own conceits. Be not over-much confident in your own opinions. Trust not entirely to your own wisdom. Be willing to receive counsel and instruction from others. When a man imagines that he is too wise to learn, that he has "gotten more wisdom than all that have been before him," Eccl. i. 16; when he haughtily rejects all advice or information from others, and even scorns instruction from the Scriptures; when he attains this giddy height of self-conceit, there is no extravagance of folly to which he is not liable. "Seest thou a man wise in his own conceit? There is more hope of a fool than of him." Prov. xxvi. 12. See also ch. i. 22, for a specimen of this kind of wisdom and its fruits.

17. *Recompense to no man evil for evil.* "This is probably one of the most difficult precepts of Christianity; but the law of Christ on the subject is unyielding."—*Barnes*. Not only does the law of Christ forbid the rendering of evil for evil, but his example, and the character of the divine government, as he revealed it, equally enforce the same duty. Our Lord returned not evil for evil, but labored for the benefit of his persecutors, and prayed for his murderers. He declared that God "is kind to the unthankful and to the evil;" and that, if we would be his children, and become perfect as he is perfect, we must love our enemies, bless them who curse us, and do good to them who hate us. Matt. v. 43—48; Luke vi. 35. Whoso returns evil for evil is not under the influence of the spirit of Christ. If our Lord had returned railing for railing, cursing for cursing, injury for injury, and had given assurance that for the evil of which men are guilty God would recompense unto them infinite evil, we might plead such examples as a justification for striving to injure them who injure us. But, while we know the merciful character of Jesus, and have faith in the *mercies of God*, we are without excuse if we do not earnestly endeavor to comply with the apostolic exhortation. ¶ *Provide things honest, &c.* This exhortation refers not to making temporal provision for one's family, as might seem at a superficial glance; but

for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men.

18 If it be possible, as much as

it is kindred in its nature to the preceding precept. The word rendered *provide* "signifies to think of the proper method of doing a thing before we proceed to action."—*Macknight*. It may properly be translated *premeditate*. The idea becomes more plain when differently translated. For example: "Seek after that which is good in the sight of all."—*Stuart*. "Premeditate things comely in the sight of all men."—*Macknight*. "See that your life be blameless in the sight of all."—*Conybeare*. The general idea seems to be this: To avoid rendering evil for evil, or being guilty of any sudden outburst of passion, which should not only wound our own consciences, but put us to open shame in the sight of men, we should subject our passions to a strict discipline beforehand; by cultivating a habit of self-control, we should prepare ourselves to meet insults and injuries with calmness and dignity. A firm and resolute determination to refrain from speaking unadvisedly with the lips, whatever the provocation, and a conscientious abhorrence of rendering evil for evil, will preserve us in temptations which would otherwise overcome us. To acquire the control of our own passions is an arduous task; but success abundantly repays the effort. "All persons who have ever been provoked by injury (and who has not been?) will see the profound wisdom of this caution to discipline and guard the temper by previous purpose, that we may not evince an improper spirit."—*Barnes*.

18. *If it be possible*. The same general duty of striving to do good to others, and refraining from injurious actions and language, taught in the preceding verse, is the theme also of this. The phraseology intimates that it is not always possible to be at peace with all men. After our best exertions, we may be unable to overcome the enmity of our adversaries; and there cannot be perfect peace while either party cherishes hatred, and a disposition to inflict injury. But we are bound to do our part faithfully for the promotion and preservation of peace. We are to refrain from provoking others to wrath,

lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.

19 Dearly beloved, avenge not

or from giving them any cause of offence. We are not to injure any man in his reputation or property. By uniform kindness and courtesy, we are to avoid unpleasant collisions, and to secure the good-will of others. Even when rebuking the ungodly, we should administer rebukes in such a spirit of kindness that they shall have no occasion for personal offence. If, notwithstanding our efforts for peace, others persist in a course of warfare, we are not responsible for their conduct. But let us look well to it that we do not add fuel to the flame that consumes them, by any exhibition of an improper spirit on our part. We are to use every possible exertion to live peaceably with all. If all who profess the name of Christ would comply with this exhortation, a remarkable and very desirable change would be wrought. Instead of maliciously pointing at Christians, as belying their profession by biting and devouring one another, unbelievers would be constrained to say, as is reported of the ancient heathens, See how these Christians love each other! More than this: whose earnestly strives for peace will have the testimony of his own conscience that he has faithfully performed his duty.

19. *Avenge not yourselves*. "This precept is founded, as in religion, so in right reason and in the good of society. For he who avenges himself, making himself accuser, and judge, and executioner, all in one person, runs a great hazard of injuring both himself and others, by acting improperly through the influence of passion."—*Macknight*. Many dangers attend the attempt to right our own wrongs, by administering what we conceive to be justice. In the first place, while smarting under a sense of injustice, we may not exercise all the coolness and deliberation which are necessary to measure the exact amount of guilt, or the exact amount of retribution which may be just. Moreover, with the best intentions, and the utmost desire to deal justly, we are less able to determine these important points, when our personal interests or feelings are involved, than other men,

yourselves, but *rather* give place unto wrath : for it is written, Vengeance is mine ; I will repay, saith

who are disinterested ; and hence we should trust in legal tribunals rather than in ourselves. How much more should we trust in God, who seeth the heart, and whose judgments are just ! I do not understand the apostle here to speak of *revenge*, in its ordinary sense ; but rather of that just retribution which is indicated in the latter clause of the verse. Otherwise, he would seem to exhort men to forbear personal *revenge*, in the hope that the desire for it should be fully gratified when the vengeance of God should overtake the offender. It is the manifest meaning of the apostle, that what man may properly desire God will do ; that what God will do man may properly desire. But anything akin to *revenge*, properly speaking, is abhorrent to the spirit of Christianity, and is absolutely prohibited by the divine law. It is not this, then, which men are to forbear, in the hope that God will execute it ; but it is simply such recompense as divine justice may demand. I am ready to endorse the opinion, forcibly expressed by *Barnes*, that "this command is not to be so understood that we may not seek for *justice* in a regular and proper way before civil tribunals. If our character is assaulted, if we are robbed and plundered, if we are oppressed contrary to the law of the land, religion does not require us to submit to such oppression and injury without seeking our rights in an orderly and regular manner. If it did, it would be to give a premium to iniquity, to countenance wickedness, and require a man, by becoming a Christian, to abandon his rights. Besides, the magistrate is appointed for the praise of those who do well, and to punish evil-doers. 1 Pet. ii. 14. Further, our Lord Jesus did not surrender his rights, John xviii. 23 ; and Paul demanded that he himself should be treated according to the rights and privileges of a Roman citizen. Acts xvi. 37." What is here forbidden is the attempt, in our personal capacity, to inflict what we suppose to be, and what perhaps may be, a just retribution upon evil-doers. We are rather to defer to the operation of law, both human and

the Lord.

20 Therefore, if thine enemy hunger, feed him ; if he thirst, give

divine. ¶ *Give place unto wrath.* This admonition has been variously interpreted, as meaning, give way or submit to the wrath of your enemies, without opposition ; or, escape from your enemies' wrath ; or, put by your own wrath, or defer the chastisement you meditate. The better opinion is, that the apostle exhorts his brethren to refrain from rendering, personally, the retribution which they think is deserved, and to leave the matter in the hands of God, who will assuredly administer justice. It may be repeated, that, wherever God has established honest tribunals of justice on earth, we are permitted to appeal to them for protection against those who would injure us. The early Christians had not the full benefit of such tribunals. The rulers and judges were among their persecutors. Their only refuge was the Supreme Judge ; and they were exhorted not to attempt to take his work out of his hands. We are more highly favored, in the enjoyment of equal laws, administered by impartial judges. We may appeal to them ; and wherein their power is deficient we may appeal to God ; but in no case are we to assume the complex offices of accuser, judge, and executioner, for the righting of our own wrongs. ¶ *Vengeance is mine.* *Vengeance* requires the same qualification as *wrath*. See note on ch. i. 18. When attributed to God, it must be regarded as "divested of everything like human passion, and especially of the passion of revenge." Divine vengeance is neither more nor less than a "just recompense of reward." Heb. ii. 2. "The meaning is, God will render righteous judgment or retribution for acts of wickedness ; Christians are not to claim for themselves the doing of that which it is his sovereign prerogative to do."—*Stuart*.

20. *Therefore, if thine enemy hunger, feed him, &c.* Hunger and thirst are here put for wants in general ; or, a part is put for the whole. The evident meaning is, that we should manifest a spirit of kindness to enemies, whether in relieving their physical wants, or in any other manner which their condition may render practicable. The *spirit*

him drink : for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head.

21 Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.

of the exhortation is in perfect harmony with the command of our Lord. Matt. v. 43—48. ¶ *Thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head.* The figure is taken from the purification of metals by fire; by the process of melting, the dross is separated, and the metal refined. "Thou shalt melt him, and make him thy friend forever."—*Trapp.* This short comment exhibits the force of the phrase with sufficient distinctness. Not that this result invariably follows; for some are so incorrigible that they remain proof against the power of human kindness; nothing short of the *mercies of God* can effectually melt them; but such is the natural effect of an exhibition of kindness towards enemies. The process may be painful, in its earlier stages, producing shame, mortification, and deep repentance; but it is purifying, like the action of fire, and the repentance thus wrought is "not to be repented of." 2 Cor. vii. 10. Its ultimate result is, to overcome the enmity of enemies, and to convert them into friends. In this general interpretation there is a substantial agreement among most commentators. *Whitby*, indeed, rejects this, and understands the apostle to mean, "That if he persevere in his enmity, to his persecution of thee, and perverseness towards thee, after these kind offices, the event, though not sought by thee, will be this: thou by thy patience shalt engage the wrath of God to fall upon him, and to maintain thy cause against him; and so shalt be more certainly and happily delivered from his malice than by avenging thyself thou wouldst be." But this seems wholly inconsistent with the general spirit of the exhortation; namely, that we should be kind to our enemies, and strive to do them good; not that we should endeavor to bring down on their heads a much sorer punishment than they now deserve.

21. *Be not overcome of evil.* This verse is a general summary of what is inculcated in ver. 17—20. The apostle here, as in the former verses, refers especially to moral results. We have an undoubted right to counteract the evil designs of our enemies, and so

resist their efforts to injure us, that they shall not gain the advantage over us, or succeed in harming us; and it is our duty to resort to all lawful and proper means for this purpose. But this is not the particular theme of the exhortation. It is to be viewed rather in its moral aspect exclusively. "Maintain your Christian principles amidst all opposition, and thus show the power of the gospel. They are overcome by evil who suffer their temper to be excited, who become enraged and revengeful, and who engage in contention with those who injure them."—*Barnes.* ¶ *Overcome evil with good.* By your own genuine kindness and benevolence destroy the enmity of your enemies. Let not your kindness be overpowered and converted into gall by the bitterness of your adversary, but subdue his evil temper, and excite his gratitude, by convincing him that you harbor no ill-will against him. The spirit of the world is, "an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth." The heathen nations imagined that the gods dealt thus with men, recompensing evil by evil, and taking vengeance for finite crimes by the infliction of infinite punishment, or inflicting infinite evil as a fit recompense of finite evil. It is mournful to reflect that many professed Christians have not wholly escaped the same error. Far different is the spirit of the gospel. By conduct and by precept, our Lord taught the all-conquering power of love. He manifested it in all his language, and in all his actions; and he gave the most undeniable evidence of it by dying for his enemies. John xv. 13; Rom. v. 6—8. He taught that such is the spirit of God—a spirit of genuine and unadulterated kindness to the unthankful and to the evil; and he commanded his disciples to love their enemies, and to do good to the evil-disposed, as the only method of becoming the children of God, and of imitating the perfection of their Father. Matt. v. 43—48. The final triumph of love over hatred, and of grace over sin, is distinctly taught in ch. v. of this epistle, and in the New Testament generally. And, because this result is certain under the operation of the divine government, we

CHAPTER XIII.

LET every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there

are encouraged to use the same means in our intercourse with mankind, in hope of the same result. Through human weakness, our exertions may fail. Yet we have this consolation, which is sufficient to sustain us under every trial and every discouragement: the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of the spirits of all flesh, is good unto all, and loveth all. He will never be overcome by evil, nor tempted by it to inflict infinite evil upon his children; but he will *overcome evil with good*, and secure their endless love, and affection, and gratitude.

CHAPTER XIII.

1—7. In the commencement of this chapter, the obedience which Christians owe to the constituted authorities under which they reside is discussed. The primary reference, doubtless, is to the duty of the brethren at Rome to be obedient to the imperial government. Yet, as the principles announced are of universal application, the directions are given in general terms. What was the duty of Christians at Rome is the duty of Christians everywhere; namely, to yield obedience to lawful authority, so far as it can be done consistently with their higher obligation to divine authority. That this is the utmost extent of their political duty, we shall perceive as we proceed.

1. *Let every soul.* Every person. Under this general appellation are included both Jews and Gentiles; to each of which classes the admonition was peculiarly necessary at that period. The government of the Roman empire, as is well known, was then administered by idolatrous heathen. The Jews had formerly been governed by the Mosaic law, given, as they believed, from heaven. After they were subjected to the Roman power, they were impatient of its control, and were disposed to rebellion. They would not quietly submit to the dominion of the heathen, and resisted, until they provoked from their rulers a most disastrous retribution, in the destruction of their temple

is no power but of God: the powers that be, are ordained of God.

2 Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance

and chief city, and the general dispersion of the nation. Those of that race who embraced Christianity naturally retained their prejudice against heathen rulers; and they needed the exhortation to be quiet and obedient. The converted Gentiles, also, regarding themselves as under the spiritual dominion of Christ, and many of them being conscious of spiritual endowments, seem to have considered themselves free from earthly rule, especially when administered by unbelievers. Hence they needed the same exhortation to be quiet and obedient. ¶ *Be subject.* Be obedient. The word used here denotes subordination, generally, without specifying its precise extent. ¶ *Unto the higher powers.* To the laws, to the established government. Reference is specially had to the authority exercised by the Roman emperor, and by those who acted in his name. The same principle applies in all cases. Christians should peaceably yield obedience to the laws of the country in which they reside, and treat its officers with proper respect. ¶ *For there is no power but of God.* There is no form of government which God does not permit, nor power exercised which he does not grant. This is assigned as a reason why Christians should submit to established authority, even though they should dislike both the laws and the officers by whom they are executed. They should regard it as their duty to submit to whatever God has appointed. ¶ *The powers that be, are ordained of God.* Or, "are placed under God."—*Macknight.* "Have been set in their place by God."—*Conybeare.* "The apostle intends, by this, to reconcile Christians to the idea of civil obedience, on the ground that obeying the magistrate is in accordance with the command of God. All magistrates are by his permission; and even when they are oppressive, the Christian is bound to regard them (so he should regard other evils) as existing by divine permission, and to bow submissive in all cases where disobedience to God is not demanded by them."—*Stuart.*

of God : and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation.

2. *Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, &c.* Power is here put for government itself, or for lawful authority, rather than for the officer who exercises power, by whatever name he may be called. Resistance to law leads to anarchy and confusion ; and this is contrary to the orderly arrangement of society, which God has ordained. Hence, resistance against law is resistance against the ordinance of God. "It is implied, however, that the laws shall not be such as to violate the rights of conscience, or oppose the laws of God." — *Barnes*. The remarks of *Macknight*, on the extent of our duty to yield obedience to the existing government, and to the laws enacted under its authority, are worthy of careful consideration. They are no less applicable to a republican than to a monarchical form of government. "As the precept in the foregoing verse, and the declarations in this, are general, they must be interpreted according to the nature of the subjects to which they are applied. Wherefore, since *the power*, of which the apostle speaks in both verses, is the form of government, and not the rulers of a country, the subjection to the higher powers, enjoined in the first verse, is not an unlimited passive obedience to rulers in things sinful, but an obedience to the wholesome laws enacted for the good of the community, by common consent, or by those who, according to the constitution of the state, have the power of enacting laws. To these good laws the people are to give obedience, without examining by what title the magistrates who execute these laws hold their power, and even without considering whether the religion professed by the magistrates be true or false. For the same reason, the opposition to and resistance of the power forbidden in the second verse, is an opposition to and resistance of the established government, by disobeying the wholesome laws of the state, or by attempting to overturn the government, from a factious disposition, or from ill-will to the persons in power, or from an ambitious desire to possess the government ourselves. These precepts, therefore, do not enjoin obedience to the magistrates in things sinful, but in

things not sinful ; and more especially in things morally good, and which tend to the welfare of the state. Besides, as in the following verses the apostle hath shown, from the nature and end of their office, that the duty of rulers is to promote the happiness of the people, it is plain, from the apostle himself, that they who refuse to do things sinful, or even things inconsistent with the fundamental laws of the state, do not resist the ordinance of God, although these things should be commanded by a lawful magistrate ; because in commanding them he exceeds his power. And that opposition to a ruler who endeavors utterly to subvert the constitution, or to enslave a free people, is warranted, not only by right reason, but by the gospel, which teaches that rulers are the servants of God for good to the people, and are supported by God only in the just execution of their office." It matters not whether the rulers be few or many. They are to be obeyed while their requirements are consistent with duty to God, and with the general welfare. But no man is bound to disobey God, for the sake of obeying man. Acts v. 29. And the political maxim, which strengthened the hearts and nerved the arms of patriots in former times, is perfectly consistent with the doctrine taught by the apostle ; namely, that "resistance to tyrants is obedience to God." ¶ *Shall receive to themselves damnation.* Or, punishment. "They that resist will be punished by those powers that they resist." — *Locke*. "Those who are seditious, that is, make resistance against the civil government, will be brought to punishment, and that deservedly." — *Stuart*. Whether *deservedly* or not, depends on the object and character of the resistance. If it be factious merely, it deserves punishment. But if it be conscientious in the refusal to disobey God, or if it spring from a desire to break the bonds of tyranny, and to maintain the original rights of the community, it calls down no punishment from God, though it may incur the penalty of law and the wrath of oppressors. It may be observed that the word here used to indicate punishment, both in the Greek and in the translation, is

3 For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power; do that which is good,

and thou shalt have praise of the same :

4 For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do

the same which many have supposed to denote endless misery in the future life. I think, however, that no reputable commentator supposes such misery to be here indicated. So far as resistance to authority is actual disobedience to God, he will undoubtedly cause it to be adequately punished, but not endlessly. The damnation or punishment of which the apostle speaks is chiefly that which is inflicted by earthly powers.

and forbid good works; then Paul's own conduct shows what other Christians ought to do." — *Stuart*. ¶ *Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power?* Some understand this to mean, Wilt thou not be induced to obey, through fear of the penalty of disobedience? But we have this argument in ver. 4. It seems more probable that this is an interrogation to which the succeeding clause is an answer; and that the force of the whole is this: Would you be free from all fear of rulers? then do that which is good, and your desire shall be gratified. ¶ *Do that which is good.* Be quiet and peaceable citizens, and manifest your love of good order, and of the welfare of the community, by obeying all the requirements of the law, so far as they are consistent with your supreme allegiance to God. ¶ *And thou shalt have praise of the same.* You shall enjoy the natural result or benefit of obedience, by being unmolested in your lawful pursuits, and by being protected against evil-doers. Or, if we take *praise* in its more strict sense, you shall enjoy the reputation of being a well-disposed citizen, and a valuable member of society. Christians are not bound to disregard their own reputation, nor to be unmindful of a good name. They may lawfully desire the approval of all the good.

3. *For rulers are not a terror to good works, &c.* "We must remember that this was written before the imperial government had begun to persecute Christianity. It is a testimony in favor of the general administration of the Roman criminal law." — *Conybeare*. This observation is important, if the apostle be understood to state the character of the government which actually existed. But it seems more probable that he designed to describe the true object of government as it ought to exist. Government is instituted for the benefit of the governed as well as of the governors. Hence it is the duty of rulers to encourage and protect the quiet and peaceable citizens, and to restrain the violent and vicious, punishing them, if necessary. They should be ministers of God for good to the obedient and virtuous citizens. Ver. 4. In either case, whether he described the Roman government as it then existed, or government generally as it should exist, it is clear that he described the kind of government to which Christians are bound to submit, and which they ought not to resist; namely, a government whose "rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil." While a government is administered in this spirit, and for this purpose, no good man will resist it. "This clause shows what sort of rulers Paul expected Christians to obey, and how far obedience was a duty; namely, such rulers as protect the good and repress the evil; and while they do this, there can be no question as to the duty of obeying them. But suppose the reverse; that is, suppose that they protect evil doings,

4. *Minister of God.* An officer appointed in the providence of God, and deriving his authority from God. See note on ver. 1. ¶ *For good.* All civil government is designed to promote the benefit of the community, by preserving order, protecting the peaceable in the enjoyment of their rights, and restraining the vicious. The duties of rulers and people are reciprocal: if it is the duty of the people to respect and honor their rulers, it is also the duty of rulers to deserve that honor and respect by a righteous administration of the government for the benefit of the people. Such was the government contemplated by the apostle, when he said that Christians need not fear the rulers, when obedient to the laws, be-

that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil.

cause rulers were ministers of good to all such. ¶ *But if thou do that which is evil.* If you be rebellious and disobedient; if you violate the laws. ¶ *Be afraid.* Transgressors always have occasion to fear; for their wickedness will find them out. Numb. xxxii. 23. It is no less the design of a good government to restrain and punish the disobedient, than to protect the obedient. Under a just administration of law, therefore, the obedient may feel secure, while the disobedient have cause to be afraid of punishment. ¶ *Sword.* The emblem of power and of justice. Justice is ordinarily represented with scales, to denote impartiality; and a sword, to denote power to execute the laws, to reward and punish. ¶ *A revenger.* An avenger; not in a bad sense, as moved by a spirit of revenge, but in a good sense, as an administrator of justice, to the evil as well as to the good. See note on ch. xii. 19. ¶ *To execute wrath.* To inflict punishment. See note on ch. i. 18. So long as the punishments provided by law are manifestly designed for the general welfare of community, they commend themselves to the judgment and the consciences of the good. But whenever they are designed as pure retaliation, so much pain inflicted for so much crime committed, without regard to the reformation of the sufferer or the welfare of community, they lose their moral force. We cannot understand the apostle to mean that God has specially commissioned men to execute justice upon principles diametrically opposite to those which distinguish his own administration.

5. *Wherefore.* For the reasons before stated. ¶ *Ye must needs be subject.* That is, to the higher powers, the powers that be, the established government. From what has already been observed, it follows that this precept is to be understood with necessary limitations. Else, it would seem to be the duty of Christians to obey heathen laws, which required sacrifices to idols, and various other abominations which

5 Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience' sake.

6 For, for this cause pay ye tribute also: for they are God's

are abhorrent to Christianity. The extent of duty here required is, that obedience should be rendered to all laws which are consistent with duty to God, and with the dictates of conscience. Beyond this we cannot go with safety. Acts v. 29. It only remains that we submit to the law, so far as to bear the unrighteous penalty, trusting in God that our suffering shall not be in vain. Such is the duty of those who, like the Romans, have no power to change the laws, or to secure a more righteous administration of them. But, where this power exists, I apprehend the precept has a further limitation. We are to obey the laws while they exist, so far as we can conscientiously, and bear the punishment when conscience forbids obedience. But we may and should change those laws which are inconsistent with the eternal principles of right and justice, whenever God gives us ability and opportunity. "It is only when magistrates keep within the bounds of moral prescription, that obedience is a duty. So long as they do so, it is better for Christians, who live under despotic governments, such as the Roman was, to submit, even when they suffer oppression, than to revolt and be seditious. Under an elective government like our own, it is their duty to assist in displacing wicked rulers, and to do this quietly and orderly, in the way the law has pointed out." — *Stuart.* ¶ *Not only for wrath.* Not only through fear of punishment for disobedience. ¶ *But also for conscience' sake.* From a conscientious regard to our duty, as peaceable citizens, and disciples of Christ. Civil government is to be regarded as one of the appointed institutions of God. Obedience to its laws, with the necessary qualifications, is a part of our duty to God. But neither our Lord nor his apostles yielded obedience to sinful commands; neither should we. They submitted to unrighteous punishment rather than transgress the higher law; and so should we, if God so will.

