

*[1960. Romans. In The Biblical Expositor. Carl F.H. Henry, ed. Philadelphia: A.J. Holman Company.]*

Romans

GORDON H. CLARK

INTRODUCTION AND THEME 1:1-17

Salutation 1:1-7

Thanksgiving 1:8-15

Theme: Justification by Faith 1:16, 17

THE NEED OF THE GOSPEL 1:18-3:20

Condemnation of the Gentiles 1:18-32

Condemnation of the Jews 2:1-3:8

Condemnation of All Men 3:9-20

BRIEF STATEMENT OF THE PLAN OF SALVATION: JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH 3:21-31

ABRAHAM, A CONFIRMATION OF JUSTIFICATION 4:1-25

RESULTS OF JUSTIFICATION 5:1-21

REPLY TO FIRST OBJECTION TO JUSTIFICATION: IT PROMOTES SIN: 6:1-8:39

Justification Produces Sanctification 6:1-23

Law and Grace 7:1-25

Assurance and Salvation 8:1-39

REPLY TO SECOND OBJECTION: IT ANNULS GOD'S PROMISES 9:1-11:36

God's Sovereign Choice 9:1-33

Jewish Zeal and Disobedience 10:1-21

The Future of Israel 11:1-36

PRACTICAL EXHORTATIONS 12:1-16:27

Service in the Church and Other Duties 12:1-21

Political Duties 13:1-14

Personal Responsibility 14:1-23

Paul's Missionary Ambitions 15:1-33

Personal Greetings 16:1-27

THE EPISTLE to the Romans, the longest, the most systematic and the most profound of all the epistles, and perhaps the most important book in the Bible, was written by the Apostle Paul (1:1,5). He was in Corinth at the time (15:26, 16:1, 2). The careful composition of the letter suggests that after some tempestuous experience there he had a period of leisure before he took relief money to the saints in Jerusalem. This puts the date early in A.D. 58. Unlike the other epistles, Romans was written to a church he had never visited (1:10, 11, 15). All the ingenuity of destructive criticism has never been able to impugn the authenticity of the epistle. Therefore, without further ado, we turn from the questions of criticism to a study of its message.

## I. Introduction and Theme (1:1-17)

Because Paul had never visited Rome, although several of his friends and converts had gone there to live, he opened his letter with a longer salutation than ordinary. It would have been odd for a private person to address such an important congregation, and utterly out of place to impose upon them such a treatise on fundamental doctrine. Therefore, Paul begins by stressing his apostolic calling (1:1,5)

Incidental allusions show the scope of Paul's mind and furnish a wealth of material for topical study. Although this article can spare no room for detours from the main subject, one paragraph may be used to give a few examples.

The doctrine of election is hinted at, in that Paul was *called* to be an apostle (1:1), and the Roman Christians were also *called* by Jesus Christ. These Christians were called to be *saints*. Paul never suggests that only some Christians, officially canonized, are saints. And as the epistle is addressed to *all* of them (1:7), Paul evident expected them all to read it. This is the Protestant principle of an open Bible. Then, too, the unity of the Old Testament and the New Testament, to which later reference will be made, is asserted (1:2). The deity of Christ is emphasized (1:3, 4, 7). The occurrence of this idea here is significant because in A.D. 58 there were still many living who had seen Jesus. The deity of Christ therefore is not a legend that took centuries to develop, perhaps under Greek influence, but was commonly accepted from the very first. Again, when Paul calls himself the *slave* of Christ Jesus (1:1; cf. 7:6, 25, 12:11; 14:18; 16:18.) and *worships*

God (1:9; 9:4), he allows for no distinction between two acts of worship, the one (*doulia*) to be paid to deceased saints and the other (*latría*) to God alone- much less a third form (*hyperdoulia*, or superslavery) to be paid to the Virgin Mary.

After the salutation (1:1-7), Paul expresses thanks for the remarkable faith of the Romans. He assures them of his desire to visit them and to preach the Gospel in Rome also, “for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth;” and then he introduces the theme of the epistle, *justification by faith* (1:17).

Here two points are to be especially noted. First, as we mentioned above, the message of the Old Testament is essentially the same as the message of the New Testament. Just as the promises which God made by the prophets are themselves the Gospel (1:2, 3; cf. Gal. 3:8), and as Jesus began at Moses to expound what *all* the Old Testament taught of him (Lk. 24:27), so justification by faith is an Old Testament doctrine. Paul takes his theme from Habakkuk 2:4. Second, the fact that the first four books of the New Testament are called Gospels produces the impression that Romans is not the Gospel. A distinction is sometimes drawn between the Gospel to be preached at evangelistic services and something else, perhaps called doctrine or theology, that is dismissed as not so important. But here (1:15-17) Paul emphatically identifies the doctrine of justification by faith with the Gospel. The verse from Habakkuk confirms that the Gospel is the power of God because in it is revealed a righteousness that comes from God by faith. What this means is the burden of the epistle.