6. *For this cause.* Because civil gov-

ministers, attending continually upon this very thing.

7 Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is

ernment is one of the institutions of God for the benefit of men, as the apostle had previously declared. ¶ *Pay ye tribute also.* Not only yield obedience to the existing government, so far as is consistent with obedience to the divine commands, but also freely contribute your proportion of the expense of maintaining that government. The word rendered *tribute* properly denotes a *tax* of any kind. The Roman government imposed a tribute on conquered nations, in consideration of which the government was under an implied obligation to secure to the conquered the peaceable possession of the remainder of their property. The Jews, wherever scattered, were exceedingly unwilling to pay such tribute or tax. They sometimes even rebelled against the imperial government, on account of the taxes. Acts v. 37. The apostle admonishes his brethren, Jews as well as Gentiles, that they ought to assist in maintaining the government which was necessary to their own protection and welfare. ¶ *God's ministers.* In the same sense that civil government is a divine institution, the officers of government are to be regarded as the servants of God. They are truly so when they discharge their duties faithfully and with a good conscience. But, if they are false to their duty, and use their power for the injury of those for whose benefit government was established, they have no more claim to be considered "God's ministers" than any other class of sinners. ¶ *Attending continually upon this very thing.* Devoting their time and their energies to the proper administration of government. Such is the duty of rulers; and what the apostle here says is upon the presumption that the duty is faithfully performed. The laborer is worthy of his hire, in this employment, as in others. Government cannot be maintained without expense; and that expense should properly be shared by all who share the benefits of government. It is unreasonable to expect that any will devote themselves wholly to the public good at their own charges.

due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honor to whom honor.

8 Owe no man anything, but

7. *Render therefore to all their dues.* Carefully perform all your relative duties. Give no occasion for others to regard you as troublesome members of society. On the contrary, recognizing the general form of civil government, and the various official grades established under it, as an expression of the divine will, while it exists cheerfully conform to it, and render to each his due, whether tribute, or custom, or fear, or honor. ¶ *Tribute.* See note on ver. 6. It was an open question among the Jews, whether tribute should be paid to the Roman government. They had always paid tithes, under their own law, willingly contributing the tenth part of their increase for the maintenance of religion. But, because they were unwilling to acknowledge a foreign government, many of them scrupled to pay the tribute demanded by Caesar, and declared it to be unlawful. The enemies of our Lord attempted to "entangle him in his talk" upon this subject. He avoided the snare; yet he plainly enough counselled them to obey the government to which they were then subject, and to pay the tribute demanded of them. Matt. xxii. 15—22. See also Matt. xvii. 24—26. ¶ *Custom.* *Tribute* denotes a tax imposed on lands, or goods, or both, ostensibly, at least, for the maintenance of government. *Custom* is the duty or tax imposed on merchandise transported from one place to another; hence the office where such duties or taxes are collected is called a "custom-house." It is said that the same distinction is indicated in the original words here used. ¶ *Fear.* That wholesome regard of the civil authority, and of its authorized officers, which shall restrain us from disobedience, or from such a violation of the laws as would expose us to the sword of justice. ¶ *Honor.* Generally, the respect which is due from one man to another. In this place it seems to indicate especially the consideration and respect which is due to those who are clothed with official authority.

8. *Owe no man anything.* From the

to love one another : for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law.

admonition, in ver. 7, to discharge all our duties to the civil government and its officers, the transition is easy to what is here said of the duties of private citizens toward each other. Commentators have generally understood the apostle to speak of pecuniary obligations exclusively, as if his meaning were, Be not in debt to any one; so manage your transactions with mankind that no one shall have any legal demand against you. If such be the purport of the precept, although it may be literally impracticable, yet in a qualified sense it is surely important. No Christian has a moral right to contract debts which he has no reasonable prospect of paying. He has no right to indulge in luxurious living at the expense of others. He should conscientiously graduate his expenses by his income, and not permit the former to exceed the latter. Sickness, or other circumstances over which he has no control, may derange the most judicious plans. But such is the general rule: contract no debt which you do not believe yourself able to pay promptly at maturity, and live within your income. By a disregard of this rule, alike demanded by religion and by common honesty, many professed Christians have incurred aggravated perplexities and troubles, and have brought Christianity itself into disgrace in the sight of unbelievers. I think, however, that the apostolic admonition is not confined to pecuniary transactions, but that it is of much wider extent; that it embraces all the duties, social and moral, which men owe to each other. The general construction of the passage indicates this interpretation. In ver. 7 the general precept, "Render to all their dues," is followed by a specification of sundry duties to those in authority. So, in this verse, we have the general precept, "Owe no man anything," followed by the specification in ver. 9. The force of the admonition seems to me to be this: Promptly discharge every duty to your fellow-man, whenever it shall arise, whether that duty consist in refraining from injuring him, ver. 10, or in contributing to his happiness by such acts of kindness as are within your power. If any one have a

proper claim on you, of whatever kind, see that the claim be met to the full extent of your ability. This view seems to harmonize with the general scope of the apostle's discourse better than that which limits the precept to a single duty, important, to be sure, but no more important, and no more obligatory, than many others which Christianity demands of its disciples. ¶ *But to love one another.* Love is a debt which exists permanently. It can never be cancelled. We owe this debt to our fellow-men. If we cherish such love at the present moment, and thus meet the present obligation, the debt is none the less for the next moment. So long as existence continues, the obligation continues also. Special claims may be met and cancelled. If we owe money, upon payment of the required amount we are discharged of the obligation, and owe it no longer. If a brother have a just claim on us for any specific act of kindness, and we render it, the debt is paid, and we owe it no longer. But the debt of love remains always due. It requires perpetual payment, but it never becomes less in amount or obligation. With much propriety, therefore, the apostle makes this exception, when he exhorts us to "owe no man anything," for this is a debt which is "inextinguishable in its own nature." ¶ *He that loveth another.* "Another is a more general word than neighbor in the next verses, and comprehends our very enemies, according to the sublime morality enjoined by Christ."—*Macknight.* ¶ *Hath fulfilled the law.* "In what way this is done is stated in ver. 10. The law in relation to our neighbor is there said to be simply that we do no ill to him. Love to him would prompt to no injury. It would seek to do him good, and would thus fulfil all the purposes of justice and truth which we owe to him. In order to illustrate this, the apostle, in the next verse, runs over the laws of the ten commandments, in relation to our neighbor, and shows that all those laws proceed on the principle that we are to love him, and that love would prompt to them all."—*Barnes.* A spirit of genuine love to others, which the gospel requires, will prompt us in

9 For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if *there be* any other commandment, it is briefly com-

prehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.

10 Love worketh no ill to his neighbor: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.

all things to consult their happiness and welfare, and will incline us to extend to them such aid, assistance, sympathy, and forgiveness, as we could reasonably ask of them under like circumstances. A man will perform his duty and fulfil the law, both towards God and men, in exact proportion to the genuineness and strength of his love to God and love to men. In this sense is it true that "he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law" in regard to mankind; and it is equally true that he that loveth God hath fulfilled the law in regard to him. It is only because our love is imperfect that our obedience fails of perfection. See notes on Matt. vii. 12; xxii. 40.

9. *For this.* The apostle thus introduces the proof that love is the substantial duty required by the law. "For the law which says."—*Conybeare*. This translation, though by no means literal, seems to express the sense of the phrase. ¶ *Thou shalt not commit adultery, &c.* See note on Matt. xix. 18. The idea which lies at the foundation of all these prohibitions is, that we are not to injure our fellow-men, or do anything inconsistent with a spirit of love towards them. ¶ *If there be any other commandment.* This "is not meant to express a doubt whether there be any other commandment, but only to say, 'Whatever other commandment there may be;' namely, whatever command respecting our relative duties."—*Stuart*. ¶ *It is briefly comprehended.* It is summed up; this is the substantial import of the whole. ¶ *Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.* This precept comprehends not only the negative duties before specified, of forbearing to injure others, but also the positive duties of kindness which we owe to others; the duties involved in the Golden Rule: "All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them." Matt. vii. 12. No specific duty is required of us, in regard to our fellow-men,

which is not included in this broad and comprehensive precept. If our conduct towards others be guided always by a spirit of genuine love to them, we shall violate no commandment. "In this one sentence the apostle affirms the whole essence of the moral law to be contained; and it is indeed so. Suppose, now, that every man on earth really, truly, and as highly, regarded his neighbor's happiness as his own; all injustice, fraud, oppression, and injury of every kind, would at once cease, and a universal fulfilment of our obligation to others would be the consequence."—*Stuart*.

10. *Love worketh no ill to his neighbor.* No man willingly injures himself, because he loves himself. If he love others as he loves himself, he will be equally unwilling to injure them. If he intentionally injure them, it is because he does not truly love them. By this test we may easily determine whether we truly love others. "Love worketh no ill to his neighbor." Nay, more, it *does work good* to others; it prompts to a desire for their happiness, and to all proper means for its advancement. Such love our Lord requires us to cherish towards all, that we may be like Him who thus loveth all, and who is kind even to the unthankful and to the evil. Matt. v. 43—48; Luke vi. 35. Love in us will work no injury to our brethren; and love in God will work no injury to his children. We may safely trust in him, therefore, that all the dispensations of his providence, whether for the present joyous or grievous, will "work no ill" to us, inasmuch as they are guided by a spirit of pure love. ¶ *Therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.* Or, the fulness of the law, its substance, the great principle on which it is founded. "The apostle's meaning is, that love to our neighbor, joined with love to God, is that which renders our obedience to the law full or complete."—*Macknight*. We shall worship and obey God in pro-

11 And that, knowing the time, that now *it is* high time to awake out of sleep: for now *is* our salva-

portion to the sincerity of our love to him. We shall do good and refrain from evil towards men in proportion to the sincerity of our love to them. Perfect love, therefore, would secure a perfect fulfilment of the law.

11. *And that.* "That is, do this, namely, all which he had been exhorting them to do."—*Stuart.* An additional inducement to faithful obedience is thus introduced. ¶ *Knowing the time.* Namely, the gospel time or day, which had then dawned, and was becoming more and more bright. Considering or realizing that you live in such a period, the duty enforced becomes the more urgent. ¶ *It is high time to awake out of sleep.* This figure is both beautiful and peculiarly appropriate. As the dawn of the natural day is the signal to arouse from slumber, and to engage with activity in physical and mental labors, so the dawn of Christianity, the moral light which shone forth when the Sun of Righteousness arose with healing in his wings (Mal. iv. 2), was a signal to shake off the moral lethargy which had brooded over mankind, and to devote all the renewed powers of the soul to moral and spiritual culture and improvement. ¶ *For now is our salvation nearer than when we believed.* This passage has been variously interpreted. Many of the German critics agree with *Locke*, that the apostle "looked upon Christ's coming as not far off;" that is, that he would speedily appear a second time on the earth, and the day of full glory commence. To this it is a sufficient objection, that when the Thessalonians understood him to teach such a doctrine, in his first Epistle to them (1 Thess. v. 2, 6), he assured them in his second Epistle, that they had utterly mistaken his meaning. 2 Thess. ii. 1—3. Others, as *Hammond* and *Whitby*, suppose *salvation* to indicate the deliverance of the church from persecution, when their most violent enemies, the Jews, should be overthrown. Others, again, like *Stuart* and *Barnes*, suppose *salvation* to be used, in its highest sense, to indicate entire purification from sin in the future life, and suppose the apostle to mean that

tion nearer than when we believed.

12 The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore

salvation was nearer to them merely because the period of death was nearer than when they became believers. But I prefer the interpretation by *Mac-knight*: "*Salvation*, in this passage, signifies the glad tidings of salvation, the gospel, as it does in various other passages. For example, Luke xix. 9, 'This day salvation is come to thy house.' Rom. xi. 11, 'Salvation is come to the Gentiles, to provoke them to emulation.'—Nor is this all; the translation which I have given of the clause is perfectly agreeable to the original: 'For now the salvation is nearer us (the word of salvation, the doctrine of the gospel, is nearer us) than when we believed.' The apostle's meaning is, that the doctrine of the gospel was better understood by the Gentiles than when they first believed. For things that are plain and easily understood were said by the Hebrews to be nigh. Rom. x. 8, 'The matter is nigh thee.' The apostle's argument stands thus: We, Gentiles, have the glad tidings of salvation now more fully preached to us, and we understand them better, than when we first believed; consequently we are better acquainted with the obligations laid on us by the gospel to live in a holy manner, and are sensible that it is time for us to awake fully from the intoxication of sin. The apostle included himself in this exhortation, not because he had ever slept in the ignorance of heathenism, and needed to awake, but to make his reproof more inoffensive, and his exhortation more persuasive." The exhortation, viewed thus, is seen to be founded on the principle that moral obligation is proportionate to the degree of moral light enjoyed. See note on Luke xii. 47, 48.

12. *The night is far spent.* Is approaching its close; is nearly ended. The ignorance of the Gentiles is often termed *night* and *darkness*, in the Scriptures. Luke i. 78, 79; Acts xxvi. 18; Rom. i. 21; Eph. iv. 18; v. 8; 1 Pet. ii. 9. ¶ *The day is at hand.* The glorious light of the gospel is emphatically styled the *day*. Those who had seen that light, who had

cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light.

13 Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wan-

tonness, not in strife and envying. acquired knowledge of the truth, are said to be "children of the day," 1 Thess. v. 5, and "children of light," Eph. v. 8. As darkness and ignorance were fading away before the approaching light, and as the light was becoming clearer and more brilliant as the great truths of the gospel were more fully and accurately understood, or, in Hebrew phrase, were more near at hand, the obligation of Christians to be active and faithful increased in a corresponding degree. The main idea is similar to that in the foregoing verse. ¶ *Let us therefore cast off the works of darkness.* Let us abandon all those sinful practices to which we were accustomed when in darkness. ¶ *Let us put on the armor of light.* Let us practise the virtues, and cultivate the spirit, required by the gospel of light and salvation. These are styled *armor*, because they furnish a defence against temptation, and the means of overcoming the obstacles to our progress in holiness. See Eph. vi. 10—17; 2 Cor. x. 4.

13. *Let us walk honestly.* Let us conduct with propriety, as becometh Christians. ¶ *As in the day.* Let our actions be such as need no concealment. John iii. 20. Let them be such as will bear the test of gospel light. ¶ *Not in rioting and drunkenness.* Some of the works of darkness are here specified, to which the Gentiles had been accustomed before the light of the gospel beamed upon them, but which were now to be cast off and shunned. In making the selection, the apostle preserves the figure, by naming only those which are chiefly practised in the night, or in darkness. *Rioting* is here used in the sense of *revelling*, and indicates the excesses which attend luxurious living. *Drunkenness*, however inconsistent with Christian principles, and even with the principles of a selfish regard to one's own welfare, is too common to require a single word of explanation. These two are grouped together, being of similar character, and having a common origin in unrestrained appetite. It scarcely need be remarked that the

tonness, not in strife and envying.

14 But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.

heathen were addicted to these vices, as well as to the others named in this verse. ¶ *Chambering.* The word used here occurs in the Septuagint (Lev. xviii. 22), and probably in the same sense. That the heathen were guilty of this, among other works of darkness, is manifest from ch. i. 27. ¶ *Wantonness.* Lasciviousness. These two are also grouped together, as of kindred character, arising from the unbridled animal passions. ¶ *Strife and envying.* "These vices are properly introduced in connection with the others. They usually accompany each other. Quarrels and contentions come out of scenes of drunkenness and debauchery."—*Barnes.* See Prov. xxiii. 29—32. Or, the phrase may be interpreted, more generally, as an exhortation that Christians indulge not "in quarrelling about riches, or honors, or opinions, and in envying the prosperity of others."—*Macknight.* All these "works of darkness" should be put off, or laid aside, by the "children of light."

14. *Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ.* Cultivate the spirit which he manifested, and practise those virtues which he enjoined. "Be conformable to his doctrine and holy life."—*Whitby.* "In all respects, the Lord Jesus was unlike what had been specified in the previous verse. He was temperate, chaste, pure, peaceable, and meek; and to put him on was to imitate him in these respects."—*Barnes.* ¶ *Make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.* Otherwise translated, "Make no provision for the lusts of the flesh."—*Macknight.* "Make no provision for the flesh, in respect to its lusts."—*Stuart.* "Take no thought to please your fleshly lusts."—*Conybeare.* According to either translation, the meaning is sufficiently manifest. Christians are exhorted not to seek indulgence of sensual lusts; but rather, as children of light, to strive earnestly for the attainment of a true Christian character. The natural tendency of a genuine faith in the gospel of Christ to produce such a change in the object and purposes of life is discussed more

CHAPTER XIV.

HIM that is weak in the faith receive ye, *but* not to doubtful

largely in the sixth chapter of this epistle.

CHAPTER XIV.

1. *Him that is weak in the faith.* From what follows it is manifest that, by weakness in faith, the apostle has special reference to certain questions of morals which then agitated the church at Rome. The persons referred to might have had strong faith in God, and might have believed on the Lord Jesus Christ with all the heart, and yet, by their scruples in regard to Christian liberty, might have been *weak* brethren. ¶ *Receive ye.* Admit him to your society and communion, and strive to improve his understanding. Treat him with kindness and gentleness. Respect his scruples, until they can be removed by the greater light which is in you. ¶ *But not to doubtful disputations.* The sense is, perhaps, more plainly expressed in the translation by *Conybeare*, even though it be less literal: "Make no distinctions for opinion's sake." If the heart be right, differences in opinion, as to certain observances, are to be overlooked. The strong should not despise the weak, nor the weak condemn the strong. Ver. 2. But the unity of the spirit should be preserved in the bonds of peace. Or, if the common translation be preferred, the meaning is, that a weak brother is to be received into fellowship, not for the purpose of violently and harshly controverting his opinions, but in the hope of winning his confidence and strengthening his faith by kindness and Christian instruction. There was great need of this caution to the church at Rome, composed of converts from Judaism, who brought with them many prejudices connected with their former creed, and of converts from heathenism, who had never entertained those prejudices. And the caution is useful to all, even now. It is well observed by *Barnes* that "young converts have often a peculiar delicacy or sensitiveness about the lawfulness of many things, in relation to which older Christians may be more fully es-

disputations.

2 For one believeth that he may eat all things; another, who is weak, eateth herbs.

established. To produce peace there must be kindness, tenderness, and faithful teaching; not denunciation, or harshness, on one side or the other."

2. *For one believeth that he may eat all things.* The first point of difference between weak and strong disciples, specified by the apostle, respected the eating of meats. Some have understood that the question extended to the eating of meats, under all circumstances whatever; and have supposed the apostle to refer to those ascetics who conscientiously abstained altogether from animal food. But it is the more common, and, probably, more correct opinion, that the real question at issue was, not whether meats might be lawfully eaten under any circumstances, but under what circumstances they might lawfully be eaten. By the Jewish law, the flesh of certain animals was pronounced unclean; and the flesh of any animal whatever was likewise unclean, if it had been offered in sacrifice to an idol. Of such unclean meats the Jew was strictly forbidden to eat. When converted to Christianity, many of the Jews considered themselves still bound to obey the Mosaic law, and, of course, to refrain from eating what the law prohibited. On the contrary, the Gentile convert knew no distinction between meats, as clean and unclean, and had been accustomed hitherto to eat, without hesitation, such meats as had been sacrificed unto idols. He, therefore, had no hesitation in *eating all things*, that is, any kind of meat or food placed before him, as a matter of conscience; it was with him a question only of taste. Some of the Jews, also, of whom the apostle was one, believed that they were free from the law of ordinances, and partakers of the liberty of Christ; and that, therefore, they might freely eat whatsoever was set before them, asking no questions for conscience' sake. 1 Cor. x. 27. ¶ *Another who is weak.* Namely, those of the Jews who still regarded themselves subject to the Mosaic law. ¶ *Eateth herbs.* Or vegetables. It was customary to expose for sale in the shambles whatever was left unconsumed

3 Let not him that eateth, despise him that eateth not; and let not him that eateth not, judge him that eateth: for God hath received him.

of the idolatrous feasts, as well as other meats which the law pronounced unclean. Lest they should be deceived, and should unconsciously purchase meat unclean in itself, or which had been sacrificed to an idol, these weak Christians refrained entirely from purchasing meats in the market, and generally subsisted on vegetables. When invited to an entertainment, or a Christian feast, the same scruples prevented them from partaking of meats, and they ate only vegetables. Such was the distinction between those who ate all things and those who ate herbs; between whom the apostle would have no violent disputation, but rather a spirit of kindness. For more extended remarks concerning the lawfulness of eating meats offered to idols, see notes on I Cor. x. 25—32.

3. *Let not him that eateth.* Namely, the Gentile convert, who eats, without scruple, whatever is provided for him. ¶ *Despise him that eateth not.* Let him not regard with contempt the scruples of his brother who conscientiously refrains from eating meat, lest he should chance to eat what the law pronounces unclean. The word *despise* is well chosen. Contempt is more likely to be cherished by the strong to the weak than any more violent emotion; yet it has no tendency to win the confidence, or to convince the judgment, or secure the affection and esteem of the weak. The Gentile, rejoicing in the liberty wherewith Christ had made him free, and never having been conscious of any allegiance to the Mosaic law, would be very likely to regard the scruples of his Jewish brother as weak and frivolous, and to despise or hold him in contempt for being restrained by them. But such contempt would not tend to edification, and should be avoided. ¶ *Him which eateth not.* Namely, the Jewish convert, who was restrained by his scruples from eating meat, and subsisted on a vegetable diet, except when absolutely certain that the meat was ceremonially clean. ¶ *Judge him that eateth.* Or, condemn him that eateth, that is,

4 Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth: yea, he shall be holden up: for God is able to make him stand.

the Gentile, who overlooked all distinctions between clean and unclean, and thankfully received any food which his appetite craved. The word *judge*, or *condemn*, is as well chosen as *despise*. The weak Christian, who conscientiously abstained from meats, would be more likely to *condemn* than to *despise* his less scrupulous brother for an act which his own conscience pronounced sinful. But neither would this crimination tend to harmony and mutual edification; and it was therefore to be avoided. ¶ *For God hath received him.* Hath received him kindly and affectionately, admitted him to communion. The same word is used here which occurs in ver. 1. In the church at Rome, God had visibly manifested his acceptance and approval of both classes, by bestowing spiritual gifts on both. And this was surely a sufficient reason why they should neither despise nor condemn each other. It is not well to attempt to reverse the judgment of God, or to reject what he accepts. Acts x. 15.

4. *Who art thou, &c.* By this question the apostle intimates the impious presumption of a man who should undertake to condemn those whom God had accepted, ver. 3. If men would seriously reflect on the infinite difference between themselves and God, between his ways and their ways, they would not arrogantly presume to "rejudge his justice," and to pass condemnation on those whom he has acquitted. ¶ *That judgest another man's servant.* Rather, *the servant of another*: that is, of God. There is nothing in the original answering to *man* in the common version. Christians are the servants of God, and of his Son Jesus Christ: but they are not servants of each other in such a sense as to incur condemnation for a difference of opinion or practice, not involving moral turpitude. The reference here is probably to the condemnation of the Gentile converts, by their Jewish brethren, for partaking of meats which the law pronounced unclean. While Paul conceded the right of weak

5 One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth

every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind.

brethren to eat herbs, if they chose, and their duty to do so, if they had conscientious scruples concerning other food, he claimed the right of others to eat meat, if their consciences justified the practice. And he insisted that neither party should *despise* or *condemn* the other for this difference. ¶ *To his own master he standeth or falleth.* He is accountable only to his own master; that is, to God. By Him alone is he to be justified or condemned. See Ps. i. 5. "The strict rendering would be: In relation to his own master, he is subject to sentence of condemnation or acquittal; that is, before the tribunal of another he cannot be arraigned in respect to his scrupulous conscience; his own master only can call him to an account as to this matter."—*Stuart.* ¶ *Yea, he shall be holden up.* He shall be sustained and justified in following the dictates of his own conscience, guided by the light of the gospel, notwithstanding his opinions and practices may be disapproved and condemned by his less enlightened or more scrupulous brethren. ¶ *For God is able to make him stand.* So long as his heart is right towards God, his only lawful master, he shall enjoy the divine approbation, and the testimony of a good conscience. Let no man, therefore, presume to condemn his brother; but rather acquiesce in the judgment of God.

5. *One man esteemeth.* The same word occurs here which is rendered *judge* in ver. 3; but the sense is very different. There it means to condemn; here, to think, to estimate, to regard. ¶ *One day above another.* Better than another; more worthy of regard than another; more holy than another. This also has special reference to Jewish Christians, who had formerly "regarded the days of their festivals, and fasts, and Sabbaths, as peculiarly sacred, and who would retain, to no inconsiderable degree, their former views, even after they were converted to Christianity."—*Barnes.* ¶ *Another esteemeth every day alike.* The word *alike* is added by the translators, but not improperly, as the manifest meaning is thus expressed. The reference is to the Jewish holy days, or "festivals,

and fasts, and Sabbaths." The Gentile Christians had never been under subjection to the Jewish law, and regarded those days as no more sacred than others; moreover, they considered that law to be abrogated, and conscientiously refrained from observing its rites and ceremonies. ¶ *Let every one be fully persuaded in his own mind.* Let every one determine the matter for himself, after due deliberation, and with the aid of all the instruction he can obtain from the Scriptures. It is not a thing to be lightly decided; but, whatever conclusion be adopted, it should be the result of a careful examination. "Let each one act conscientiously in respect to this matter, according to the real persuasion or belief of his own mind, so as not to violate his conscience in observing, or neglecting to observe, particular days in a special manner."—*Stuart.* It is manifest that our Lord did not regard the Jewish Sabbath as it was regarded by the Jews generally. It was a frequent complaint against him that he transgressed the Sabbath day. Neither the apostles nor the early Christians regarded the Jewish Sabbath, or the other legal holy days, as worthy of any peculiar reverence. On the contrary, when some of the early converts manifested an inclination so to regard and observe them, it was deemed a fit occasion for apostolic reproof. Gal. iv. 9—11. It has been a question among commentators whether the Christian Sabbath belongs to the same category. The Lord's day, the first day of the week (instead of the seventh day, which was the Jewish Sabbath), was very early set apart, in commemoration of our Lord's resurrection from the dead. It was not one of those holy days of which the apostle was speaking, and is not therefore directly included in the judgment pronounced. Whether the general principle involved be equally applicable to this day is, at the least, very questionable. The apostle would not have his brethren contend in regard to observances brought into the church by converts from other forms of faith; but it by no means follows that he would not insist on observances established by the authority and prac-

6 He that regardeth the day, regardeth *it* unto the Lord: and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard *it*. He that eateth, eateth to the Lord,

for he giveth God thanks; and he that eateth not, to the Lord he eateth not, and giveth God thanks.

7 For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself.

tice of those Christians who enjoyed spiritual gifts. The remarks of *Stuart* are candid and judicious: "The question, whether Rom. xiv. 5 has respect to the Lord's day as well as the Sabbath of the Jews, is more difficult of decision than some may at first suppose; because there is nothing in the context which furnishes any certain clue to the meaning of *day* here. But, if we may venture to compare Col. ii. 16 and Gal. iv. 10 with the passage here (and it does seem to me that the two passages manifestly have relation to the same usages and prejudices in the church), then we may draw the conclusion, pretty clearly, that *day* here relates to days which the scruples of Jewish Christians deemed sacred, and has no relation to the *Lord's day*, which all agree to keep holy."

6. *He that regardeth the day.* Religiously observes any of the Jewish holy days, of which the apostle is understood to be speaking. ¶ *Regardeth it unto the Lord.* Believing the day to be set apart as holy time, and commanded to be kept holy, he so observes it, in obedience to what he thinks is the will of God. The Jewish Christians, who, through the weakness or incompleteness of their faith, had not become fully conscious of their liberty in Christ, are admitted to be conscientious in their legal observances. ¶ *He that regardeth not the day.* Namely, the Gentile Christians, and such of the Jewish Christians as had escaped from the shackles of the law. None of these esteemed the Jewish holy days as more holy, or more worthy of religious observance, than others. ¶ *To the Lord he doth not regard it.* These were as conscientious as their weaker brethren. They refrained from honoring such days by religious observances, lest they should seem to acknowledge the binding force of a law which had been abrogated by the same Lawgiver who enacted it, that it might give place to another and a better law, even the law of liberty in Christ. ¶ *He that eateth.* That is, he that eateth meat from which the weaker

brother abstained. This is said of the Gentiles, and of those Jews who had thrown off their allegiance to the law of rites and ceremonies. ¶ *Eateth to the Lord.* Because he believes it is agreeable to the will of the Lord, who hath provided this kind of food, and who permits it to be eaten. ¶ *For he giveth God thanks.* Both for the food, and for permission to partake of it. ¶ *He that eateth not.* The Jewish brother, whose scrupulous adherence to the law prevents him from eating what the law styles unclean. ¶ *To the Lord he eateth not.* He eats not, because he believes the Lord hath forbidden him to eat. ¶ *And giveth God thanks.* The Jewish Christian, who retained his scruples, thanked God that he had more light, and more knowledge of the divine law, than his Gentile brother enjoyed; and that he was thus able to make that distinction in articles of food which he believed the Lord required. The general idea, running through this and the preceding verse, is, that both classes of Christians, the stronger and the weaker, were equally conscientious in their opinions and practices. And this is urged as a reason why neither should despise or condemn the other, ver. 3; on the contrary, by mutual charity and kindness, they should promote the peace and harmony of the church; remembering that God accepts and approves all who conscientiously serve him according to the light which they have received. Ver. 4.

7. *For none of us liveth to himself.* No Christian lives merely for the personal gratification of his own passions or desires; but he owns his subjection to a higher power, and his obligation to be governed by it. ¶ *And no man dieth to himself.* Neither does the Christian claim the privilege of dying sooner or living longer than God hath appointed; but, in regard to death, as well as in the events of life, he submits cheerfully to the supreme authority of God, and of him who hath been appointed "Lord both of the dead and living." Ver. 9. The context clearly

8 For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's.

indicates that such is the general purport of this verse; as the apostle is exhorting his brethren to refrain from despising and condemning each other, for the reason that all are servants of one master, whom all acknowledge, and to whom alone they are accountable for their actions.

8. *Whether we live.* While and as long as we live; or, in the state of living. ¶ *We live unto the Lord.* Subject to his authority, and under obligation to obey his commands. It is implied, if not asserted, that we are also entitled to his protection. ¶ *Or whether we die.* When we die; or, in the state of death. ¶ *We die unto the Lord.* In obedience to his will. ¶ *Whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's.* Death does not disturb the relationship between us and the Lord. Our obligations to obedience, and claims for protection, remain in full force. "Whether in a state of life or death, we belong to the Lord, we are bound to glorify him.—In English we should say, 'Both living and dying, we are the Lord's.'—Whether we exist in the present world or in another, namely, the world of the dead, we belong to the Lord.—In other words, we, in the state of the living and in the state of the dead, that is, we of the present or of the future world, are Christ's; he is our Lord, both here and hereafter."—*Stuart.* By *Lord*, in this verse, there can be no reasonable doubt that the Lord Jesus Christ is intended. See ver. 9. Yet we should recognize God as the original source of all power; for it was he who gave unto his Son "power over all flesh," and who "put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church." John xvii. 2; Eph. i. 22.

9. *For to this end.* For this purpose. Not that this was the only purpose; but that this was one and a very important result. ¶ *Christ both died.* He manifested his affection for mankind, and his strong desire for their welfare, not only in his labors while he lived on the earth, but by dying on the cross

9 For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living.

10 But why dost thou judge thy

for their benefit. ¶ *And rose.* This word is almost unanimously rejected, as spurious, by critics. It is supposed to have been written in the margin, in explanation of the following word, and afterwards to have been transferred to the text by some copyist. ¶ *And revived.* Was restored to life. The resurrection of our Lord is denoted by this phrase. He was restored to life, that he might exercise the dominion which God had given him over men. ¶ *That he might be Lord.* The ruler: that he might have control, for the full accomplishment of the work committed to him. ¶ *Both of the dead and living.* A general phrase, including the whole human race, past, present, and future. The commission of our Lord was general and universal; it extended to "all flesh;" see note on John xvii. 2; and nothing was excluded from his dominion except him only who bestowed it. 1 Cor. xv. 27. The word *dead*, it must be remembered, does not here denote the entire absence of life; for, in this sense, no man dies; or, at the least, no man remains dead. See Matt. xxii. 31, 32. The *dead* and *living* are terms used here merely to designate those who have already passed away from the earth, through the gate of death, and those who yet remain. And the meaning is, that in either state of existence, the present or the future, Jesus Christ is our divinely commissioned Lord and Master, to whom our allegiance and obedience are due. To him also we may confidently look for protection, and assistance, and final deliverance from sin and all its woes, inasmuch as he hath declared that dominion over all was bestowed upon him for this special purpose, that he should give eternal life to the whole number. John xvii. 2. See also John iii. 35; vi. 37—39.

10. *But why.* Why, then. Since Christ is Lord of all, to whom his subjects are personally responsible, why do you usurp his authority? The apostle enforces his exhortation, ver. 3, 4, by the consideration that we are truly accountable only to him whom God

brother? or why dost thou set at naught thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ.

hath appointed "to be the Judge of quick and dead." Acts x. 42. ¶ *Dost thou judge thy brother?* Or, condemn him, for a difference in opinion or practice. Why dost thou, who hast Jewish scruples remaining, condemn the Lord's servant, who is free from such scruples? Ver. 3. ¶ *Or why dost thou set at naught thy brother?* Or, despise him; look upon him with contempt. Why dost thou, who art a Gentile, or a fully enlightened Jew, despise or set at naught thy weaker brother, or look with scorn on his conscientious scruples? Ver. 3. ¶ *We shall all.* Both Jewish and Gentile converts; both strong and weak; both those who make no distinction between meats and days, and those who regard such distinction as a religious duty. This declaration has special reference to the church at Rome, where the danger existed against which the apostle is warning his brethren; yet it expresses a general fact in regard to all men. This is manifest, not only from the nature of the case, but from the testimony to which the apostle appeals, ver. 11. ¶ *Before the judgment-seat.* The tribunal. ¶ *Of Christ.* "The Father judgeth no man; but hath committed all judgment unto the Son." See note on John v. 22. To him, therefore, are his subjects responsible. The purpose for which this fact is alleged here is well expressed by *Stuart*: "Such a brother is not amenable to you in a matter of this nature: Christ is his judge, who is the supreme judge of all. We must leave such matters to him; but should feel, at the same time, that we are accountable for all that we do or say, in respect to our Christian brethren. *For* is prefixed to a reason given why we ought not to despise a Christian brother for his weak conscience; namely, the fact that he is accountable to Christ himself, and not to us; as we also are accountable, for our demeanor toward him." The phrase *supreme judge*, as applied in this note to Christ, must be taken in a qualified sense, or rejected as inappropriate; for delegated authority, which Christ expressly affirmed was that which he

11 For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God.

exercised, cannot be strictly called *supreme*. For more extended remarks on the subject of standing before the judgment-seat of Christ, and of being judged by him, see note on 2 Cor. v. 10.

11. *For it is written.* See Isa. xlv. 23. The passage is not quoted literally, but the spirit is preserved. ¶ *As I live, saith the Lord.* A form of absolute affirmation, equivalent to "I have sworn by myself," as the passage stands in Isaiah. The words, *saith the Lord*, are not in the passage quoted, but are added by the apostle, to show that the language was spoken by the same God who, in the preceding verse, had said, "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none else." The reference, in this case, is not to the Lord Jesus, as in ver. 8, 9, but to the supreme God, "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." 2 Cor. xi. 31. ¶ *Every knee shall bow to me.* To bow the knee is an acknowledgment of subjection. The meaning is, every soul shall submit to my authority. The authority of God was always unlimited and universal. Of course, we are not to understand this as a declaration that all men should become subject to him; for they were thus subject from the beginning. But they should become conscious of their dependence on God, and their obligation to obey him; and they should be constrained to acknowledge his authority, and to reverence him as their Supreme Governor. This is indicated by bowing the knee, or prostrating themselves before him. ¶ *And every tongue shall confess to God.* In the original passage, the language is, "Every tongue shall swear." Either phrase distinctly indicates that the confession is to be sincere, hearty, and unequivocal. They shall acknowledge their entire dependence on him for righteousness and strength. Isa. xlv. 24. Dependence implies subjection and accountability. The whole verse is designed to prove the fact asserted in ver. 10; namely, that all men, being subject to God, must be judged by the Lord Jesus Christ, to

12 So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God.

13 Let us not therefore judge one another any more: but judge this rather, that no man put a stum-

whom the Father "hath committed all judgment." John v. 22.

12. *So then.* Wherefore; in conformity with the word which God spake by his prophet. ¶ *Every one of us.* Especially of the church at Rome; both strong and weak; for of them particularly the apostle here speaks. Yet the language is true, in its largest sense, and is equally applicable to all mankind. ¶ *Shall give account of himself unto God.* Is accountable to God, as the Supreme Judge. The theme of discourse is, that men should not condemn each other on account of their differences; because all are responsible alone to God, and to his authorized representative. Because the apostle represents men as accountable to Christ in ver. 10, and here as accountable to God, and because he quotes the prophetic declaration that all shall submit to God, in proof that all shall submit to Christ, some have imagined that Christ is the supreme God. To this it is a sufficient answer, that Christ himself acknowledges all his authority to be derived from the Father, whose distinct and separate personality, superiority, and supremacy, are recognized. The language of the apostle is not unusual. Similar language is in common use, which no one misunderstands. For example: we owe allegiance to our country, and are subject to its government; of course, we are subject or accountable to its legally established tribunals. To prove our accountability to a tribunal, it is sufficient to prove our accountability to the government which established it. But nobody ever supposed that, therefore, the tribunal, or court of law, was the supreme government. So, also, because we are accountable to Christ, as the appointed Lord and Judge of all men, it by no means follows that he is that supreme God by whom he was appointed to his exalted office. John v. 22; Acts ii. 36. But, being thus appointed, it is proper "that all men should honor the Son even as they honor the Father," and "confess that Jesus Christ is Lord,

bling-block, or an occasion to fall in his brother's way.

14 I know, and am persuaded by the Lord Jesus, that *there is* nothing unclean of itself: but to

to the glory of God the Father." See notes on John v. 23, and Phil. ii. 11.

13. *Let us not therefore judge one another any more.* The apostle applies his argument to the point discussed in the commencement of the chapter. Since we are properly accountable only to God, and to him whom he hath appointed to execute judgment in his name, let us refrain from judging one another; for such judgment is a usurpation of divine authority. ¶ *But judge this rather.* Let us resolve on this, or come to this determination. The word judge is used, in this verse, in very different and still somewhat analogous senses. ¶ *Stumbling-block.* Any obstacle in one's path. It is well explained by the succeeding words, "occasion to fall," which are of similar import. The phrase is here used, as, indeed, it is almost uniformly used in the Scriptures, in a moral sense; and the meaning is, that no man lead another into the commission of sin, either by example, in matters of doubtful propriety, or by a harsh judgment, which may excite anger.

14. *I know.* The apostle seems here to address himself chiefly to the Gentile converts. Having already admonished the weak Jewish brethren, that they ought not to condemn the Gentiles for not making a distinction between meats and days, he now admonishes the strong to respect the scruples of the weak. Ver. 1. He tells the Gentiles that they are unquestionably right, in regard to their freedom from the legal distinctions which their weaker brethren scrupulously observed. This, he says, he knows perfectly well. ¶ *And am persuaded.* Convinced, satisfied beyond doubt. ¶ *By the Lord Jesus.* Either by special revelation, as Peter was convinced, Acts xi. 9, 17; see also Gal. i. 11, 12; or by the general spirit of the revelation. The ritual law was abrogated by the more perfect dispensation of the gospel, and was no longer binding on the Jews, even as it never was binding on the Gentiles. ¶ *That there is nothing unclean of itself.* "That

him that esteemeth anything to be unclean, to him *it is* unclean.

15 But if thy brother be grieved with *thy* meat, now walkest thou not charitably. Destroy not him

is, no food or drink in its own nature, or as it is in itself, is unclean to the Christian."—*Stuart*. Whether pronounced unclean, or not, by the Jewish law, Christians may lawfully and properly partake of any food which God hath furnished, provided it be palatable, wholesome, and not injurious to health. ¶ *But to him, &c.* The apostle reminds his brethren that all have not this knowledge. Some remain "weak in the faith," ver. 1, 2. And if such a person partakes of food which he verily believes to be unclean, the moral effect is precisely the same as if it were actually unclean. And when he sees others partaking of what he believes to be unclean, he is grieved precisely as he would be if such participation were actually forbidden by the divine law. From what follows, the apostle seems to contemplate a two-fold evil: that the weak brethren would be grieved, by what they regarded as sinful conduct, and that some might be tempted to imitate a practice which their own conscience condemned. See 1 Cor. viii. 9, 10.

15. *But if thy brother be grieved, &c.* Thou art doubtless at liberty, so far as thine own conscience is concerned, to "eat all things." Ver. 2. But if the use of this liberty appear sinful to thy weaker brother, "thou walkest not charitably," thou dost not fulfil the royal law of love, and do unto thy brother as thou wouldst have him do unto thee, if thou persistest in disregarding his scruples. ¶ *Destroy not him, &c.* "The meaning seems to be, 'Do not furnish an occasion of stumbling to thy brother, lest he fall, and come into condemnation.' For whom Christ died seems to be added in order to show how very differently Christ himself acted and felt with respect to Christians who are weak in faith; and thus to paint in glowing colors the criminality of those who refused to imitate his spirit."—*Stuart*.

16. *Let not then your good.* Your freedom from the law of rites and ceremonies. That the Gentile converts

with thy meat, for whom Christ died.

16 Let not then your good be evil spoken of:

17 For the kingdom of God is

were born free, and that the Jewish converts had been delivered, if they had the grace to perceive it, from this ritual and ceremonial law, the apostle distinctly asserts in ver. 14, and frequently elsewhere. Yet he would have his brethren use their freedom, and enjoy this *good*, in a prudent and decorous manner, in order that weak brethren might not be grieved, nor unbelievers be scandalized. ¶ *Be evil spoken of.* Become an occasion for reproach; literally, be blasphemed. If they persisted, on all occasions, in "eating all things," making no distinction between meats, as legally clean or unclean, their weaker brethren might regard it as a mere indulgence of appetite, unbecoming Christians; or, they might regard it as an actual sin, a violation of law, and so pronounce sentence of condemnation. Ver. 3, 4. Or, weaker brethren might imitate the example, even though doubting its lawfulness, and thus become actually guilty of sin (ver. 23); and when called to account by equally weak brethren, might cast the blame on the strong, as having tempted them beyond measure. Thus disputes and ill-feeling might be engendered, and unbelievers have occasion to denounce Christianity as a fount of confusion. It were better therefore for the strong to abate somewhat of their liberty, though *good* in itself, lest it should be misunderstood and reproached.

17. *For the kingdom of God.* For the various significations of this phrase, see note on Matt. iii. 2. It seems here to denote the reign of God in the soul. "Locke understands the privileges of the kingdom or church of God. But the phrase seems to be used here in the sense in which it was often used by Christ, namely, to signify his *religion*, whereby God's kingdom or government is effectually established in the minds of men; and therefore the kingdom of God is said to be within them. Luke xvii. 21."—*Macknight*. ¶ *Is not.* Does not consist in; is not characterized by. The Jewish religion was distinguished by certain outward observances, with-

not meat and drink ; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.

18 For he that in these things

out which the claims of a man to discipleship would be repudiated. The Christian religion, on the contrary, is essentially a religion of the heart. If the Christian worship God "in spirit and in truth" (John iv. 23, 24), it is of little consequence whether or not he observe the legal distinctions which were characteristic of Judaism. 1 Cor. viii. 8. ¶ *Meat and drink.* "Drink is mentioned as well as *meat*, because, though the law of Moses did not forbid any kind of drink, the Nazarites abstained from wine, and all kinds of fermented liquors. Hence the exhortation, Col. ii. 16, 'Let no man judge you in meat or in drink.' Perhaps some of the more zealous Jews abstained from drinks prepared by the heathens, thinking them impure. Or, the expression may be proverbial, signifying that the kingdom of God, that is, true religion, does not consist in the observation of any ceremony whatever."—*Macknight*. Perhaps *drink* may be specified for yet another reason. Meats, which had been offered in sacrifice to idols, were regarded by the weaker brethren as unclean, though the apostle, in common with the Gentile converts, did not suppose they were unfit to be eaten by a Christian. 1 Cor. x. 27—30. But drink-offerings as well as meat-offerings were included in idolatrous ceremonies. Both would be regarded as unclean by the Jew, and the Gentile would make no distinction in regard to either. The Gentile is admonished therefore equally in regard to both, that the kingdom of God, or true religion, does not consist in eating and drinking, or in refraining from eating and drinking, what some regarded as unclean, whether because it had been offered in sacrifice unto idols, or otherwise. ¶ *But righteousness.* Upright conduct ; a virtuous life ; a faithful and conscientious discharge of the moral duties ; unfeigned love and obedience to God. In the language of the prophet, "What doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" Mic. vi. 8. ¶ *And peace.* This word here denotes harmony and

serveth Christ, is acceptable to God, and approved of men.

19 Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace,

concord among brethren, rather than that internal peace which is often mentioned as the fruit of religion. The object of the apostle is to promote the harmony of his brethren, and he mentions this as one characteristic of true religion. See ver. 19. ¶ *And joy in the Holy Ghost.* That inward comfort and happiness, which arises from the influence of the divine spirit in the heart, from the testimony of a good conscience enlightened and guided by that spirit, from a firm and unwavering confidence in God as a Father and un-failing friend, and from a living hope of the blessings promised in the gospel. Purity, harmony, and spiritual joy, these are the true characteristics of pure religion.

18. *He that in these things.* That is, in righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost, in which, as the apostle has just declared, true religion consists. ¶ *Serveth Christ.* Or, obeys him ; conforms to his precepts, and imitates his example. The Christian obeys his Master by doing those things whereby the excellency of the gospel is exhibited to the world, so that others may be induced to become fellow-subjects of the same divine government. See Matt. v. 16. ¶ *Acceptable to God.* God regardeth the heart, not outward ceremonies. Whether a man eat and drink, or refrain, he is equally acceptable to God, if the heart be the abode of purity, peace, and holy joy. Whether Jew or Gentile, whether weak or strong, "in every nation, he that feareth God and worketh righteousness is accepted with him." Acts x. 35. ¶ *And approved of men.* A holy life and conversation not only meets the spontaneous approbation of Christians, but even extorts the respect of the unbelieving and the ungodly.

19. *Let us therefore follow after.* Let us pursue ; or, more freely, Let us practise. The exhortation which follows is grounded on the facts already stated. As the differences which existed in regard to certain ceremonies were far less important than a spirit of Christian love and harmony, therefore the apostle

and things wherewith one may edify another.

exhorts his brethren to forego their prejudices, and even their well-settled opinions, in minor matters, for the sake of that peace which ought to exist in the church. ¶ *The things which make for peace.* Which promote peace; or, literally, the things of peace. It becomes Christians to cultivate a spirit of harmony, consistent with that love which their religion inculcates. In the church at Rome the brethren were of one mind, in regard to the essentials of Christianity. The apostle besought them not to contend about forms and ceremonies, and matters of comparatively trivial importance. And while no man might safely do violence to his own conscience, ver. 23, yet each should cheerfully allow others to be guided by their own consciences, without reproach or condemnation. They should yield their own preferences, so far as they could do so conscientiously; and, by mutual deference and conciliation, all should strive for the attainment and the preservation of peace. The same exhortation is applicable to all Christians, in all ages. It is a mortifying fact, that the professed disciples of the Prince of Peace have hitherto been less peaceful than is meet. To say nothing here of the sanguinary persecutions which disgraced the very name of Christianity in former years, and made it a byword and a scolding among unbelievers, even now there is altogether too much bickering and contention between different sects, and not unfrequently between members of the same communion. Generally speaking, the subjects of contention are of as little importance as those which disturbed or threatened the harmony of the church at Rome. In the great essentials of Christianity, such as the existence and attributes of God, the divine mission of his Son, the authenticity and authority of the gospel, the moral accountability of men, the equitable retribution of their deeds, whether good or evil, and their resurrection from the dead to an immortal existence, of a character consistent with the will and with the attributes of God,—in these and other important matters there is a substantial agreement among Christians. Their differences often relate to details,

20 For meat destroy not the work of God. All things indeed

rather than to general principles; and to trivial observances, rather than to essential truth. It is well observed by *Barnes*, that “Christians have more things in which they agree than in which they differ. The points in which they are agreed are of infinite importance; the points on which they differ are commonly some minor matters, in which they may ‘agree to differ,’ and still cherish love for all who bear the image of Christ.” In consequence of their distinct mental organization, absolute and perfect agreement in opinion, on all points, between any two men in existence, is utterly impossible. How useless, then, and worse than useless, is it for Christians to contend about minor matters, instead of mutually rejoicing in their substantial harmony in regard to the great facts of Christianity! ¶ *And things wherewith one may edify another.* “Such as may build us up together into one.”—*Conybeare*. To build up, or to edify, is properly contrasted with *destroy* in ver. 15, 20. A man is edified by whatever increases his strength, his faith, hope, and charity; he is destroyed by whatever diminishes these. We should labor to enlighten the ignorant, to strengthen the weak, to confirm the wavering, to reform the vicious, and to encourage all to be “steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord.” 1 Cor. xv. 58. But, to do this with effect, we must have access to their hearts by a spirit of love. Let not that spirit be quenched by bitter contentions about points of comparative insignificance.

20. *For meat destroy not the work of God.* The metaphor in the foregoing verse is continued here. The apostle, having exhorted his brethren to edify or build up each other in the Christian virtues and graces, presents the contrast to this work, by beseeching them not to destroy these virtues and graces in the hearts of their brethren by pertinaciously insisting on the full indulgence of their own liberty. They had a perfect right to eat meat; but they ought not to use that right, if thereby their brethren were grieved and offended, or were encouraged to imitate the example against their own appre-

are pure; but *it is* evil for that man who eateth with offence.

ensions of propriety. In either case, the true Christian spirit of their brethren, the spirit of love, of faith, and of a pure mind, which had grown up under the influence of the divine spirit, and which is therefore called *the work of God*, would be destroyed, diminished in purity and energy. ¶ *All things indeed are pure.* While the apostle counsels the strong to bear the infirmities of the weak, ch. xv. 1, and to abstain from what is right and proper in itself, rather than give offence to the less enlightened, he would by no means surrender the principle that the ceremonial distinctions of the Mosaic law are abolished. He was earnest in the inculcation of this principle. He refers to it frequently in his epistles. No kind of food which God had prepared for the use of man is to be regarded as unclean or impure; but "every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving." 1 Tim. iv. 4. Such is the general truth; and any Christian, fully believing it, may lawfully and safely eat whatsoever is set before him, asking no questions for conscience' sake. 1 Cor. x. 27. Nevertheless, two modifications of this Christian liberty are to be observed. (1.) Although "there is nothing unclean in itself," yet if a man, through weakness of faith, "esteemeth anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean;" that is, his own conscience is defiled, he is sinful, if he partake of that which he really believes to be unclean; he is precisely as guilty as though it were actually unclean. See ver. 14, 23. Christian liberty, in this respect, is inseparably connected with faith. (2.) The second modification of this liberty is suggested in the concluding clause of this verse—*But it is evil for that man who eateth with offence.* That is, with offence to others. Upon this same subject the apostle says, 1 Cor. x. 23, "All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient; all things are lawful for me, but all things edify not." It was doubtless lawful for the Gentile Christians, and others of equally clear faith, to eat meats without distinction; yet it might not be expedient to use this liberty. If it grieved

21 *It is* good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor *anything*

or offended weaker brethren, if it induced them to violate their own sense of right, if it proved detrimental in any manner whatever to their Christian faith, and hope, and charity, then the use of liberty became evil, and was not to be indulged. Every Christian, while he is answerable to God, according to his own conscience, is still bound to show a decent respect to the conscience of his weaker brethren. 1 Cor. x. 29. On this ground the apostle exhorts, "Abstain from all appearance of evil." 1 Thess. v. 22.

21. *It is good neither to eat flesh.* That is, such flesh as the weak brethren regarded as unclean, either because it was prohibited by the Levitical law, or because it might have been offered in sacrifice to idols. The meaning is, it is right and proper for the strong to refrain from eating such flesh; it is their duty to do so, rather than to wound the feelings of the weak, or to tempt them, by example, to do what they do not fully believe to be right. ¶ *Nor to drink wine.* See note on ver. 17. The use of wine was not prohibited by the Jewish law; yet, when offered as a libation, or, as the Hebrews styled it, a drink-offering, to idols, it was regarded as unclean. The apostle would not countenance the drinking of wine in a heathen temple, or any participation whatever in idolatrous ceremonies; yet he did not hesitate to avow, openly, that neither meat nor wine which had been offered in sacrifice thereby became polluted; but a Christian might afterwards partake of either, without defilement. But many of his brethren had not such knowledge. 1 Cor. viii. 4, 7; x. 19. For this reason, the strong should refrain, lest the weak should be grieved and injured. At the present day, it is well known that many believe the use of wine and stronger drinks to be morally wrong, not because they are unclean in themselves, but because they are injurious to health, to soundness of mind, and to good morals. Should not Christians who think differently be willing to abstain from indulgence, out of respect to the conscientious scruples of their brethren? Moreover, it is notorious that many persons of inordinate

whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak.

22 Hast thou faith? have *it* to

appetite, but of weak resolution, find no safety except in total abstinence from intoxicating liquors. Others, of more strong will, may control their appetites, and use such liquors without abusing them. But does not Christian charity demand that they should abstain from that which is so injurious to others, lest they lead the weak into temptations which they have neither moral nor physical power to resist? The father whose example has encouraged his son to tamper with wine and strong drinks, until he falls a victim to intemperance, has a solemn account to settle with his own conscience. What is true in the family, is true also in the community. We should strive to edify, to build up, not to destroy; to strengthen the weak, not to paralyze the vigor of the strong. Notwithstanding our supposed ability to walk near the edge of a precipice without falling, we should not tempt or encourage others, by our example, to venture upon the same experiment, lest they become giddy and fall, and miserably perish. ¶ *Nor anything.* There is an ellipsis here, which the translators have supplied, at least in part. Some render the phrase, "nor to do any other thing." The meaning is sufficiently manifest. The apostle designs to say that his admonition concerning the use of *meat* and *wine* rests on a general principle, equally applicable to all other things in regard to whose lawfulness men differ in opinion. The strong should be willing to abate somewhat of their liberty, in respect to the weakness and danger of their less clear-sighted or less self-controlled brethren. ¶ *Whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak.* It has been said that the first of these verbs, in the original, signifies the striking of one's foot against an obstruction, without falling, and expresses the condition of one who is tempted, partially yields, but recovers himself; the second denotes an actual fall and injury, and expresses the condition of one who is overcome by the temptation to do what he verily believes to be wrong; the third denotes the loss of strength consequent upon an injury by falling,

thyself before God. Happy *is* he that condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth.

and expresses the condition of one whose integrity and moral sense are so impaired by sin, that he is in danger of making "shipwreck of faith." 1 Tim. i. 19. Rather than his brethren should suffer harm in either respect, the strong should use his liberty with prudence and circumspection, so as to place no stumbling-block in their path.

22. *Hast thou faith?* That is, as to the lawfulness of using those meats and drinks which the weak consider unclean; for this is the special subject of discussion. The apostle had such faith; and he assures his *strong* brethren that they were right in the exercise of similar faith. ¶ *Have it to thyself before God.* "Hast thou a belief that there is no difference in meats (which is truly the case), yet deem it sufficient, in respect to this point, to regulate by it thy conduct in private, as seen only by the eye of God? Do not act this out in public by which you may give needless and injurious offence."—*Stuart.* "God sees your sincerity; he sees that you are right; and you will not offend him. Your brethren do not see that you are right, and *they* will be offended."—*Barnes.* ¶ *Happy is he.* Every man, who honestly obeys the dictates of his own conscience, enjoys peace of mind, and is to be accounted happy. Such is the general proposition. In its application to the particular subject of discourse we are to understand, that those who put no conscientious difference between meats, but received all with thankfulness, were happy in the approbation of their own consciences. If they forbore the exercise of their liberty in the presence of their weaker brethren, for the sake of harmony, to avoid grieving or offending the scrupulous, or that none might be encouraged by their example to stifle their own convictions of duty, they were happy in this forbearance; their consciences testifying that their conduct was guided by a fervent regard for the welfare of their brethren. ¶ *That condemneth not himself.* Whose conscience doth not condemn him. ¶ *In that thing which he alloweth.* In what he approves, and allows himself to do. Whether he

23 And he that doubteth is damned if he eat, because *he eateth* not of faith: for whatsoever *is* not of faith is sin.

use his liberty, or refrain from its use, if his conduct be such that his conscience approve it as right, under the circumstances of the case, he is happy and at peace. "We may congratulate that man who does not so use his Christian liberty in respect to food as to bring on himself condemnation or blame by an abuse of it, or by making use of it in an imprudent and inconsiderate manner." — *Stuart*.

23. *And he that doubteth.* Rather, *But he that doubteth*, as many translate the word. This verse is designed as a proper contrast to the preceding: the man who obeys his conscience is happy, *but* not so the man who disobeys its promptings. Instead of *doubteth*, some render the original by *discerneth a difference*; that is, between things as clean or unclean. The word occurs in this sense, Acts xv. 9. In connection with what follows, the sense is sufficiently manifest. If a person believed that such a difference existed, and that it would be sinful for him to eat certain articles of food; or even if he had grave doubts on the subject, and could not perceive clearly the lawfulness of eating; in either case he should refrain for the reason assigned. ¶ *Is damned if he eat.* Is condemned by his own conscience. I believe no one pretends that *damned*, in this case, indicates endless misery, although it is the word chiefly relied on by many, in proof that such misery awaits the ungodly. Eating, or refraining, in itself considered, was neither meritorious nor sinful; but it took its moral character from the state of mind in the actor. He who ate, with a full persuasion of its lawfulness, had the approbation of his own conscience, and was happy; but he who ate, believing it to be unlawful, or doubting its lawfulness, was condemned by his own conscience, and endured remorse and anguish. The act was the same; yet it was justifiable in the one, and sinful in the other, because one believed it to be right, while the other had not such belief. ¶ *For whatsoever is not of faith is sin.* This is the general principle which underlies this part of

CHAPTER XV.

WE then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the

the apostle's argument. It is always sinful to do what one does not believe to be right. This passage has been abused, by representing it to teach that, without faith in Christ, all the actions of men are necessarily sinful. No recent commentator of note, however, so interprets it. On the contrary, *Macknight*, *Stuart*, and many others, concur substantially in the foregoing interpretation.

CHAPTER XV.

1. *We then that are strong.* The division of chapters here is unfortunate, inasmuch as there is no change of subject. The *strong* are those who had no scruples concerning the Levitical distinctions mentioned in ch. xiv. ¶ *Ought to bear.* To bear with; to be patient with; to tolerate; to regard with decent respect. ¶ *The infirmities of the weak.* The lack of clear faith, the scruples of the Jewish converts, who are not wholly weaned from the law. See ch. xiv. 1, 2. ¶ *And not to please ourselves.* Not to insist on the public and constant use of our liberty, to the offence and injury of our weaker brethren; not to insist on gratifying ourselves, or on "having our own way," in all things; but rather to defer somewhat to the opinions of others, for the sake of harmony and mutual edification. This is said with special reference to the matter of meats, and drinks, and days, discussed in the preceding chapter; but the principle is equally applicable to all Christian intercourse. The reasons are obvious: (1.) No concert of action could otherwise exist. No two Christians think precisely alike in all things; and if no one would yield anything to another, either in opinion or practice, instead of the harmony which should distinguish the Christian church, constant discord and mutual crimination would ensue. One would be condemned for believing or doing too much; another, for believing or doing too little. It is only by mutual forbearance, as to minor differences, that those who agree in the essentials

weak, and not to please ourselves.

2 Let every one of us please his neighbor for his good to edification.

3 For even Christ pleased not

of Christianity can act together harmoniously, or even dwell together in peace. (2.) The duty of forbearance is even more imperative on the strong than on the weak. They can more easily appreciate and overlook the scruples of the weak, than the weak can comprehend their breadth of vision and strength of faith. Moreover, (3) the apostle assigns a specific reason, in the verses immediately preceding, from which he concludes that the strong ought, *therefore*, to bear the infirmities of the weak; namely, that the strong might forbear the full exercise of their liberty without offence, and enjoy the testimony of good consciences while they conformed to the custom of the weak; but it would be sinful for the weak to conform to the custom of the strong, for "whatsoever is not of faith is sin." In short, the strong believed themselves at liberty to eat or to refrain, and might do either without moral offence; the weak believed themselves bound to refrain, and were condemned by their own consciences if they ate. It is to be observed, however, that, while the apostle was willing, in practice, to regard the scruples of such as were not fully enlightened, he boldly maintained the principle of Christian liberty, and spurned every attempt on the part of others to impose shackles on him, or on other Christians. He repeatedly declares, in the preceding chapter and elsewhere, that the eating of meats without distinction is lawful, notwithstanding the scruples of the weak. See also 1 Cor. x. 29, 30; Gal. ii. 3—5, 11—18. He would yield everything which he could conscientiously for the sake of harmony; but he would not abate one hair's breadth of principle, of truth, of Christian liberty, on compulsion.

2. *Let every one of us please his neighbor.* That is, by exercising forbearance towards his infirmities, respecting his scruples, and conforming to his wishes, so far as we may do so with a good conscience. ¶ *For his good to edification.* We are by no means to conform to the wishes of others, to their own harm;

himself; but, as it is written, *The reproaches of them that reproached thee fell on me.*

4 For, whatsoever things were

but, if we believe our compliance, in matters not essential, will benefit others, will confirm and increase their faith, strengthen their virtuous inclinations, and cement the bond of fellowship which binds them to us, so that we may exercise an influence over them for good, then by all lawful means we should strive to please them.

3. *For even Christ pleased not himself.* The example of the Master is urged for the imitation of his disciples. The language, however, is not to be understood literally; for undoubtedly our Lord so conducted, in all things, as to be happy in the testimony of his own conscience; and he expressly declares that he delighted in obedience to the divine will, even in those things which occasioned physical weariness or distress. John iv. 34. See also Heb. xii. 2. The meaning is understood by some to be, that our Lord, while on earth, did not insist that all men should at once conform to what he knew to be right and proper; as, for example, that they should disregard the distinctions of the Levitical law, which was abrogated by his more perfect law; but he even conformed to their opinions, in matters of an indifferent nature, so as not unnecessarily to shock their prejudices, or alienate their hearts. Others, with perhaps more propriety, interpret the passage in a more general sense, as indicating that our Lord did not seek personal indulgences and gratifications, but sought rather the benefit of mankind, even though he thus subjected himself to inconvenience and reproach. In either case, the general idea is, that he willingly made personal sacrifices in order to benefit others. And in this respect his example is fitly urged by the apostle to enforce the duty of mutual forbearance. ¶ *As it is written.* See Ps. lxxix. 9. ¶ *The reproaches, &c.* "The general sentiment is here accommodated to a particular case; that is, the same thing which this sentiment declares was, in fact, exemplified in the treatment which Christ received. In other words, Christ suffered reproaches, rather than desist from his

written aforetime, were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope.

beneficence toward others; which is the sentiment of the passage quoted." — *Stuart*.

4. *For whatsoever things were written aforetime.* The connection of this verse with the preceding is not very clear. It is generally regarded as parenthetical. It would seem that the apostle was struck with the appositeness of his quotation from the Psalms, and was led to remark that what was said by holy men of old was not confined by private interpretation to the particular subjects contemplated by them, but was for the consolation of their successors also. 2 Pet. i. 19—21. Or he may have designed to admonish his Gentile brethren that, although the Scriptures were first imparted to the Jews, all had a common interest in them; and that the Gentile might derive as much consolation from them as the Jew. ¶ *Were written for our learning.* Or, for our instruction. We are not to understand that they were written for this purpose exclusively, but for this among others. They were the common inheritance of all mankind. ¶ *That we through patience, &c.* The idea seems to be this: That, by contemplating the patience exhibited by the ancient saints under the trials which they encountered, and the consolation and hope which crowned their virtuous endeavors, we might be stimulated to exercise similar patience. See ch. v. 3—5. ¶ *Comfort.* Some render this word *admonition*. If this be the proper translation, it may be understood to refer to those precepts which inculcate patience under trials. ¶ *Might have hope.* See note on ver. 13. The natural result of patience, or of patient continuance in well-doing, even amidst trials and discouragements, is a "hope that maketh not ashamed." Ch. v. 3—5.

5. *Now the God of patience and consolation.* The Scriptures assert that God is long-suffering and patient, in regard to the imperfections of his children. But probably the apostle does not use the phrase here in this sense, as if he would propose the example of our heavenly Father for our imitation. He

5 Now the God of patience and consolation grant you to be like-minded one towards another according to Christ Jesus:

rather recognizes God as the giver of patience and consolation to his children, through the gracious influence of his spirit. "Having in the preceding verse mentioned 'the patience and consolation of the Scriptures,' he in this calls God 'the God of patience and consolation, to show that the patience and consolation of the saints proceeded from God. In like manner, having in ver. 12 said 'in him shall the Gentiles hope,' he calls God, ver. 13, 'the God of hope,' to show that the hope which the Gentiles entertained of salvation proceeded from God. So also, ver. 33, 'the God of peace;' and elsewhere, 'the God of glory,' 'the God of order,' &c." — *MacKnight*. ¶ *Grant you to be like-minded, &c.* "To be of one mind together." — *Conybeare*. To be at peace and in harmony with each other. This is the general theme of the whole preceding chapter, and of the commencement of this; and the mutual forbearance, so earnestly inculcated, naturally tends to this result. ¶ *According to Christ Jesus.* Whether we understand this to indicate the person of our Lord, or his gospel, the meaning is substantially the same. He was a man of peace. He had no contention with his enemies. Even when administering his sharpest rebukes, he manifested a spirit of benevolence, and spake the truth to them in love. Comp. Matt. xxiii. 37 with the other portions of the same chapter. See also Luke xix. 41—48. "When he was reviled, he reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously." 1 Pet. ii. 23. And in his utmost agony, as he was about expiring on the cross, he uttered no malediction, he manifested no enmity, but prayed for his murderers, saying, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." Luke xxiii. 34. His gospel breathes the same spirit of peace and good-will. The grand principle, which underlies all its precepts, is supreme love to God, and universal love to men. No duty is required of us, either toward God or toward men, which is not the legitimate

6 That ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

fruit of such love. And it surely requires no argument to prove that where such love truly exists there must be mutual forbearance and harmony. Impatience and contention result from selfishness, from consulting our personal gratification, without regard to the desires and feelings of others. If we would copy the example of our Master, or yield full obedience to the spirit of his precepts, we should willingly practise self-denial and forbearance, for the sake of general harmony and peace.

6. *That ye may with one mind.* Unitedly, in heart as well as in voice. "With one accord," as in Acts i. 14; ii. 1; iv. 24. Without any contentions or heart-burnings, in respect to ceremonial observances, or other differences of minor importance; but with hearts knit together by love, and with a common desire and purpose. ¶ *And one mouth.* Reference is probably had here to their public acts of worship; that their prayers should ascend as the joint sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving on the part of all. Or, if we suppose the apostle to refer to their ordinary intercourse with each other, and with the world, rather than the exercises of public worship, the meaning will be not unlike that of 1 Cor. i. 10: "Now, I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you," &c. They should manifest the genuineness of their Christian affection, by speaking pleasantly to each other, and favorably of each other. ¶ *Glorify God.* God is glorified or honored among men when they are made holy and happy under the influence of his spirit. When the purifying and consoling nature of the gospel is manifested in the life and conversation of believers, the kindness of the Father is exhibited so as to excite the reverence and affection of all who witness such gracious fruits. See Matt. v. 16. Thus, in the church at Rome, where it was known that differences of opinion existed concerning ceremonial observances, if the brethren exercised mutual forbearance, and preserved the unity of spirit in the bonds of peace,

7 Wherefore receive ye one another, as Christ also received us, to the glory of God.

they gave visible evidence that the love inculcated by the gospel dwelt in their hearts, and thus glorified or honored God. ¶ *Even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.* See note on ver. 5. As the apostle styles God, in ver. 5, "the God of patience and consolation," apparently because he had just been speaking of the patience and consolation of the saints, so here he styles him especially "the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ," apparently because, in the previous verse, he had exhorted the brethren to live in peace and harmony "according to Christ Jesus." From the vast variety of descriptive epithets applicable to God, he judiciously selects that which is most in accordance with the subject under immediate consideration. Moreover, "the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" may be considered as peculiarly honored by whatever tends to the honor of his Son, and of the gospel communicated through him.

7. *Wherefore.* For the reasons already assigned; because they had the example of Christ, ver. 3, and of the ancient saints, ver. 4; and because their compliance would tend to the honor of God, ver. 6. ¶ *Receive ye one another.* Some commentators suppose the apostle here exhorts his brethren to receive each other into church fellowship, notwithstanding their differences of opinion. But, for aught which appears to the contrary, the brethren at Rome were united in one church; and the apostle's great desire was that they should dwell in peace together; that they should exercise mutual forbearance, and receive and treat each other as Christian friends. To *receive one another* here seems equivalent to *pleasing each other*, ver. 2, being *like-minded*, ver. 5, and of *one mind*, ver. 6. ¶ *As Christ also received us.* Or, as Christ hath received you, which is the rendering of what most critics regard as the true original. Christ did not reject any of his disciples, for erroneous opinions on minor matters, if their hearts were really devoted to him. He knew that, notwithstanding all his instructions, his chosen apostles did not believe he would literally die and rise again from the dead; and that

8 Now I say that Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision

they did not correctly appreciate the character of his spiritual kingdom ; but that, on the contrary, they entertained the common Jewish opinion that the Messiah would live forever on the earth, and would establish an earthly kingdom, which should have universal dominion. See note at the end of Matt., ch. xxviii. Yet he was patient and forbearing, in regard to their dulness of apprehension, and their inability to understand the truth taught by him, even though their mistakes were much more vital than any opinions concerning ceremonial observances. He knew the sincerity of their hearts, their true affection to him, their fervent devotion to his welfare, their faith in him as the promised Messiah ; and he graciously received them as *friends* (John xv. 15), and treated them with the utmost kindness. He had also, by the influence of his spirit, given like assurance of friendship to the Gentiles, notwithstanding their knowledge of his character and gospel was far from being perfectly accurate. As he had thus received all who trusted in him as friends, notwithstanding their several weaknesses and imperfections, so also should they receive each other in the bonds of fraternal affection, inasmuch as they trusted in the same Saviour, through faith in the same gospel, notwithstanding some were weaker than others, and less fully acquainted with the true character of Christian liberty. ¶ *To the glory of God.* If this mean, as it may, that the brethren ought to imitate the conduct of their Master, in receiving each other kindly, to *the glory of God*, then the sentiment is similar to ver. 5, 6. Or if, as is perhaps more probable, the meaning be that Christ received his disciples to *the glory of God*, and that they ought therefore to receive each other, then the sentiment is, that God was glorified in the mission and conduct of his Son ; and he was so glorified, because his character was thus exhibited in a most lovely light, worthy of the admiration and praise of his children. Jesus came, in the name of his Father, to bless mankind ; in his Father's name, he manifested the most fervent desire for their spiritual good, and was merciful not only to their unrighteousness,

but to their prejudices and mistakes ; and thus was the Father glorified.

8. *Now I say.* The apostle here introduces a new argument, to enforce his exhortation to mutual forbearance and friendship ; new, because now first introduced for this specific purpose, but not otherwise, for the fact had been distinctly asserted, for another purpose, in the former part of this epistle. The difference in regard to ceremonial observances, which threatened to disturb or destroy the harmony of the brethren at Rome, existed principally between the Jewish converts, on the one hand, and the Gentiles, on the other. The apostle, having urged other inducements to forbearance and harmony, now reminds his brethren, not merely that they are servants of one Master, and bound to imitate his spirit and to obey his precepts, but that their Master regards both classes with equal affection ; that his labor was performed, and his sufferings were endured, not for the exclusive benefit of either, nor because he loved either better than the other. The argument is, that as Christ entertained equal affection for Jews and Gentiles, and gave himself equally for both, notwithstanding all the differences which may have existed in their characters and opinions, they ought also to cherish mutual affection, and to cultivate a spirit of harmony and peace, overlooking all such minor distinctions. ¶ *That Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision.* The Jews, styled the circumcision, were embraced in the mission of Christ. Indeed, he preached personally to none other ; and during his sojourn on the earth he required his apostles to preach only "to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." Matt. x. 5, 6. It was not until after his resurrection, when he was about to ascend to the Father, that he enlarged their commission, and commanded them to "teach all nations," and "preach the gospel to every creature." Matt. xxviii. 19 ; Mark xvi. 15. To the Jews, first of all, he proclaimed the loving-kindness of God, and his purpose to save mankind from their sins. In their chief city he offered up his life, as the highest possible proof that his love for them was sincere. And by his resur-

for the truth of God, to confirm the promises *made* unto the fathers :

rection life and immortality were first brought to light among them. "By thus admitting that the Messiah was the minister of the circumcision, the apostle conceded all that the Jew could ask, that he was to be peculiarly *their* Messiah."—*Barnes*. He did this, and more ; he admonished the Gentiles that the Jews were not to be *despised* for their weakness (ch. xiv. 3), nor held in contempt for the deficiency of their knowledge ; for, notwithstanding these infirmities, the Lord Jesus was truly their Messiah, and had manifested the sincerity of his love toward them, by his labors, his sufferings, and his death. If the Lord admitted them to the enjoyment of mutual friendship, it surely did not become their fellow-disciples to treat them with coldness or contempt. ¶ *For the truth of God.* For the manifestation of the truth of God. The ancient prophecies pointed to Judea as the scene of the Messiah's labors ; and his mission was in accordance with the prediction. Or, if *truth* be taken in its larger sense, we may understand that the proclamation of the gospel first to the Jews was a part of the general scheme of divine grace, which had been disclosed in the ancient promises referred to in the succeeding words. That the whole scheme might be orderly developed, according to the original purpose, it was necessary that the Jews should precede the Gentiles in receiving the heavenly message. ¶ *To confirm the promises made unto the fathers.* Reference, of course, is had to the promises respecting the Messiah, which were, briefly, that in the promised seed, which is Christ, all the nations, families, and kindreds, of the earth should be blessed. See Acts iii. 25, 26 ; Gal. iii. 8, 16, 17. The beloved apostle briefly describes the consummation of all these promises, saying, "We have seen and do testify, that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world." 1 John iv. 14. In this manner did Jesus become "a minister of the circumcision, — to confirm the promises made unto the fathers." He came at the appointed time, and at the appointed place, and taught, and labored, and died, and rose again, that men might

9 And that the Gentiles might glorify God for *his* mercy ; as it is

have assurance of that divine grace which superabounds over all sin, and will secure eternal spiritual life to the whole human family. Ch. v. 20, 21 ; vi. 23. The gospel was thus first offered to the Jews, and Jesus was manifested as their Messiah. This precedence granted to the Jews, whatever other object it might have had, plainly demonstrates that they were included as joint-heirs of the promise, and therefore entitled to the Christian regard of their Gentile brethren ; and for this practical effect the apostle here introduces the fact. In the words immediately following, he shows that the obligation is reciprocal on the part of the Jews ; for they are not the only favored people, nor are they entitled to the exclusive benefit of the promise. Its blessings extend equally to the Gentiles. "Is he the God of the Jews only ? is he not also of the Gentiles ? Yes, of the Gentiles also." Ch. iii. 29. So that, as God has extended his mercy to the Gentiles, notwithstanding their former idolatry, and has converted them to the faith of the gospel, "purifying their hearts by faith," Acts xv. 9, they were surely entitled to the Christian regard of their Jewish brethren, even though they conformed not to the ritual observances of the Levitical law. The common interest of all in the great salvation, and their common participation in the fruit of divine love, the apostle urges as an inducement to mutual forbearance, and love, and harmony.

9. *And that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy.* "The Gentiles, as well as the Jews, are to be brought into the church, that God may be all and in all, and thus be glorified by all men." — *Stuart*. The Gentiles have equal cause with the Jews to *glorify God for his mercy*, because that mercy is not confined to any particular family or race, but extends to all the families, kindreds, and nations, of the earth. All are created by the same power, and all are objects of the same love. The Father of mankind is no respecter of persons ; but, though he ordain temporary distinctions among men or nations, he desires the general good of all, and has secured that good by his

written, For this cause I will confess to thee among the Gentiles, and sing unto thy name.

10 And again he saith, Rejoice, ye Gentiles, with his people.

own eternal "purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began." 2 Tim. i. 9. ¶ *As it is written.* That the Gentiles might not despise the Jews, and stand aloof from them, on account of their scrupulous regard to ceremonies, the apostle assured them, ver. 8, that Jesus was a "minister of the circumcision;" see the note. So here, that the Jews might not condemn the Gentiles, and stand aloof from them, on account of their disregard of the Mosaic law, the apostle assures them that the Gentiles are heirs of the promises as truly and effectually as themselves; and, as his custom was when addressing Jews, he enforces the truth by quotations from their own prophets, in whom they implicitly trusted. The place here cited is Ps. xviii. 49. "The design of it is to show that the Gentiles, as well as the people of Israel, would have the blessings of the gospel proffered to them, and be brought to glorify God."—*Stuart.* ¶ *I will confess to thee,* &c. Otherwise translated, "I will acknowledge thee among the Gentiles," *Conybeare*; and, "I will celebrate thy praise among the Gentiles."—*Stuart.* The idea intended to be conveyed by the apostle is, that God should be honored and praised among the Gentiles; in other words, that the Gentiles should honor and praise God. This of course implies that the divine character should be so exhibited to them that praise should spontaneously ascend from their hearts. But spontaneous praise can be offered only by those who feel themselves personally interested in the providences of God, and who regard him as their friend and benefactor. To say, then, that the Gentiles shall honor and praise God, is to say that they shall be turned away from their ungodliness, that they shall approve the character of God, and shall confidently rely on his mercy.

10. *And again he saith.* See Deut. xxxii. 43. ¶ *Rejoice, ye Gentiles, with his people.* What can this mean, in this connection, less than that they should rejoice in the hope of the gospel? They

11 And again, Praise the Lord, all ye Gentiles; and laud him, all ye people.

12 And again Esaias saith, There shall be a root of Jesse, and

should so perceive and understand the divine character, that they should be constrained to rejoice in the Father as the God of their salvation. They should realize that they were comprehended among *his people*, and should rejoice in hope of the promised inheritance.

11. *And again, Praise the Lord, &c.* Ps. cxvii. 1. The meaning of this passage is similar to that of the words cited in the preceding verse. The apostle accumulates testimony, as in ch. ix., for the purpose of showing that the truth announced by him was in accordance with the general current of prophecy; that its proof rested not on a single testimony, which might be misunderstood; but that God's holy prophets had frequently spoken of the period when "the middle wall of partition" between Jews and Gentiles should be "broken down," and the Gentiles be admitted to the enjoyment of spiritual blessings on earth, as well as in heaven. The Psalm from which the apostle quotes, though the shortest, is one of the most encouraging and animating in the whole Bible. It distinctly proclaims the universal benevolence of God, and exhorts all men to praise him, because his mercy extends to all: "O praise the Lord, all ye nations; praise him, all ye people; for his merciful kindness is great towards us; and the truth of the Lord endureth forever. Praise ye the Lord." The merciful kindness of the Lord, being abundant to all his children, will surely preserve them from mortal harm. He showers down blessings continually on both Jew and Gentile; and his truth, which he pledged in his ancient promise, to bless them all in the promised seed, by "turning away every one from his iniquities," Acts iii. 25, 26, shall never fail, but it "endureth forever." What stronger inducement could be offered, that men should praise the Lord, and give thanks unto him, for his abundant benefactions?

12. *And again Esaias saith.* See Isa. xi. 10. This is a still further accumu-

he that shall rise to reign over the Gentiles; in him shall the Gentiles trust.

lation of testimony, similar in character to the preceding. ¶ *There shall be a root of Jesse, &c.* "This clause in the Hebrew runs thus: 'There shall be the root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people.' But the apostle hath adopted the LXX. translation, because it represents the prophet's meaning with sufficient exactness. For as soldiers, in marching and fighting, follow the standard of their prince, a *standard* may be put metonymically for a *prince* or *ruler*. The meaning of the prophecy is, 'At the proper time the root of Jesse shall revive, and he who standeth up to rule the Gentiles shall spring from it.' In allusion to this prophecy our Lord calls himself, Rev. v. 5, 'the root of David;' and, Rev. xxii. 16, 'the root and offspring of David,' to signify that he is the life and strength of the family of David, as well as its offspring; that family being raised and preserved for the sole purpose of giving birth to the Messiah." — *Macknight*. ¶ *In him shall the Gentiles trust.* Rather, in him shall the Gentiles *hope*; for so should the word be translated. The meaning, to be sure, is not essentially changed by substituting *hope* for *trust*; because no one can cherish reasonable hope in a being whom he cannot confidently trust, nor can he repose confident trust in a being whose character does not justify his hope for all needed assistance, defence, and blessing. But, by preserving the same similarity of terms which the apostle used, it is more apparent why he adopts the phrase, "the God of hope," in the succeeding verse. See note on ver. 5. But, whichever word is used, the apostle plainly teaches the important truth that the Gentiles are embraced in the great scheme of salvation, which our Lord came to develop and to execute in his Father's name. In this "root of Jesse," this "son of David," this "minister of the circumcision," the Gentiles might confidently *trust* as their Saviour, and might as confidently *hope* to obtain all needed spiritual blessings here, and perfect salvation hereafter; for he came not for the exclusive benefit of

13 Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope,

the Jews, but ~~the~~ heathen also were given unto him for his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession. Ps. ii. 8. He loved all; he labored for all; he tasted death for all, Heb. ii. 9; and "he shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied," Isa. liii. 11. "The Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world," 1 John iv. 14; and he performed not the Lord's work negligently, but was able to appeal to the Father: "I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do." John xvii. 4. Not that the perfect salvation of the world was then, or is even now, a blessing in actual enjoyment; but the blessing was secured, placed beyond possibility of failure; the process was commenced, whose result was as certain as the purpose of God is unchanging, and his truth everlasting. What is *certain* of accomplishment may properly be styled finished. For a similar form of speech see Heb. ii. 8, 9.

13. *Now the God of hope.* This may be understood as referring specially to the Gentiles, who were authorized by the ancient promises to *hope* in Christ; or generally to all the believers at Rome, who had an equal interest in Christ and in his gospel. ¶ *Fill you with all joy and peace in believing.* "May that God, who is the author of all Christian hope, make your joy and peace, which result from faith in Christ, greatly to abound." — *Stuart*. "If they were filled with this, there would be no strife and contention." — *Barnes*. That the apostle has reference to mutual forbearance and harmony among believers, there can be no reasonable doubt; inasmuch as this is the proper conclusion of his exhortation which commences ch. xiv. 1. His repeated assurances, that both Jews and Gentiles are equally the objects of divine love, and joint-heirs of the blessings of the gospel, all tend to this point, that they should live in harmony together. But, I apprehend, this was not the whole object of the apostle. He not only desired that his brethren should dwell in peace with each other, but that their inward peace of mind and their joy

through the power of the Holy Ghost.

should be so complete that their hope might be abundantly excited and increased. Their joy and peace resulted from their faith; the apostle desired that they might be filled with joy and peace *in believing*. Believing what? The gospel, unquestionably, with which the apostle declared that the ancient promises were in agreement. The question then presses for solution, what interpretation of the gospel has the most direct tendency to fill the believer's heart with joy and peace? That which represents its blessings as designed for all men, and certain of universal bestowment? or that which represents that some are to be forever excluded from their enjoyment? We are required by our Lord to love all men, as we love ourselves; and we are assured that such love, comprehending even our enemies, makes us to resemble, in spirit, our heavenly Father. Matt. v. 43—48. It will not be denied that love becomes more perfect and universal in the same proportion that men become more holy and Godlike. If such love fill the heart, can anything short of the ultimate good of all who are thus beloved give perfect joy and peace to the believer? Can he rejoice, can he even refrain from grief, while he believes that any whom he loves as he loves himself shall endure endless misery? The apostle asserts that prayers and supplications, on behalf of all men, are "good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth." 1 Tim. ii. 1—4. Every true and sincere Christian offers such prayers. As his heart warms with the spirit of divine love, his desires for the happiness of his brethren expand, and he pours out his soul to God in supplications that all may be embraced in the arms of his grace, and be made partakers of everlasting salvation. While in such a frame of spirit,—and it will not be denied that it is a truly Christian spirit,—is it credible that he can rejoice in the belief that some, for whom he thus prays, are to be forever excluded from the mercy of God? No true Christian can rejoice in such a belief; nor can any man, in whose heart dwells

such love to God and love to men as the gospel requires. But, while one believes the grace of God to be universal and impartial, while he believes that God will have mercy on all his children, that he will save all from their sins and make them perfectly holy and happy, his joy and peace will be precisely in proportion to his love for them. The more ardently he loves them, and desires their welfare, the more abundantly will he rejoice in believing that they shall obtain everlasting salvation, and the more perfect and satisfactory will be his peace of mind. And this is what the apostle desired his brethren might experience: fulness of joy and peace in believing. It would be a profitable exercise for every Christian, whose faith does not embrace the salvation of all, to question his own heart faithfully, whether he enjoys the fulness of the blessing invoked by the apostle; whether he rejoices in anticipation that some shall never be saved; whether his joy would not be increased, if he could believe that all shall finally receive the blessing; and he should not forget to inquire whether he truly and fully obeys the second great commandment, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. Matt. xxii. 36—40. ¶ *That ye may abound in hope.* That your hope may be more and more steadfast and unwavering. "So that, having much joy and peace in believing, you may also have a lively Christian expectation of future glory." — *Stuart*. Hope is a combination of desire and expectation. The more firm one's faith, the more confident will be his expectation; and the more cheering and more joyful one's faith, the more ardent will be his desire. Both are necessary to constitute hope. A man may desire what he despairs of obtaining; he may expect what he dreads rather than desires; but neither of these is hope. He hopes only for what he both expects and desires. Substantially the same questions return. What interpretation of the gospel inspires the most confident and cheerful hope of its entire consummation? — that which extends its blessings to all men, or that which excludes a portion from their enjoyment? A Christian. Doubt-

14 And I myself also am per-
suaded of you, my brethren, that

less, may confidently believe that some of his fellow-men will never be saved; he may feel certain that some will remain sinful and miserable to all eternity. But will he appeal to the searcher of hearts, and say that he sincerely *hopes* for this result?—that he is filled with joy and peace in believing and anticipating the endless wretchedness of his brethren, and ardently hopes to witness it hereafter? There may be such *men* in the world, but can there be such *Christians*? On the contrary, believing that all are constituted heirs of the heavenly blessing; that all shall be turned away from ungodliness and saved from their sins; that all shall bow the knee in the name of Jesus, and confess him to be Lord to the glory of God the Father, Phil. ii. 10, 11; that none shall die any more, but that all shall be equal to the angels, and shall be the children of God, being the children of the resurrection, Luke xx. 36; believing that such is both the letter and the spirit of the gospel, the Christian, under *the power of the Holy Ghost*, may both confidently and joyfully *hope* for the full consummation of the divine purpose. His hope will abound through his joy and peace in believing. Or, if we regard *hope*, in its more selfish aspect, as relating to one's personal security and welfare, the result is similar. So long as a Christian believes that salvation is of grace, not of works; that all men are sinners, and that none has power to save himself; that all are equally dependent on God for the blessing, and that so many as receive it must receive it as a free unpurchased gift; if he also believe that any shall be excluded from mercy, what satisfactory reason can he assign, why it should not be himself as well as any other? If he will deal faithfully with his own heart, he must confess, either that he does not exercise perfect faith in what he admits to be the doctrine of the gospel, or that his hope of personal salvation is not steadfast and unwavering. He must believe his own works entitle him to this distinction, and thus discredit the doctrine of salvation by grace alone; or, he must believe that God makes such distinction without regard to human desert, and

thus doubt or deny the divine impartiality; or he cannot find a firm foundation for hope. But if he believe, with all the heart, that God's love is impartial and universal, and that it will make all temporary distinctions and sufferings to result in the final and perfect happiness of all his children, he will not doubt that his own welfare is secure, but may steadfastly hope for everlasting salvation. He may then understand the force of the apostle's language, that joy and peace in believing, fulness of satisfaction and happiness in the prospect unfolded by the gospel, tends to the abundant increase of hope. ¶ *Through the power of the Holy Ghost.* Under the influence of the divine spirit, which excites love towards others and a desire for their happiness, a love of holiness and a desire for its personal enjoyment; and which also enables us to exercise faith in the gospel, to rejoice in its promises, and to hope for their perfect fulfilment. "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him." John vi. 44. "As many as are led by the spirit of God, they are the sons of God." Rom. viii. 14.

14. "This apology for writing to a church with which the apostle was not acquainted personally was the more necessary, that in this letter he had opposed some of their strongest prejudices, and had rebuked them for certain irregularities in their conduct. But he was entitled to instruct and reprove them, by virtue of his apostolic office, ver. 15. The truth of which he proved by his success in converting the Gentiles, ver. 16, 17, and by the miracles he had wrought among them, and by the gifts of the spirit he had communicated to his converts in all the Gentile countries, from Jerusalem round about, as far as Illyricum."—*Macknight.* ¶ *And I myself also am persuaded.* I believe; I am confident. The apostle had no personal acquaintance with the brethren at Rome, with a few exceptions; yet he had heard a good report of them, ch. i. 8, 12, and believed them worthy of the commendation which follows. ¶ *My brethren.* He acknowledges both Jews and Gentiles to be his brethren in the Lord. He recognizes

ye also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another.

15 Nevertheless, brethren, I

no distinction between them ; as he exhorts them to live in harmony with each other, so he intimates that they are held by him in equal esteem and affection. ¶ *That ye also are full of goodness.* "Full of kindness."—*Stuart.* Goodness here denotes, not so much moral purity or holiness in general, as that friendly, kindly, affectionate spirit, which would prompt to harmony and peace. The apostle had earnestly exhorted them to cultivate such harmony, and not to permit it to be disturbed by any difference in regard to ritual observances, or other minor matters. He now expresses his confidence that they are already disposed to act agreeably to his exhortation ; nevertheless he had put them in mind of their duty, ver. 15, because it pertained to his office, as an apostle, to do so. ¶ *Filled with all knowledge.* Well acquainted with the doctrines of the gospel. This has reference to the former part of his epistle, in which the general system of divine grace, revealed in the gospel, and resulting in the salvation of men from sin, is largely discussed. Of these important things he had also put them in mind, in the discharge of his apostolic duty, notwithstanding his belief that they were already well instructed. ¶ *Able also to admonish one another.* "The meaning is, I am persuaded that ye possess in abundance such Christian knowledge, that is, such a knowledge of Christian truths and principles, that ye will be able to give such advice and warning as you may mutually need."—*Stuart.* Thus, in regard both to Christian faith and Christian conduct, the apostle expresses his confidence that his brethren were not deficient ; he had not instructed them because he believed them to be very ignorant, nor exhorted them because he believed them to be disinclined to live in harmony. But he had done both, in the performance of an official duty, for the purpose of putting them in mind, or, as the apostle Peter expresses it, stirring up their pure minds by way of remembrance. 2 Pet. iii. 1.

15. *Nevertheless.* Notwithstanding

have written the more boldly unto you in some sort, as putting you in mind, because of the grace that is given to me of God,

my good opinion of your gifts and graces, of your Christian knowledge and kindly dispositions. ¶ *I have written the more boldly unto you.* I have written more freely and more fully than might have been expected of a stranger, especially of one whose general opinion of your character and condition is so favorable, for the reasons which follow. ¶ *In some sort.* Or, in part. Some suppose, with *Whitby*, that the apostle indicates a part of the church, to wit, the Gentiles, to whom he had written the more boldly because he was "the minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles." Others, with *Stuart*, understand him to refer to certain parts of his epistle ; as if he had said, I have written the more boldly in regard to certain doctrines and duties. Others adopt the interpretation of *Grotius* : "That is, somewhat more boldly." This last appears to be the most natural interpretation, and is probably the true one. ¶ *As putting you in mind.* See note on ver. 14. It was no unusual thing for the apostles to remind their brethren of things already well known. See ch. vii. 1 ; 1 Cor. xv. 1 ; 2 Cor. i. 13 ; Gal. iv. 13—16 ; 2 Pet. i. 12, 13 ; 1 John ii. 14 ; 2 John 5. The mind cannot remain steadily and permanently fixed on any one subject, or class of subjects, however important. Many things, both temporal and spiritual, demand attention. The danger is, that the less important, even the comparatively trivial and frivolous, will occupy the mind in an improper degree, to the exclusion of those of the highest moment. It is profitable, therefore, to be reminded frequently and forcibly of those great truths which belong to our spiritual growth and peace. Moreover, instruction may be thus conveyed in a most acceptable manner. A man listens much more willingly when proper credit is allowed him for the degree of knowledge he has already attained. If all Christian teachers would imitate the modesty and genuine good manners of the apostle, they would reap more abundant fruit of their labors. ¶ *Because.* The apos-

16 That I should be the minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles,

the now assigns the reason for his writing somewhat more boldly than he would otherwise have judged expedient, or even proper. ¶ *Of the grace that is given to me of God.* Namely, the grace of apostleship. See note on ch. i. 5. Paul was called to the apostleship in such a remarkable manner, that he could not doubt the genuineness of his call, nor the truth of the gospel committed to him. Acts xxvi. 12—20; Gal. i. 11, 12. Being thus divinely appointed, and divinely instructed, as an apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ, he regarded himself as “a debtor both to the Greeks and to the Barbarians; both to the wise and to the unwise.” Ch. i. 14. Whenever he could promote the cause of the gospel, by proclaiming it to those who had not before heard it, or by enforcing its doctrines, and precepts, and promises, on the minds and hearts of believers, he felt bound to be diligent in his Master’s service. For this reason he had addressed his brethren at Rome; and he wrote the more boldly, both because it was his duty to do so, and because he was empowered to speak with more authority than private Christians could speak to each other.

16. *That I should be the minister of Jesus Christ.* The word used here is different from that which is ordinarily translated *minister*. It “denotes one who performs some public office for the people, especially of the sacred kind. This sense it hath here; for it is added *ἰερωσύνην* (*ierourgounta*), *ministering* as a priest. It is also applied to rulers. ‘They are public ministers of God.’ Rom. xiii. 6.”—*Macknight*. The word well expresses apostleship, embracing the duty of ministering in holy things, that is, proclaiming to men the character and purposes of God, and the duty and destiny of men, as revealed in the gospel; and also authority to act in the Master’s name, in teaching, exhorting, reproving, consoling, and aught else which might serve to establish his kingdom in the hearts of men. ¶ *To the Gentiles.* Though Paul was a Jew, he was specially commissioned as an apostle to the Gentiles; not, indeed, exclusively to them, for it was his uniform custom,

ministering the gospel of God, that the offering up of the Gentiles

in every city, to preach first to the Jews, and afterwards to the Gentiles. See Acts xiii. 46; xviii. 5, 6, and the whole history of his ministry. But it was his principal duty to proclaim the gospel to the Gentiles. Acts ix. 15; xiii. 1—4; xxii. 21; xxvi. 16—18; Gal. ii. 7—9. Hence the peculiar propriety of his writing *boldly* to the church at Rome, composed, as it was, in great part, of Gentiles. ¶ *Ministering the gospel of God.* The word here rendered *ministering* occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. It is similar in character to that which is translated *minister* in the former clause. It seems to indicate that the apostle’s duties among the Gentiles bore a certain resemblance to that which was appropriate to the priests under the law. The legal phraseology continues through the verse, as will be seen. The law of rites and ceremonies had indeed been superseded by the more perfect rule of the gospel; and the sacrifices and offerings, prescribed by the law, “that could not make him that did the service perfect, as pertaining to the conscience” (Heb. ix. 9), were to be succeeded by a pure spiritual worship, by the offering of the heart itself, with its best affections. John iv. 23, 24. Nevertheless, there were certain points of similarity between the duty of a priest, under the law, and that of an apostle, under the gospel. ¶ *That the offering up of the Gentiles.* The offerings of the Gentiles; the sacrifices offered by the Gentiles. Most commentators understand that the Gentiles were themselves offered up, as the phrase, in its English form, might seem to indicate; and this offering they suppose was made by the apostle. With due deference to the opinions of others, I venture to interpret differently. There is a striking similarity between this verse and ch. xii. 1; in which the apostle beseeches his brethren, by the mercies of God, to offer themselves (not to permit another to offer them, nor to submit to be offered by a third party, but to offer themselves) to God, a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable. So, here, he represents it as an object of his ministry to aid the Gentiles in offering such a sacrifice. ¶

might be acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy Ghost.

was the duty of the Jewish priest to see that the sacrifices offered under the law, whether of animals, or fruits of the earth, or aught else, were perfect in their kind. So it was the duty of the apostle to use all diligence to secure the perfectness of the living sacrifice offered by the Gentiles, to wit, the sacrifice of themselves. To this end, he had used *boldness* in this epistle, admonishing the brethren at Rome concerning the necessity and true nature of salvation, and *putting them in mind* of the important doctrines and precepts of the gospel, that they might "be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (2 Tim. iii. 16, 17), and not least unto the work of offering themselves as a living sacrifice. See note on ch. xii. 1. ¶ *Might be acceptable.* Or, approved by God. Our Lord has declared what sacrifice, what form of religious worship, what *offering*, is acceptable to God. John iv. 23, 24. And this is implied in the living sacrifice mentioned in ch. xii. 1, and in this place. ¶ *Being sanctified by the Holy Ghost.* Under the law, sacrifices were ceremonially sanctified, or made fit to be offered, by oil, or frankincense, or salt, according to their nature. Lev. vi. 14, 15; Mark ix. 49. But under the gospel, the living sacrifice was actually *sanctified*, or made acceptable to God, by the influence of the Holy Spirit on the heart, purifying it from sinfulness, and inspiring holy affections. As these influences were generally communicated through the medium of faith in the gospel, the labors of the apostle to diffuse a knowledge of the gospel among the Gentiles had a tendency to prepare them to offer this acceptable sacrifice; yet the real sanctification was not the work of human agency or ceremonies, but of the divine spirit operating directly on the heart.

17. *I have therefore, &c.* Both because of the apostolic gift bestowed on him, and because of his faithful exercise of it, the apostle had reason for gratitude. 1 Tim. i. 12. In what follows, he modestly refers to the labors by which his faithfulness had been manifested. ¶ *Whereof I may glory through Jesus Christ.* The word here

17 I have therefore whereof I may glory through Jesus Christ, in

rendered *glory* often means to *boast*, to *exult*, as in ch. iii. 27. It also means to *rejoice*, as in 1 Cor. xv. 31; 1 Thess. ii. 19. Such is its meaning here. The apostle had no occasion here, as in 2 Cor., ch. xi., to vindicate his apostleship by an appeal to his past labors in terms which he there admits to savor of boasting, for his brethren at Rome did not question his authority to instruct, to exhort, and to *put them in mind* of their various duties, in respect both to faith and to practice. He simply gives utterance to his joy, that such a heavenly treasure had been committed to him, and that, by divine grace, he had been a faithful steward; for he was always willing to admit that the faithfulness and success of the Christian minister depended not on his own strength or sufficiency, but on divine grace. 2 Cor. iv. 7. Very probably the apostle had his eye on the assurance of the Master that he would be with his faithful disciples in the performance of the work committed to his charge. See note on Matt. xxviii. 20. Moreover, he had a special promise of his Master's presence and assistance (Acts xxvi. 16, 17), which he here gratefully acknowledges. ¶ *In those things which pertain to God.* In those things which pertain to the purpose of God, revealed in the gospel of his Son; in those things which belong to God's gracious dealings with his children, and to their duty towards him; in brief, in those things which promote a religious spirit among men, and serve to manifest the glory of God. "They were not things which pertained to Paul, but to God; not wrought by Paul, but by Jesus Christ; yet he might rejoice that he had been the means of diffusing so far those blessings." — *Barnes.* It too often happens that reliance is placed on an arm of flesh, and the minister is regarded as the actual savior of men; and this mistake very naturally arises from the manner in which the minister utters his warnings and exhortations. The blessed Saviour and his Father are overshadowed by the prominence of the minister, who alone would seem to have any desire, strong enough to induce effectual action, for the salvation of men. **The**

those things which pertain to God.

18 For I will not dare to speak of any of those things which Christ

hearers of Paul were liable to no such mistake. They recognized in him a true and faithful servant, devoted to the service of his Master, and willing to labor in the station assigned to him. They recognized in him a true disciple of Christ, who rejoiced in the prevalence of that kingdom which he came to establish, in the increase of that spiritual purity which his gospel was designed to produce, and in hope of the final triumph of divine grace over all sin and moral impurity. But they never lost sight, through his means, of the Master who was greater than Paul, or of the Father who "is greater than all." His manner of preaching is described thus: "We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus, the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake." — "Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us; we pray you, in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." 2 Cor. iv. 5; v. 20. In short, whenever he expressed any desire for the highest good of his brethren, he let it be distinctly understood that the divine spirit prompted him both to desire and to act. He directed their attention to God, as the fountain of grace, and to Jesus, as the brightest manifestation of divine love. All the labors and all the instructions of human ministers, even though distinguished by apostolic gifts, were but means employed by a higher power for the attainment of good.

18. *For I will not dare, &c.* "I do not presume to mention anything which Christ hath not wrought by me; that is, I do not, in saying this, intend to claim any praise by exaggerating my success, or taking to myself the credit of what others have done in order to bring the Gentiles to obey the gospel." — *Stuart.* Paul truly rejoiced in the success of the gospel among the Gentiles, by whomsoever preached, Phil. i. 18; yet he preferred to labor where others had not preceded him, ver. 20, and was very scrupulous not to claim honor to himself for what others had done. 2 Cor. x. 14—16. So here, when mentioning the success with which his labors had been crowned, and in which

hath not wrought by me, to make the Gentiles obedient, by word and deed,

he greatly rejoiced, he disavows all reference to the labors of his fellow-apostles, and confines himself strictly to his personal ministry. ¶ *Which Christ hath not wrought by me.* Namely, the success granted to other laborers. The first clause of this verse is equivalent to "I will dare to speak only of those things which Christ hath wrought by me." It is observable here, as often elsewhere, that the apostle acknowledges his dependence on a higher power, to which power he attributes all the success of his ministry. He does not attempt to speak of what he had done, by his own power, even when referring to his extensive journeyings and constant preaching among the Gentiles, ver. 19, 20; but he refers to these as things which Christ had wrought by him. Thus, also, when comparing his own labors with those of his fellow-apostles, 1 Cor. xv. 10, he expressly disavows all personal honor, but ascribes all the honor to the "grace of God," which gave him strength and success. ¶ *To make the Gentiles obedient.* Namely, to the gospel. The Gentiles were induced to obey the gospel by the instructions which made them acquainted with its true character, and by the exhortations which stimulated them to conform to its spirit; both of which had been communicated by the apostle. These means had been enforced by the powerful spirit of God, through signs and wonders, ver. 19, in attestation of the apostle's authority, and of the truths delivered by him; and the spirit of grace, operating through these means, had induced the Gentiles to offer themselves to God, ch. xii. 1, and to yield obedience to the gospel. ¶ *By word and deed.* Most commentators suppose that by *word* the apostle refers to his preaching; and by *deed*, to the other labors and sufferings he had encountered in "testifying the gospel of the grace of God." But I strongly incline to the interpretation by *Macknight*, who refers *word and deed* to the obedience of the Gentiles, and paraphrases the clause thus: "In order to make the Gentiles obedient to the gospel, both in faith and practice."

19. *Through mighty signs and won-*

19 Through mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God ; so that from Jerusalem,

and round about unto Illyricum, I have fully preached the gospel of Christ.

ders. By displays of miraculous power. Whether the *word and deed*, in the preceding verse, be descriptive of the apostle's labors, or of the obedience rendered by converts, the application of this phrase cannot be a matter of doubt. Christ wrought certain works by the ministry of Paul, ver. 18, through the same divine power which enabled himself, when on the earth, to give such full proof that he spake by authority of the Father. Jesus was "approved of God," that is, was proved to be the Son of God, or demonstrated to have the *approval* of God, "by miracles, and wonders, and signs, which God did by him." Acts ii. 22. See also John iii. 2. In like manner, after he ascended to the Father, he *wrought* powerfully by the ministry of his apostles, through the aid of *mighty signs and wonders*, having their origin in the same divine power, and yielding the same convincing testimony that God was with those in whom such power was manifested. That Paul was thus distinguished is expressly declared in Acts xix. 11 : "And God wrought special miracles by the hands of Paul." Thus were the words of Paul confirmed among the Gentiles, and multitudes became obedient to the gospel. ¶ *By the power of the Spirit of God.* This "may mean signs and wonders performed by virtue of this influence ; and so Chrysostom, Theodoret, Erasmus, and others, have understood it. But it may also mean the internal influences of the spirit, bestowing the gift of prophecy, the power of speaking in foreign languages, &c. ; and so Beza, Grotius, Tholuck, and others, have explained it." — *Stuart.* The first is certainly the most obvious and natural interpretation. But either affords a good sense ; for unquestionably Paul was not only endowed with miraculous power, but he enjoyed what are generally denominated spiritual gifts in as full measure as any other apostle. 1 Cor. xiv. 18 ; 2 Cor. xi. 5. In either case, the great idea which he manifestly intended to communicate stands forth prominently ; namely, that the success which had attended his labors resulted from divine

rather than human power. By the grace of God, Paul planted the gospel broadcast through the Gentile world ; occasionally, Apollos and others watered ; yet "neither is he that planteth anything ; neither he that watereth ; but God, that giveth the increase." 1 Cor. iii. 5—7. ¶ *So that from Jerusalem.* The apostle did not commence his Christian ministry at Jerusalem. He left that city, full of bitterness against the religion and the disciples of Christ, and for the purpose of doing what he might against both. He was converted, and commissioned as an apostle, when near Damascus, as is fully related in his speech before King Agrippa. Thence he passed into Arabia, and returned again to Damascus ; but he did not visit Jerusalem until the expiration of three years. Gal. i. 17, 18. But Jerusalem was the point from which the gospel radiated through the world. There the Saviour of men taught, and died, and rose again. There he directed his apostles to remain until they should "be endued with power from on high." Luke xxiv. 49. There they commenced preaching the gospel, after "they were filled with the Holy Ghost," and received the gift of tongues, on the day of Pentecost. Acts ii. 1—4. And thence they afterwards departed, in obedience to the command of their Master, that they should "go into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." Mark xvi. 15. That city was, therefore, regarded as the centre of the gospel field, from which the laborers travelled in every direction. With much propriety the apostle recognizes this fact, although he was commissioned at another place. Moreover, although he did not commence his ministry in that city, he had preached there ; so that it was strictly true, in regard to himself, that he had "preached the gospel," through all the country, from Jerusalem to far-distant regions. ¶ *Round about unto Illyricum.* Geographers describe Illyricum as the north-westerly province of Greece, bordering on Macedonia, and on the Adriatic Sea. Thus far Paul's labors extended, in that direction, from Jerusalem, even before he

20 Yea, so have I strived to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build upon another man's foundation :

21 But as it is written, To whom he was not spoken of, they shall

visited Rome ; in the opposite direction, he had visited Damascus and Arabia ; and between these two points he had travelled extensively in various parts of Asia Minor, and in all Greece. A vast missionary field, truly, to be cultivated by one man. Well might he ascribe his success to a higher than human power. It does not appear, from the Acts of the Apostles, that Paul actually entered Illyricum : but he did preach in Macedonia, which bordered on this province ; so that he preached *unto*, if not *in* Illyricum ; and this is all which the text necessarily implies. ¶ *I have fully preached the gospel of Christ.* By this phrase some understand the apostle to mean that he had diffused the gospel through the whole region mentioned by him ; that he had "filled up" the whole country with it. Others, with quite as much probability, understand him to mean that wherever he had preached the gospel he had preached it fully ; that he had withheld nothing which needed to be known ; that he had "declared all the counsel of God." Acts xx. 27. See also ver. 29, in which a reference is made to the manner in which Paul preached the gospel.

20. *Yea, so have I strived, &c.* I have earnestly endeavored. The word rendered *strived* conveys the idea of choice or desire, as well as of effort. ¶ *Not where Christ was namqd.* That is, not where the gospel had already been preached. The general idea is, that Paul had chosen to preach where no other apostle had preceded him. He preferred rather to go among those who had never heard the sound of the gospel. The training which he received from Gamaliel, Acts xxii. 3, peculiarly fitted him to carry the gospel among the heathen. In questions of philosophy and mere human wisdom he was fully their equal, and ready to meet all their captious objections. When to this is added the indomitable energy of his character, and patience of fatigue,

see : and they that have not heard shall understand.

22 For which cause also I have been much hindered from coming to you.

23 But now having no more

he seems to have had unusual *natural* qualifications for his work, to say nothing of his spiritual gifts which were common to him and his fellow-apostles. ¶ *Lest I should build upon another man's foundation.* He desired not even to seem disposed to deprive any other of his due ; but rather to enter into fields where no other had labored, and to plant new churches in the moral wilderness. This labor was more arduous and more dangerous than was required for instructing and edifying churches already planted. Yet he chose to encounter it all, in preference to the easier and safer work of building on the foundations of others. Others might follow him, and he would bid them God speed in their endeavors to cultivate the ground which he had broken up ; but he could follow no mere man. His position was the post of danger. And whether in the cities of the Gentiles, or in the chief city of the more prejudiced and obdurate Jews, he was ready to encounter any hazard, for the sake of proclaiming the "unsearchable riches of Christ" to unbelievers. See Acts xx. 22—24 ; xxi. 11—13.

21. *But as it is written.* What follows is quoted substantially, though not literally, from Isa. lii. 15. "The apostle quotes it here in order to illustrate and justify the principle which he had avowed, namely, that of preaching the gospel where it was entirely unknown before. The quotation says as much as to declare that the gospel shall be thus proclaimed." — *Stuart.*

22. *For which cause.* On account of my anxiety to preach the gospel where it was before unknown, and the many opportunities which offered. ¶ *I have been much hindered from coming to you.* In ch. i. 13, the apostle speaks of the desire he had long entertained to visit Rome, and of the hindrances which had interposed. Although the gospel had been preached in that city, still it was an important point being the

place in these parts, and having a great desire these many years to come unto you ;

24 Whensoever I take my journey into Spain, I will come to you : for I trust to see you in my jour-

political centre of the world, yearly visited by vast multitudes from distant regions ; it might almost be regarded as an unbroken missionary field, because there was such frequent opportunity to preach the gospel to strangers who were profoundly ignorant of it, and who might be converted, and become messengers of glad tidings to their respective countries. Nevertheless, the apostle had hitherto strictly followed the rule he had prescribed to himself, not to enter into the labors of others so long as he could find dark places to be enlightened, in which "a door of utterance" should be opened to him. And so many benighted spots he had found, and his time had been so fully occupied in preaching the gospel in the waste places of the Gentiles, that he had hitherto been obliged to forego his desire to visit Rome.

23. *But now having no more place in these parts.* By these parts, the apostle probably refers in particular to the region round about Corinth, from which city this epistle was written. He had already preached throughout the Grecian states, and there remained no considerable city there where the gospel had not already been proclaimed. ¶ *And having a great desire, &c.* See ch. i. 8—15. Such a visit would not be wholly inconsistent with his intention to preach only to such as had not previously heard the gospel. See note on ver. 22.

24. *Whensoever I take my journey into Spain.* Whether the apostle ever performed this contemplated journey into Spain, does not appear from the Acts of the Apostles. There is a tradition, generally regarded as of uncertain credibility, that he spent about two years in Spain, between his first and second imprisonment at Rome. *Conybeare* speaks with apparent confidence on the subject of this journey, though he cites no authority. It should be observed, however, that this journey, as well as the fact of a second imprisonment at Rome, is regarded with great doubt by

ney, and to be brought on my way thitherward by you, if first I be somewhat filled with your company.

25 But now I go unto Jerusalem to minister unto the saints.

many critics. Of this we may be certain, that Paul did not make his first visit to Rome in the manner he had intended, as disclosed in the text ; but he went as a prisoner, having appealed unto Cæsar against the false accusations of the Jews. Acts xxv.—xxviii. ¶ *To be brought on my way, &c.* To be accompanied by some of you for a portion of my journey. It seems to have been a custom of the brethren to accompany the apostles, and, perhaps, to provide for their temporal wants, on their journeys. See Acts xv. 3 ; xvii. 15 ; xxviii. 15. ¶ *If first.* Namely, while I may tarry at Rome, before proceeding on my journey to Spain. ¶ *I be somewhat filled with your company.* Or, refreshed in spirit, by Christian intercourse with you. See ch. i. 11, 12. Paul anticipated much satisfaction in proclaiming the grace of God in Rome, and in witnessing the Christian faith of the disciples there, which was spoken of throughout all Christendom. Ch. i. 8. He trusted also that their hearts had been purified through faith, ver. 14, so that their Christian sympathy and virtuous conduct should fill him with joy. A peculiarity in the phrase *somewhat filled* has not escaped the notice of commentators ; being a delicate way of saying that an intercourse for a short time only would not be fully satisfactory, but would excite a strong desire for its longer continuance.

25. *But now.* However anxious the apostle was to visit Rome, he had another duty, which must first be performed. He must therefore again postpone the gratification of his desire, ch. i. 13, at the call of more urgent duty. ¶ *I go to Jerusalem.* I am now about to visit Jerusalem for the specific purpose mentioned. By a comparison between what is here said of this journey and its object with references to the same subject in Acts xx. 2, 3 ; xxiv. 17—19 ; 1 Cor. xvi. 1—4 ; 2 Cor. viii. 1—4 ; ix. 2, Paley constructs an irresistible argument, which he sums up

26 For it hath pleased them of Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor saints which are at Jerusalem.

thus: "Here therefore, at length, but fetched from three different writings, we have obtained the several circumstances we inquired after, and which the Epistle to the Romans brings together, namely, a contribution in Achaia for the Christians of Jerusalem, a contribution in Macedonia for the same, and an approaching journey of St. Paul to Jerusalem. We have these circumstances, each by some hint in the passage in which it is mentioned, or by the date of the writing in which the passage occurs, fixed to a particular time; and we have that time turning out, on examination, to be in all the same, namely, towards the close of St. Paul's second visit to the peninsula of Greece. This is an instance of conformity beyond the possibility, I will venture to say, of random writing to produce. I also assert that it is in the highest degree improbable that it should have been the effect of contrivance and design." This last assertion Dr. Paley defends triumphantly, in a passage too long to be quoted here. See *Horæ Paulinæ*, ch. ii., No. I. ¶ *To minister unto the saints.* Namely, to convey to the poor brethren at Jerusalem the alms contributed by those of Macedonia and Achaia. Ver. 26.

26. *For it hath pleased them, &c.* The contributions referred to were bestowed with readiness and spontaneous benevolence. *Trapp* quaintly remarks: "It hath not been squeezed out of them, as verjuice is out of a crab, but freely and cheerfully they have contributed." The apostle refers, with commendation, to the liberality of the Macedonians, a liberality even disproportionate to their ability, in 2 Cor. viii. 1—6; and, in like manner, he commends the readiness and forwardness of the Achaians, in 2 Cor. ix. 1, 2, adding a hint that it were well to complete the collection speedily, if anything yet lacked, lest his boasting should seem to have been too confident. Unwilling contributions may benefit the receiver; but they are less profitable to the giver than when they flow freely. Of such it can scarcely be said that it

27 It hath pleased them verily; and their debtors they are. For if the Gentiles have been made partakers of their spiritual things,

pleased the contributors to impart assistance to the necessitous; but the phrase was well applied by the apostle in this case. ¶ *Of Macedonia.* This was one of the Grecian provinces, bordering on Thrace and on the Ægean Sea. In this province was the city of Philippi, where Paul planted a church, to which one of his epistles was addressed. See notes on Acts xvi. 9, 12. ¶ *And Achaia.* This name was sometimes applied to the whole of Greece; but, in consequence of a political division of the country by the Roman government, to which it was subject when the apostle wrote, the southern provinces were called Achaia, and the northern more generally known as Macedonia; several provinces being comprehended in the northern division, besides that to which the name properly belonged. Corinth, from which this epistle was written, was in the south part of Achaia. ¶ *The poor saints which are at Jerusalem.* The Christians in Jerusalem were peculiarly exposed to persecution, and to the spoiling of their goods. Many were forced to flee from the city. See Acts viii. 1; xii. 1. It may well be supposed that those who remained were subjected to many hardships. For the relief of their necessities, the apostle encouraged contributions among the disciples who were more favorably situated. Such contributions not only relieved the physical necessities of the Jewish Christians, but they tended also to beget and keep alive that spirit of harmony between the two great branches of the Christian church, which is so earnestly urged in the foregoing chapter, and the commencement of the present.

27. *It hath pleased them verily.* "This repetition is very emphatical, especially as the apostle immediately explained the obligation under which the Christians in Macedonia and Achaia lay to make these collections for the poor of the brethren at Jerusalem. And his intention in this, no doubt, was to show the brethren in Rome that they ought to follow the example of the Macedonians and Achaians in that matter." — *Macknight.* The intimation,

their duty is also to minister unto them in carnal things.

28 When therefore I have performed this, and have sealed to them this fruit, I will come by you into Spain.

if such was the apostle's design, was very delicately conveyed. ¶ *And their debtors they are.* The reason immediately follows. ¶ *Partakers of their spiritual things.* The Gentiles had received this benefit in a two-fold sense. (1.) The Jews had for ages enjoyed the exclusive privileges pertaining to a divine revelation, and had considered themselves entitled to the exclusive enjoyment of the blessings to be communicated through the Messiah. The "middle wall of partition" was now broken down, and the Gentiles had become joint-partakers of all these *spiritual* blessings. (2.) The Gentiles had received the gospel through the ministry of Jews. Although the mass of the Jewish people rejected Jesus as the Messiah, yet it is true that both he, as to the flesh, and all his apostles, were Jews; so likewise were the earliest disciples. Through their ministry "the gospel of the grace of God" was communicated to the Gentiles, who thus became *partakers of their spiritual things*. In both respects, therefore, the Gentiles might be styled *debtors* to the Jews. ¶ *Carnal things.* Carnal is here used in a good sense, indicating those things which are necessary to the sustenance of the body, such as food, raiment, and the like.

28. *When therefore I have performed this.* When I have accomplished my journey to Jerusalem, for the purpose specified, ver. 25. ¶ *And have sealed to them this fruit.* Have distributed to "the poor saints which are at Jerusalem" the contributions made by their Gentile brethren. The word rendered *sealed*, "applied to an instrument in writing, means to authenticate it, to make it valid; that is, sure to answer the purpose for which it was intended. So here the apostle would not stop short, in the performance of the duty with which he is intrusted as the almoner of the churches, until he had seen the actual distribution of their charity among the indigent saints at Jerusalem; a fidelity and an activity

29 And I am sure that when I come unto you, I shall come in the fulness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ.

30 Now I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake,

well worthy of all imitation." — *Stuart.* This journey to Jerusalem was accomplished, according to its design. Acts xxiv. 17. ¶ *I will come by you into Spain.* It is not certainly known that Paul's desire to visit Spain was gratified. See note on ver. 24. But he did visit Rome; not, indeed, as he had intended, on a free journey into Spain, but as a prisoner. Acts, ch. xxvii., xxviii. Although he was a prisoner, however, under military custody, he nevertheless, for the space of "two whole years," at least, "preached the kingdom of God, and taught those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, with all confidence, no man forbidding him." Acts xxviii. 16, 30, 31.

29. *And I am sure.* Perfectly confident. When speaking of his journey, Paul recognized its uncertainty, ver. 30—32, ch. i. 10; he knew not what the will of God might be, as to the time or manner of his visit; and he submitted himself to that will. But he was *sure* what would be the character of his preaching, whenever the opportunity was granted; because he had only one gospel to preach, namely, that which he had received by revelation of Jesus Christ, Gal. i. 11, 12; and he knew that he had always preached that gospel in its fulness. Acts xx. 20—27. He might well feel the most perfect assurance that he should preach the same gospel, and in the same manner, at Rome. ¶ *When I come unto you.* Whenever the opportunity shall be granted. ¶ *In the fulness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ.* This phrase is regarded by some as a Hebraism, equivalent to the full blessing, or the abundant blessings of the gospel of Christ. The sense is substantially the same in either case. The gospel which Paul preached elsewhere, which he intended to preach at Rome, and which he so fully discussed in this epistle, is characterized by its full blessings, or abundant blessings; and he was neither ashamed, ch. i. 16, nor afraid, to preach it openly, distinctly, and *fully*. He

and for the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me in *your* prayers to God for me ;

31 That I may be delivered from

kept nothing back which was necessary to the faith, good works, or comfort and hope, of mankind. He declared "all the counsel of God."

30. *Now I beseech you, brethren.* The appeal which follows is somewhat similar in form to that which occurs in ch. xiii. 1. The divine affection displayed towards men is here urged as an inducement to the exercise of fraternal kindness ; there, as an inducement to self-consecration to God. The latter is the sum of the *first* table, namely, supreme love and devotion to God ; the former is the sum of the *second* table, namely, the mutual love of mankind, manifested in a prayer for the apostle's personal safety, and for the benefits which might flow to others through his continued ministry. ¶ *For the Lord Jesus Christ's sake.* For the sake, or in consideration, of what the Lord Jesus Christ hath done for men. As much as to say, I beseech you to imitate the Lord Jesus Christ ; to cherish the spirit which he manifested ; to give expression to that spirit in earnest desires and prayers on my behalf. Some understand the apostle to mean, I beseech you, by the love which you bear to the Lord Jesus. But this would not exclude the idea embraced in the former interpretation ; for their love towards him was but the natural outgrowth of his love towards them. Men love the Son for the same reason that they love the Father ; namely, because he first loved them. 1 John iv. 19. ¶ *And for the love of the Spirit.* "By the love which the spirit hath showed to you, in giving you his manifold gifts." — *MacKnight.* Others understand the apostle to mean, by the love which the spirit hath shed abroad in your hearts, the mutual sympathy and affection which is kindled by the influence of the spirit. Here, as before, the leading idea is not changed. Divine love is the fountain from which human love flows. The divine spirit is the true origin of all Christian sympathy and affection. ¶ *That ye strive together with me, &c.* Great earnestness of desire is here expressed. The apostle was an obedient child of

them that do not believe in Judea ; and that my service which *I have* for Jerusalem may be accepted of the saints ;

God, and cheerfully submitted to the divine will. At the same time, he ardently loved mankind, and was very desirous to communicate the blessings of the gospel. Hence he desired the prayers of others, in unison with his own, that his journey to Jerusalem might be prosperous, so that he might depart in peace, and preach the gospel to them whom he had not yet visited. Ver. 31, 32.

31. *That I may be delivered, &c.* Two difficulties were apprehended by the apostle, connected with his proposed visit to Jerusalem ; the first, here mentioned, was the open opposition of "them that do not believe in Judea." After the death of Jesus, the enmity of the unbelieving Jews was concentrated upon Paul more than upon any other one individual. They regarded him as an apostate ; as one who had been a leader in opposition to Christianity, but who had become one of its most earnest advocates. They had not forgotten, what was true, that he departed from Jerusalem as their chosen agent to persecute the Christians ; and they had heard and believed, what was not strictly true, that he taught "all the Jews which are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses," and disregard his authority. See note on Acts xxi. 21. He apprehended, therefore, that they might use personal violence against him, if he put himself within their reach. His apprehensions were verified. See Acts xxi., and the following chapters. They beset him in a disorderly manner, and, had not the chief captain interfered with a military force, they would probably have murdered him, as they had before murdered Stephen. As it was, their violent opposition resulted in his arrest, confinement, repeated examinations before magistrates, and voyage to Rome as a prisoner. When these trials came upon him he submitted patiently ; but while he viewed them merely as impending, he strongly desired to escape them. Even so his and our Master, though he unresistingly and uncomplainingly submitted to the terrible sufferings of the cross,

32 That I may come unto you with joy by the will of God, and may with you be refreshed.

had previously prayed, even "with strong crying and tears," for deliverance, if consistent with his Father's will. Luke xxii. 40-46; Heb. v. 7. Ardent prayers for deliverance from apprehended distress, therefore, are not to be regarded as inconsistent with a spirit of Christian submission and resignation. Thus Paul prayed, and besought prayers, that he might escape the rage of his enemies, and live longer in the exercise of his ministry, notwithstanding he was prepared to encounter the utmost hazard with fortitude, and even "ready to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus," if such were the will of God. Acts xx. 24; xxi. 13. ¶ *And that my service.* My ministry; namely, the particular service in which he was then engaged, as the bearer of the contributions of the Gentile churches. ¶ *Which I have for Jerusalem.* For the benefit of the "poor saints which are at Jerusalem." Ver. 26. ¶ *May be accepted of the saints.* That they may both approve the interest which I have taken in their behalf, and gratefully accept what has been contributed for the relief of their necessities; that the gifts and the bearer of the gifts may be acceptable in their sight. The second difficulty apprehended by the apostle is here disclosed. He knew that even the believing Jews at Jerusalem regarded him with some considerable degree of suspicion and distrust. On his first visit to them, after his conversion, "they were all afraid of him, and believed not that he was a disciple." Acts ix. 26. If they had entirely outgrown that fear, he knew that his active labors among the Gentiles had excited their jealousy; for they had not overcome their ancient prejudice, that the Gentiles were not entitled to equal spiritual privileges with themselves. Moreover, they were zealous for the ritual law, and insisted that its observance was an indispensable prerequisite to salvation, Acts xv. 1; and they had heard that he not only taught the Gentiles, but the Jews also, who dwelt among the Gentiles, that such observance was wholly unne-

33 Now the God of peace be with you all. Amen.

sary. Acts xxi. 20, 21. He might reasonably apprehend, therefore, that he should not meet such a hearty, frank reception, as corresponded with his affectionate regard for them. And as to the gifts which he bore, he may have doubted whether they would be *accepted* in a Christian spirit.

32. *That I may come to you with joy.* That I may neither be prevented from visiting you, by any obstruction, nor visit you in sadness, on account of any unfriendliness manifested by the "saints of Jerusalem." ¶ *By the will of God.* In his utmost anxiety for a prosperous journey, repeatedly expressed, in the first chapter, and here, the apostle constantly recognized the controlling purpose of God; and all his prayers were offered with the qualification, "If the Lord will." See note on ver. 30. ¶ *And may with you be refreshed.* Comforted and edified by mutual Christian sympathy, affection, exhortation, and instruction. See notes on ver. 24, and ch. i. 12.

33. *Now the God of peace be with you all.* In ver. 5, where he is treating upon the subject of forbearance and Christian patience, the apostle invokes the "God of patience." In like manner, when dwelling upon the glory of Christian hope, ver. 13, he invokes the "God of hope." So here, after expressing his ardent desire for a peaceable meeting with the "saints which are at Jerusalem," and with his brethren at Rome, where he hoped to enjoy a season of quiet happiness and refreshment, he invokes the "God of peace." See note on ver. 5. This closing invocation is the more appropriate, inasmuch as the leading design of this chapter, and the one which precedes it, is to promote a spirit of peace and harmony between the Jewish and Gentile brethren at Rome. May that God, who inspires peace, be with you, and cause you to dwell in peace, by the gracious influences of his spirit. ¶ *Amen.* See note on Matt. vi. 13. The word in this place is regarded by critics as of doubtful authority.

CHAPTER XVI.

I COMMEND unto you Phebe our sister, which is a servant of the

CHAPTER XVI.

Having completed his statement and illustration of Christian doctrine, and his exhortations to conform to the spirit of Christianity and to "adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things," Tit. ii. 10, the apostle concludes, by commending the bearer of his epistle to the favorable notice of his brethren, and saluting many of them by name. An additional exhortation is found in ver. 17—20; the salutations of Paul's companions are offered in ver. 21—23; and a Doxology to the God and Father of all closes the Epistle. "The Papists affirm that, at the time the apostle wrote this letter, St. Peter was in Rome, exercising the office of Bishop in the church there. But, if Peter had been in Rome when this epistle was written, Paul probably would have known it; in which case, he would not have omitted him in the salutations, and mentioned so many others of inferior note." — *Macknight*.

1. *I commend unto you Phebe.* I commend her to your Christian sympathy and affection. It was customary in ancient times, even as now, to furnish travellers into distant countries with letters of introduction, which might secure for them a favorable reception. The manner in which the apostle thus recommends and introduces Phebe to the brethren at Rome renders the subscription to this Epistle very probable: namely, that it was sent from Corinth to Rome by Phebe; or, at the least, that she accompanied those to whose care it was intrusted. ¶ *Our sister.* Namely, in the faith of the gospel. The primitive disciples of Christ recognized each other as brethren and sisters, because they regarded themselves as children of one spiritual Father, bound to cherish fraternal affection. For acknowledging this spiritual affinity, and adopting this form of its expression, they had the example of the Master, who said that "whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother."

church which is at Cenchrea :

2 That ye receive her in the Lord, as becometh saints, and that ye assist her in whatsoever busi-

Matt. xii. 50. ¶ *Which is a servant of the church.* Literally, "being a deaconess of the church." It is manifest that deaconesses, as well as deacons, were appointed in the primitive church, although the title is not thus applied to females elsewhere in the New Testament. On account of the seclusion in which females were kept in the East (which practice still exists in many countries), their instruction, as well as many other ministries to their wants, was necessarily confided to their own sex. "These female teachers are mentioned under the appellation of *widows*, 1 Tim. v. 3, where also (ver. 9) their character and election are described. — The deaconess is also described 1 Tim. iii. 11, and in the Apostolical Constitutions, lib. iii., ch. 15: 'Ordain also a deaconess who is faithful and holy, for the ministries towards the women.' — The office of female deacon being of such early institution, and of such utility, it is probable Phebe held that office in the church at Cenchrea. For she is not only called a deaconess, but she is said to have performed the offices of a deaconess: 'she hath been a helper of many, and of myself also.' Ver. 2. At least, Origen and Chrysostom understood the apostle as speaking of a female deacon in this passage." — *Macknight*. ¶ *At Cenchrea.* The eastern port of Corinth: about nine miles from the city.

2. *That ye receive her in the Lord.* As being in the Lord; or, as a Christian. To express the influence of the divine spirit in the hearts of believers, it was said of them that they were in Christ, 2 Cor. v. 17, and Christ in them, ch. viii. 10; that the spirit of God was in them, ch. viii. 9; and that the indwelling was mutual, 1 John iv. 16. ¶ *As becometh saints.* As saints, or Christians, ought to receive each other, with affection and kindness. ¶ *And that ye assist her, &c.* It would seem that she had some personal interests at stake in Rome; perhaps the collection of dues, perhaps an appeal against the injustice or exorbitancy of provincial magistrates. We have no

ness she hath need of you : for she hath been a succorer of many, and of myself also.

3 Greet Priscilla and Aquila, my helpers in Christ Jesus :

direct information, however, concerning the specific character of the *business* in which she might *have need* of aid. ¶ *For she hath been a succorer, &c.* This is well urged as a reason why she is entitled to aid from others. She had freely rendered assistance, when it was in her power ; it was meet, therefore, that she should receive assistance in her hour of need. This is according to the Saviour's rule, Luke vi. 38. ¶ *Of many.* Not once or twice, merely, had she assisted them who had need, but it was her habitual practice. So much the more should she receive the like favor. ¶ *And of myself also.* The apostle had personal experience of her kindness, and felt doubly bound to commend her to the kindness of the brethren. As much as to say, Whatever assistance you may render to her, I will regard as a favor to myself, and as rendered on account of my personal obligation to her.

3. *Greet.* Salute. See note on Acts xv. 23. Greet, or salute, the persons mentioned, in my name, as a token of my remembrance and affection. ¶ *Priscilla and Aquila.* Priscilla was the wife of Aquila, who was a Jew, born in Pontus, and for a time resided at Rome. When Paul first visited Corinth, he found Aquila there, having "lately come from Italy with his wife Priscilla, because that Claudius had commanded all Jews to depart from Rome." Acts xviii. 1, 2. Whether they had before met, does not distinctly appear ; but Paul dwelt with them at Corinth, and wrought with them, for "they were tentmakers." Before the date of this epistle, they had returned to Rome. See note on Acts xviii. 2. ¶ *My helpers in Christ Jesus.* Fellow-Christians, and fellow-laborers in the ministry of the gospel of Christ. That they were well grounded in the faith, and competent to impart instruction, appears from the fact that while they were at Ephesus, whither they accompanied Paul, they instructed the eloquent and fervent Apollos "more perfectly ;" for he had previously known "only the

4 Who have for my life laid down their own necks : unto whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles.

5 Likewise *greet* the church that

baptism of John." Acts xviii. 18, 19, 24—26. It would seem that they were accustomed to instruct those who resorted to them ; for the apostle speaks of "the church that is in their house," 1 Cor. xvi. 19, and again, in ver. 5, he uses the same phrase.

4. *Who have for my life.* In my behalf ; for my protection and safety. ¶ *Laid down their own necks.* Encountered great hazard and peril. The figure is taken from the ancient method of capital punishment by beheading. We have no account of the particular instance in which they hazarded their lives in behalf of the apostle. It may have been during the *insurrection* against him at Corinth, Acts xviii. 12—17. They may have concealed him from the fury of the Jews, after Gallio "drove them from the judgment-seat ;" and it is not unlikely that they would thus incur the popular indignation, and endanger their own lives, as did Jason on a similar occasion. Acts xvii. 5—9. ¶ *All the churches of the Gentiles.* They were entitled to the thanks, not only of the apostle, for the personal protection he received from them, but also of all the churches among the Gentiles, whom he had converted and established ; because through the preservation of his life they had attained a knowledge of the gospel.

5. *The church that is in their house.* Three interpretations have been given of this phrase. (1.) It has been supposed to indicate that the whole family were Christians. Origen says that such a family was saluted as "the church" in the house ; but that when only a part of the household had embraced Christianity, the salutation was to those "which are in the Lord," ver. 11, or the "brethren," or "saints, which are with them," ver. 14, 15. (2.) It has been understood to denote the converts who frequented the house of Aquila, for more perfect instruction (see note on ver. 3), styling the company thus gathered a "church," though in fact embracing only a portion of the whole church at Rome. (3.) Others, with

is in their house. Salute my well-beloved Epenetus, who is the first-fruits of Achaia unto Christ.

perhaps even more probability, suppose the house of Aquila was the place where the church ordinarily met for social worship. Of course, the Christians were not permitted to use the heathen temples for that purpose; nor would they, if they might, without a previous purification from idolatry. Moreover, generally speaking, they were obliged to meet in secrecy, to avoid persecution; and, for this reason, private houses were better suited to the purpose than more public edifices. ¶ *Salute.* The same word in the original which is translated *greet* in ver. 3. ¶ *My well-beloved Epenetus.* This person is not elsewhere mentioned in the New Testament. But he was well known to the apostle, and held a high place in his regard, as one of his earliest converts in one field of his labor. "It was a distinguished honor to be beloved by Paul, whose love was guided, not by impulse, but by judgment." — *Theophylact.* And nothing more surely acquired the apostle's approbation and love than sincere and earnest devotion to the cause of Christ. ¶ *The first-fruits of Achaia.* See note on ch. xv. 26. Some read *Asia* instead of *Achaia*; if this be the true reading, *Asia Minor*, or the pro-consular *Asia*, is supposed to be indicated. The figure is taken from the Old Testament. The first-ripened part of the harvest was styled the "first-fruits," and also the firstlings of the cattle; as such they were offered unto the Lord. Epenetus was the first, or among the first, in *Achaia*, or in *Asia Minor*, converted under the ministry of Paul, — the first-fruits of his labor in that field. ¶ *Unto Christ.* In respect to Christ. The idea is, that he was the first, or one of the first, in that region, who embraced Christ, through faith in his gospel.

6. *Greet Mary.* Several disciples of this name are mentioned in the gospels, who will be held in perpetual honor. Another *Mary* is named, Acts xii. 12. But to none of these does the apostle probably refer. Nothing is known of this person, except what is implied in this reference to her; namely, that she was now dwelling at Rome, but had

6 Greet *Mary* who bestowed much labor on us.

7 Salute *Andronicus* and *Junia*

met the apostle elsewhere, and had rendered services to him, for which he was grateful. ¶ *Who bestowed much labor on us.* Although Paul labored with his own hands at Corinth, lest he should be burdensome to others, Acts xviii. 3; xx. 34; 1 Cor. ix. 15, yet he often enjoyed the hospitality of the faithful while engaged in his apostolic work. Among others, this *Mary* may have furnished him shelter and sustenance.

7. *Andronicus* and *Junia.* These names, and those which follow, to ver. 15, are Grecian or Roman in form, and probably indicate persons with whom the apostle had been acquainted in Greece, but who had subsequently removed to Rome. Probably some of them were Jews by birth, who had adopted Greek or Roman names, as the apostle himself had done. See note on Acts xiii. 9. Nothing is known of their history, except what may be gathered from these salutations. But they appear to have been well known at Rome, and highly esteemed by the apostle. Instead of *Junia*, many critics read *Junias*, regarding it as the name of a man, rather than of a woman. The word is susceptible of either meaning. ¶ *My kinsmen.* So Paul styles all the children of Israel, ch. ix. 3, 4. But it is supposed that some nearer relationship than a common descent from Jacob is here intended, because this appellation is not given to Aquila, ver. 3, who was certainly a Jew, nor to some others, who probably were, but only to these two, and to Herodion, ver. 11. ¶ *My fellow-prisoners.* Paul was often imprisoned during his ministry. Acts xvi. 23; xxiv. 27. See also his own account of his expectations and his experience. Acts xx. 22, 23; 2 Cor. xi. 23—27. It would seem that the two persons here named had shared his imprisonment at some previous time. ¶ *Who are of note among the apostles.* Some have understood Paul to mean that these persons were apostles in the qualified sense in which the title is given to Barnabas, Acts xiv. 14; namely, that they were preachers of the gospel, and distinguished men in their

my kinsmen, and my fellow-prisoners, who are of note among the apostles, who also were in Christ before me.

8 Greet Amplias, my beloved in the Lord.

9 Salute Urbane, our helper in Christ, and Stachys my beloved.

10 Salute Apelles, approved in Christ. Salute them which are of Aristobulus' household.

class. But the more probable opinion is, that they were known and respected by the apostles; that their peculiar virtues had attracted the attention of the apostles. They were not noteworthy apostles, but noteworthy or distinguished persons, in the estimation of the apostles. ¶ *Who also were in Christ before me.* Who were Christians before me. See note on ver. 2.

8. *Amplias.* This is clearly a Grecian name. ¶ *My beloved in the Lord.* My beloved fellow-Christian. See note on ver. 2. More is expressed here than that common affection which all Christians should mutually cherish. Amplias is singled out as one especially beloved, on account of something peculiar in his character. See note on ver. 5.

9. *Salute Urbane, our helper in Christ.* Our fellow-laborer in the promulgation of Christianity; or, our sympathizing and beneficent Christian friend. ¶ *Stachys my beloved.* Distinguished among his fellows for fidelity, hospitality, or other excellent trait of character. See note on ver. 5.

10. *Salute Apelles, approved in Christ.* "A tried and approved Christian."—*Stuart.* Those who endured persecution without faltering proved their faithfulness. The apostle refers to the trial of faith endured by the Jewish converts, Heb. x. 32—34. Probably Apelles had encountered similar trials in Judea or elsewhere. In some manner he had approved himself a sincere and faithful Christian. ¶ *Salute them which are of Aristobulus' household.* It does not appear why Aristobulus was not included in the salutation. He may have been absent, or dead; or he might not yet have been converted. But, for whatever reason he was omitted, there were those in his family who were believers, with whom the apostle had

11 Salute Herodion my kinsman. Greet them that be of the household of Narcissus, which are in the Lord.

12 Salute Tryphena and Tryphosa, who labor in the Lord. Salute the beloved Persis, which labored much in the Lord.

13 Salute Rufus, chosen in the Lord, and his mother and mine.

14 Salute Asyncritus, Phlegon,

been acquainted, perhaps in Judea, for the name is Jewish; and to them he extends a token of Christian remembrance.

11. *Salute Herodion my kinsman.* This also is a Jewish name, and the person addressed was probably a not remote relative of Paul. See note on ver. 7. ¶ *Household of Narcissus.* See note on ver. 10. ¶ *Which are in the Lord.* Who are Christians. The form of salutation indicates that some of this family were not yet converted. But to so many of them as had embraced the Lord, through faith in his gospel, the apostle sends greeting. See note on ver. 5 for the distinction which ancient commentators made between "the church which is in the house" and them of the household "which are in the Lord," or "the saints which are with them."

12. *Tryphena and Tryphosa, who labor in the Lord.* These were probably "deaconesses," who were engaged in their appropriate labor at Rome. See note on ver. 1. Although the apostle did not permit females to teach publicly, 1 Cor. xiv. 34, 35, yet there were certain duties which he regarded as within their peculiar province; such as relieving the distressed, ministering to the saints, and guiding their children in the way of the Lord. 1 Tim. v. 10. They are recognized by him as the most fit persons to instruct the younger women in their social, moral, and religious duties. Tit. ii. 3—5. ¶ *The beloved Persis, which labored much in the Lord.* Probably another deaconess, even more distinguished for zeal and fidelity.

13. *Salute Rufus, chosen in the Lord.* A chosen follower of Christ; an eminent Christian. Some suppose this to be the same Rufus who is mentioned in Mark xv. 21. ¶ *And his mother and*

Hermas, Patrobas, Hermes, and the brethren which are with them.

15 Salute Philologus, and Julia, Nereus, and his sister, and Olympas, and all the saints which are

mine. "His mother in a literal sense, and mine in a figurative one."—*Stuart.* Paul may have styled this matron his *mother*, on account of her faith and her devotedness as a Christian. Mark iii. 35. But, as he gives this appellation to none of the other Christian women named in this chapter, it is more probable that he refers to her personal tenderness to him, as of a mother to her son, when she had ministered to his necessities. He often had need of sympathy, and of tender care, when suffering from scourgings, and other personal barbarities. 2 Cor. xi. 23—27. She may have dressed his wounds, and soothed his spirit, with Christian sympathy.

14. *Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermas, &c.* Of the persons named in this verse, it may be presumed that all were eminent for Christian faith and virtue, as they would not otherwise have been particularly saluted by the apostle. Nothing further is known of them. It has indeed been conjectured, but without much visible foundation, that *Hermas* was the same who was styled *Pastor* and *Shepherd* by the ancient Fathers, and who is said to have written three books, entitled *Visions, Commands, and Similitudes.* These books are included in the volume of "Genuine Epistles of the Apostolic Fathers," &c., translated by William, Archbishop of Canterbury. An American edition was published at Hartford, 1834.

15. The same general remark may be made concerning all the persons named in this verse. They were doubtless eminent Christians, in their day; but all trace of their particular history is lost.

16. *Salute one another with a holy kiss.* Kissing was an ancient form of salutation among the Jews and other Eastern nations. Thus Laban kissed Jacob, Gen. xxix. 13; and Joseph, his brethren, Gen. xlv. 15; and Aaron, his brother Moses, Exo. iv. 27; and Moses, his father-in-law, Exo. xviii. 7; and Absalom, "any man that came nigh to him to do him obedi-

with them.

16 Salute one another with a holy kiss. The churches of Christ salute you.

17 Now I beseech you, brethren,

sance," 2 Sam. xv. 5. The same custom existed in our Saviour's day; and he noted it as an omission of customary courtesy on the part of Simon, the Pharisee, that no kiss had been given. Luke vii. 45. The traitor Judas availed himself of this custom to give a signal to his confederates. Matt. xxvi. 48, 49.—This manner of salutation was not discarded by Christians. They adopted it as an expression of Christian affection, when gathered together for religious worship. "So Justin Martyr informs us, in his account of the religious assemblies of the Christians: 'Prayers being ended, we salute one another with a kiss, and then the bread and cup are brought to the president,' &c. This was called the *holy kiss*, to distinguish it from a lustful kiss; and the *kiss of love* (1 Pet. v. 14), to distinguish it from the treacherous kiss of Joab and Judas; being given as an expression of that sincere, chaste, spiritual love, which Christians owed to one another. On the occasions mentioned by Justin, the men and women did not kiss each other promiscuously; the men saluted the men only, and the women kissed none but their own sex, as may be known from their manner of sitting in the public assemblies, described Apost. Constit., Lib. ii., ch. 57: 'On the other side, let the laicks sit with all silence and good order; and the women, let them sit also separately, keeping silence.' Then, after a long description of the worship, the author adds: 'Then let the men salute one another, and the women one another, giving the kiss in the Lord.'"—*Macknight.* "This custom is extensively maintained, at present, on the continent of Europe, among Christian friends, and others also. In itself, it is like any external thing, not essential, but depending on the manners and customs of the time and place, like the wearing or not wearing of long hair at Corinth, &c."—*Stuart.* As practised in Europe and elsewhere, however, the custom of promiscuous kissing between the sexes is so liable to abuse, that it is more honored in the breach than in the ob-

mark them which cause divisions and offences, contrary to the doc-

servance. Such a custom was unknown in the apostle's time ; and he does not recommend it in this exhortation. ¶ *The churches of Christ salute you.* Namely, the churches in the vicinity of Corinth, where Paul wrote this epistle, or the churches which he had planted among the Gentiles. Although personally strangers, they cherished an affectionate regard for those "of like precious faith" at Rome.

17. *Now I beseech you, brethren.* The peace and harmony of the church at Rome was very earnestly desired by the apostle ; and, notwithstanding his previous exhortations and arguments, he seems unwilling to close his epistle without once more calling their attention to this subject. ¶ *Mark them which cause divisions and offences.* There can be no reasonable doubt that the apostle here refers to the Jewish teachers, who insisted on obedience to the Mosaic law, as a test of fellowship. The Gentiles disclaimed any obligation, on their part, to conform to the ceremonial and ritual observances prescribed by the law ; yet they did not regard the conformity of their Jewish brethren to that law as a breach of fellowship. But many of the Jews were thus exclusive ; and they occasioned much perplexity and grief to the apostle, as is manifest from his frequent reference to this disturbance of Christian peace and harmony. When this difficulty first became prominent, he found it necessary to leave the field of his labor, and go to Jerusalem, that the question might be adjudicated by a council of apostles. Acts xv. 1—29. But, notwithstanding this decision of the apostles, themselves being Jews, the Judaizing teachers continued to insist on these observances, and to withhold fellowship from non-conformists. Gal. iii. 1—4 ; v. 1—10. See also ch. xiv. 1 ; xv. 7 ; 1 Cor. viii. 1—7. By thus insisting on conformity to the ritual law, they caused *divisions and offences* in the church. Hence the apostle repeatedly exhorted his brethren to avoid this "root of bitterness," this grand disturber of their peace. If any, notwithstanding his admonitions, persisted in sowing discord, by making conformity to the ritual law a test of fellowship, he would have them

marked, or attentively observed and known, so that the evil likely to result from their conduct might be counteracted. ¶ *Contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned.* The doctrine maintained in this Epistle, and publicly preached by Paul and the other apostles. Not only had Paul uniformly insisted that the Gentiles were never bound by the ritual law, and that even the Jews were liberated from it, but the council of apostles, after full argument and deliberation, had been constrained by the "Holy Ghost" to give their solemn assent to the doctrine taught by him, at least in regard to the Gentiles. Acts xv. 23—29. He might well presume, therefore, that from whichever of the apostles his brethren at Rome had learned the doctrine of the gospel, they had been taught that Gentile Christians were not in bondage to the Jewish law. And, now, if any taught a contrary doctrine, and thus sowed contention and division, he would have them *marked* as deceivers of the simple. Ver. 18. ¶ *And avoid them.* Give no heed to them. Listen not to their instructions. Give no attention to them as teachers. Refrain even from conversing with them on that subject ; for, if they heed not the decision of the apostles, they will not probably be influenced by you. "It is worthy of notice, that the apostle desires the faithful to mark them who cause divisions, not for the purpose of disputing with them, and far less for the purpose of apprehending and punishing them with fines, imprisonment, torture, and death ; but that they might avoid their company, lest by conversing familiarly with such they might have been infected with their errors and vices ; for, as the apostle told Timothy, 'their words will eat as doth a gangrene.' 2 Tim. ii. 17." — *Macknight.* It should be observed that the apostle does not indiscriminately condemn all teaching whose first effect is contention and disturbance ; for such was the character of his own teaching, in every city which he visited, and such was the character of his Master's teaching. See notes on Matt. x. 34—36. The devotees of the Jewish law, and the worshippers of Diana of the Ephesians, and of the uncounted mul-

trine which ye have learned ; and avoid them.

titude of heathen divinities, united in a general outcry against Jesus and his apostles, as pestilent fellows, turning the world upside down. John vii. 45—49 ; Acts xvii. 6 ; xxiv. 5. The apostle distinguished, and we should distinguish, between two classes of men whose teaching occasions "divisions and offences." (1.) The Lord Jesus proclaimed the Father as the only true God. This was enough to excite the opposition of the idolatrous Gentiles. He taught that men were not able to save themselves from sin, but were entirely dependent on the grace of God for salvation. This excited the indignation of the self-righteous Jews, who trusted in their conformity to the ritual law, and expected salvation as the reward of works. He taught, also, that, as all were dependent on divine grace, and as all were equally dear to their common Father, so would he have mercy on all, the Gentiles as well as the Jews. Accordingly, he commanded his disciples to "go into all the world," and to "teach all nations" to love and obey God, and trust in him for salvation. This doctrine made the Jews absolutely furious ; for they claimed the exclusive enjoyment of heaven, and unceremoniously thrust aside the whole race of Gentiles. The apostles obeyed the instructions of their Master, and preached salvation to all the world, as a free gift from the only true God, the Father of the spirits of all flesh. Divisions, contentions, and strife, were the natural result. Yet such teaching is not condemned, because it was in conformity with the divine command, and with eternal truth ; and because those who thus preached acted under a sense of divine obligation. They were ready to "serve the Lord," ver. 18, at the risk of causing temporary divisions among men, and at the hazard of their own lives. They acted in obedience to God, and were, therefore, approved, whether men would hear, or whether they would forbear. (2.) Those of whom the apostle here speaks were of an entirely different character, and they taught an entirely different doctrine. For their own purposes they exhorted those who had "begun in the spirit"

18 For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their

to become "perfect by the flesh." Gal. iii. 3. They taught men to distrust the fulness and efficiency of divine grace, by insisting that none could be saved unless they should be circumcised, and should obey the ritual law, Acts xv. 1 ; in substance, that their salvation depended on their own works, instead of God's abounding grace. The distinction between meats was urged on this ground as well as other legal observances. God had given no such commandment or instruction under the gospel, and those who thus taught, instead of serving or promoting the cause of the gospel, were casting impediments in its way. Therefore the apostle condemns them, and exhorts the faithful to avoid them. The distinction, in short, is this: The preaching of the great fundamental truths of the gospel, as revealed in the Scriptures, is justifiable and commendable, whether its immediate effect be harmony or *division* in the community. But the bringing in of "another gospel," or, rather, the perverting of the gospel of Christ, Gal. i. 6, 7, exalting the law above grace, insisting on non-essentials as a test of fellowship, or as a condition of final salvation, is only mischievous in its tendency, destructive of Christian harmony, and is, therefore, highly reprehensible. Of this class of teachers the apostle urges his brethren to beware.

18. *Serve not our Lord Jesus Christ.* "Obey not. Though they are professedly, yet they are not his real friends and followers."—*Barnes*. Or, the phrase may be understood thus: They promote not the cause of Christ. Their teaching hindered the progress of the gospel, by controverting its fundamental principles, by exciting passions inconsistent with its spirit, and by causing believers to waste their energies in mutual opposition, instead of using their united strength for the promulgation of the truth. ¶ *But their own belly.* "Their own appetite ; that is, they do not labor for the good of the Christian cause, but merely for their own private interests, merely to obtain a maintenance."—*Stuart*. Perhaps this need not be construed quite so strictly. The reference may be

own belly ; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple.

19 For your obedience is come abroad unto all *men*. I am glad

merely to any sinister object, any desire which is permitted to overcome one's love for the gospel of Christ. Some false teachers are doubtless excited by desire for notoriety or "pre-eminence." 3 John 9. Those to whom the apostle specially refers were "zealous for the law," and desired to incorporate it with the gospel. Some of the Gentiles also brought their former opinions with them into the church, and adulterated the gospel by their admixture. In both cases their love for the simple gospel was not sufficient to overpower their love for former errors. In teaching and insisting on these excrescences, they promoted not the cause of the gospel, but rather their own selfish purposes. ¶ *Good words*. Plausible words ; enticing words. Col. ii. 4. ¶ *Fair speeches*. The word may be rendered *flatteries*, or *eulogies*, or even *blessings*. The idea is, that the false teachers endeavored to gain the confidence of their hearers by an exhibition of great friendliness and affection. ¶ *Deceive the hearts of the simple*. Deceive the minds of the unwary, or unsuspecting.

19. *Your obedience is come abroad*. The fame of your obedience is wide spread. Like your faith, it is "spoken of throughout the whole world." Ch. i. 8. The conversion of so many at Rome, the most important city of the world, would naturally become a subject of notoriety, both because intelligence was so readily diffused from this central point, and because the prevalence of the gospel in a city where idolatry was under the patronage of the rulers and dignitaries was such a signal triumph. ¶ *I am glad, therefore*. The apostle rejoices that they had exhibited a teachable, obedient disposition. Yet the very fact that they desired to know and believe the whole truth, and were anxious to perform their whole duty in obeying every precept of the gospel, rendered them liable to be deceived by such as incorporated their own traditions with the

therefore on your behalf : but yet I would have you wise unto that which is good, and simple concerning evil.

20 And the God of peace shall

truth, and superadded the requirements of the law to the simple precepts of the gospel. Hence the apostle adds the admonition which follows. ¶ *Wise unto that which is good*. I desire that you may manifest a clear understanding in embracing all truth which is consistent with the gospel, and in yielding obedience to every righteous precept. ¶ *Simple concerning evil*. Pure or harmless in regard to evil. Be not partakers of any false doctrine or evil practice. Be not led astray from the truth by false teachers, who would entangle you again with the yoke of bondage. Gal. v. 1. The form of the caution is general, against all which may be of evil tendency. The special reference, however, is doubtless to the particular false doctrines and unauthorized requirements of which the apostle had been speaking.

20. *The God of peace*. The God who inspires that peace for which the apostle was so anxious, and which he labors throughout this epistle to promote. See note on chap. xv. 5. ¶ *Shall bruise Satan, &c*. Satan denotes an *adversary*, and the appellation is here applied to the false teachers, whose labors endangered the peace of the church. The general scope of the passage excludes the supposition that any superhuman being is intended by Satan. The name "is given to the unbelieving Jews, and also to the Judaizing teachers and their adherents, who, for selfish purposes, bred divisions at Rome (ver. 17), and in every church where they could obtain a footing ; they are, therefore, called 'ministers of Satan,' 2 Cor. xi. 15. The speedy destruction of these false teachers who occasioned divisions in the church the apostle foretold, by assuring the Romans that the God of peace would bruise Satan under their feet soon, I suppose in allusion to the bruising of the head of the serpent under the heel of the seed of the woman." — *Mac-knight*. ¶ *The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you*. The usual apostolic

bruise Satan under your feet shortly. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ *be* with you. Amen.

21 Timotheus my work-fellow, and Lucius, and Jason, and Sosipater, my kinsmen, salute you.

22 I Tertius, who wrote *this*

epistle, salute you in the Lord,

23 Gaius my host, and of the whole church, saluteth you. Erastus the chamberlain of the city saluteth you, and Quartus a brother.

24 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ *be* with you all. Amen.

benediction. See note on chap. i. 7. By grace is here to be understood all spiritual blessings which flow from divine grace, as manifested in the Lord Jesus Christ. Especially may we suppose the apostle to have desired that the Romans might enjoy that peace and harmony which divine grace inspires, as this was the subject uppermost in his mind in this part of his epistle. ¶ *Amen.* So be it. By Griesbach and other critics this word is rejected as spurious.

21. *Timotheus my work-fellow.* This was undoubtedly that Timothy who was converted by Paul, and styled by him "my own son in the faith," 1 Tim. i. 2; styled also, in consequence of his devotedness to the gospel, and his "unfeigned faith," "my dearly-beloved son," 2 Tim. i. 2. Paul often speaks of him as his companion and fellow-laborer. 1 Cor. xvi. 10; 2 Cor. i. 1, 19; 1 Thess. iii. 2. See notes on Acts xvi. 1—3. To this disciple Paul addressed the two epistles which bear his name. ¶ *Lucius.* Supposed by some to be the same who is named, in Acts xiii. 1, as one of the early teachers at Antioch, where "the disciples were first called Christians." Acts xi. 26. Others suppose the evangelist Luke is intended, the Roman form of the name being here used in addressing Romans. ¶ *Jason.* This has been supposed to be the person with whom Paul lodged at Thessalonica, and who was attacked and ill-treated by the mob on account of his connection with the apostle. Acts xvii. 5—9. We have no certain knowledge, however, whether he were the same or another Jason. ¶ *Sosipater.* Not elsewhere named in the New Testament, unless Sopater, who went with Paul into Asia, be the same. Acts xx. 4. ¶ *My kinsmen.* See note on verse 7. ¶ *Salute you.* Send their affectionate regards; express their Christian sympathy and respect. See note on ver. 3, 5.

22. *Tertius.* This disciple is not elsewhere named in the New Testament, and nothing more is known concerning him than may be gathered from this salutation. ¶ *Who wrote this epistle.* Some suppose Tertius copied the epistle in a fair hand, which had first been written by the apostle. But the more common opinion is that he was employed as an amanuensis, and wrote according to the apostle's dictation. ¶ *In the Lord.* As fellow-Christians.

23. *Gaius my host, &c.* Gaius was a citizen of Corinth, baptized and probably converted by Paul. 1 Cor. i. 14. He is supposed to have been the person to whom John addressed his third epistle. 3 John 1. It would seem that his house was the common resort of Christians at Corinth, and that they assembled there for worship. Or, the meaning may be merely that Gaius was hospitable to all Christians, as well as to the apostle. ¶ *Erastus.* This disciple was a helper of Paul, and was sent by him, in company with Timothy, into Macedonia. Acts xix. 22. He is named, also, in 2 Tim. iv. 20, as dwelling at Corinth. ¶ *The chamberlain of the city.* This word is ordinarily rendered *steward*, and indicates one who has the principal charge of pecuniary affairs. It might not improperly be translated *treasurer.* ¶ *Quartus a brother.* Not elsewhere named; but probably a Roman, as his name distinctly indicates, and known personally to the brethren at Rome.

24. *The grace, &c.* See note on verse 20. This benediction was ordinarily placed by Paul at the end of his epistles, and always in his own handwriting (2 Thess. iii. 17), to authenticate them as his own, though written, as in the present case, by an amanuensis. Having assumed the pen for that purpose here, he added the doxology which follows, ascribing glory to God for his manifestation of grace to the Gentiles.

25 Now to him that is of power to establish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept

25. *Now to him.* To the supreme God, and to him alone, ver. 27. ¶ *Who is of power.* Who is able. Throughout this Epistle, the supreme power of God is recognized, and his ability to accomplish all his purposes, by means of his own appointment, in spite of all obstacles or opposition. ¶ *To establish you.* Namely, to confirm your faith, and to keep you from falling away. ¶ *According to my gospel.* According to the gospel which I have taught, both by word and letter. The great gospel truths which he had taught, and in which he desired that they might be established, may be briefly comprehended in the single proposition, — salvation by grace. The inability of men to rescue themselves from sinfulness, the inefficacy of Grecian wisdom and Jewish law, as means of salvation, the great purpose of God, gradually unfolded to the patriarchs, to the prophets, and more fully by his Son, all tend to the same result; namely, the salvation of men from sin by the grace of God, through Jesus Christ our Lord. ¶ *And the preaching of Jesus Christ.* The preaching concerning Jesus Christ. To preach Christ, is to exhibit his character, and the work which he came to accomplish. This was the theme of apostolic preaching. Acts xvii. 18; 1 Cor. i. 23; 2 Cor. iv. 5. Most fully is this theme discussed in this Epistle, demonstrating that what men cannot accomplish by their own strength, aided by all the wisdom of philosophers and all the precepts of law, the free grace of God, of which Jesus was the manifestation, both can and will accomplish effectually. “Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools.” Ch. i. 22. “By the deeds of the law, there shall no flesh be justified in his sight.” Ch. iii. 20. “Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound.” Ch. v. 20. “The wages of sin is death: but the gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord.” Ch. vi. 23. This is the keynote of the harmony which pervades the whole Epistle. ¶ *Revelation of the*

secret since the world began.

26 But now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made

mystery. According to the public exhibition of that which before was secret; namely, the distinguishing doctrines of the gospel. These were brought to light by the ministry of Jesus Christ, and by the teachings of his inspired apostles. A *mystery* is not something unintelligible, but something not fully comprehended or known. See note on Matt. xiii. 11. ¶ *Which was kept secret.* Was not fully revealed. The patriarchs and prophets enjoyed some glimpses of gospel truth, in ancient times; but its full glory was manifested by him who came as the special representative of the Father. Heb. i. 1—3. ¶ *Since the world began.* Literally, through the eternal ages, or times. Equivalent to all past time. The mystery had always been kept secret, until it was revealed by Jesus Christ.

26. *But now is made manifest.* It is now revealed, made fully known. ¶ *And by the scriptures of the prophets.* By the writings of the prophets. Obscure as were some of those writings, until illuminated by the gospel, yet, as the apostle has shown by many quotations, they announced principles perfectly consistent with the leading truth of the gospel; namely, that in divine grace is the only sure hope of salvation, and that that grace is as free to Gentiles as to Jews, inasmuch as “God is no respecter of persons.” Acts x. 34; ch. ii. 11; see also ch. iii. 29, 30. ¶ *Commandment.* This revelation or manifestation of the truth, as well as its former concealment, is according to the will of God, expressed through his Son. ¶ *Everlasting God.* Everlasting implies unchangeability. Whatever is subject to change has not within it the elements of perpetual duration. The reference here, however, is to the divine purpose. That has not changed, though there has been a change of dispensation. The concealment of the gospel for ages, and its subsequent revelation, were parts of one eternal, unchangeable purpose. Eph. i. 8—10; iii. 9—11. ¶ *Made known to all nations.* Matt. xxviii. 19; Mark xvi. 15. The final commission of our Lord

known to all nations for the obedience of faith :

27 To God only wise, *be glory through Jesus Christ for ever. Amen.*

to his disciples was general and unlimited. The gospel was to be preached to all men, without respect of nation or race. ¶ *For the obedience of faith.* That full faith may be exercised in the gospel thus made known. Men attain no present benefit from the gospel, without faith in its truth. Heb. iv. 2. But a present and special salvation cometh through faith. 1 Tim. iv. 10. Such faith purifies the heart, and induces obedience to the precepts of the gospel, a cheerful submission to its authority as well as to its truth. See note on ch. i. 5.

27. *To God only wise.* The doxology, broken off, in the middle of ver. 25, by one of those parentheses so abundantly used by Paul, is here resumed and finished. He ascribes infinite wisdom as well as infinite power to God. He has elsewhere spoken of his infinite goodness. Possessing these attributes, God is the sure "refuge and strength" of his children. Ps. xli. 1. Infinite wisdom can surely devise means for the accomplishment of all the good which infinite love desires; and infinite power can make those means effectual and triumphant. ¶ *Be glory.* Be honor and praise. See ch. xi. 25—36, where the apostle states even more fully the particular reason why we should ascribe all honor and praise to the God and Father of our spirits. ¶ *Through Jesus Christ forever.* As Christ is the medium through whom the abounding grace of God is manifested to men, so it is natural and proper that our thanksgivings and ascriptions of praise should ascend through him to the Father. We cannot fail to connect him in our minds with that grace of which he was the bright manifestation.

The subscription, which follows, is supposed to state the precise fact, that this Epistle was written at Corinth, and sent to Rome by Phebe; for so much may be inferred from ver. 1, and from

¶ Written to the Romans from Corinthus, and sent by Phebe, servant of the church at Cenchrea.

other circumstances; but it is generally understood to have been added by some other hand, and is rejected from the text, as spurious.

Thus ends the most remarkable Epistle contained in the New Testament. The other apostles, and Paul himself in his other Epistles, devoted their efforts to certain specific points of doctrine or practice, wherein the brethren had need to be instructed. But in this Epistle we have a whole Body of Divinity. It might, without much impropriety, be styled the Gospel according to Paul. It unfolds the whole subject of salvation, or God's method of saving men. And this is the proper theme of the gospel. See Luke ii. 10, 11, and notes. He describes the present condition of mankind; their need of salvation; their inability to save themselves; and the only method in which they can be saved. He shows that this method was devised by the wisdom of God; that the intermediate steps have been under his direction; and that his infinite power will in due time insure its perfect and triumphant accomplishment, according to that "eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord." Eph. iii. 11. This is gospel, or good news, in its highest sense. It informs men that they have a Father in heaven, who desires their highest good. It unfolds to them the method which he has devised to secure that good. And it assures them that his power is equal to his love and his wisdom, and that his purpose cannot be defeated, in any manner whatever. Having maintained this doctrine by a process of argument whose force is irresistible, he calls on all men to unite with him in ascribing all glory to that God, of whom, and through whom, and to whom, are all things. May God enable us, now and evermore, to glorify Him, both in body and in spirit!

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