## II. The Need of the Gospel (1:18-3:20)

### 1. Condemnation of the Gentiles (1:18—32)

The need of the Gospel, that is, the need of justification by faith, is based on God's wrath against the sin of mankind. This sin may be divided into impiety (1:19-23) and iniquity (vv. 24-32). Wrath, guilt, and liability to punishment are appropriate because we know the truth and yet suppress it. What is known of God has been made clear to them (Acts 14:17). The eternal attributes of omnipotence and deity, though invisible, are clearly seen in the created universe, rendering it inexcusable for a man not to worship God. The race, refusing to glorify and thank God, became stupid, so stupid as to fall to the level of idolatry. They worshipped birds, beasts, and even reptiles.

Because of this impiety, God gave them over to iniquity and to vile passions. This abandoning of man to his lusts is not a passive permission, but is the active and effective wrath of verse 18. One terrible result was sexual perversion which was so vicious that the Apostle Paul does not refer to men and women, as the translations have it, but simply to males and females.

Since they thus reprobated God, God gave them up to a reprobate mind. All sorts of evils followed: maliciousness, murder, deceit, backbiting, cruelty, and so forth. Yet, though they wished to exclude all knowledge of God from their minds, they could not altogether succeed. They still knew that just judgment of God, namely, that people who practice such things are worthy of death; nonetheless they continued in their wicked way and entirely approved of those who did such things.

## 2. Condemnation of the Jews (2:1-3:8)

The Jews were only too willing to admit that the Gentiles were as evil as Paul had said. But in the very act of judging the Gentiles, the Jews condemned themselves, for they were doing essentially the same thing, namely, breaking the law of God. Despising thus the riches of God's goodness, the Jews were treasuring up wrath for themselves because God's judgment is based on strict justice. God rewards each man according to his works. To those who are patient in well doing, God will give eternal life; to those who obey not the truth, he will give tribulation and anguish. And this applies to the Jew as well as to the Gentile. God is no respecter of persons. The Gentiles sinned without the Mosaic law – they shall perish without it; the Jews sinned under the law – they shall be judged by it. For having or hearing the law does not justify; only the doers of the law shall be justified. (In a sense the Gentiles too have the law of God, not the Mosaic law to be sure, but from their creation in the image of God they have the moral law written on their hearts.) If God's wrath were the last word, strict justice would be satisfied, but no one would be saved. But before the righteousness that is given to man through faith can be explained, more emphasis must be put on human sin.

The Jews had many spiritual privileges. They knew more about God than the Gentiles did. Unfortunately, this made them proud, conceited, and Pharisaical. The contrast between their profession and their conduct caused the Gentiles to blaspheme. Those privileges increased, not decreased, their responsibility. Circumcision and the ritual are privileges, but to profit from them one must keep the law. The true child of God is not one who makes an outward profession by receiving the sacraments; he is a Jew who is one inwardly, one in whom the outward sacramental sign truly represents an inward spiritual reality.

To have the sacraments and the oracles of God is a great privilege, even if some misuse them. Man's lack of faith does not nullify God's promises. God will be true, even though every man is a liar. Some Jews try to argue that their unfaithfulness contrasts so sharply with God's faithfulness that God's goodness is put in a much clearer light. But to emphasize God's goodness is to glorify Him. Therefore God ought not to punish them for their unfaithfulness. Nonsense! By that argument God could not even punish the Gentiles. It would always be proper to do evil that good might come. But it is never right to do wrong. There is never an excuse for disobeying God's commands. Those who adopted this wicked principle are most justly condemned.

### 3. Condemnation of All men (3:9-20)

To those who by patience in well doing seek for glory and incorruption, God will give eternal life. But there are no such persons. All are under sin. There is none righteous, no, not one; there is none that seeketh after God. Whatever "religion" may be, Christianity is not man's search for God nor is the Bible a record of such a search; Christianity is God's search for rebellious man and the Bible is His message of redemption. Men need redemption, for their throat is an open sepulcher, their feet are swift to shed blood, and there is no fear of God before their eyes.

The law was given that every mouth should be stopped and that the whole world should be guilty before God. For by the works of the law no one shall ever be justified in God's sight.

Surely there is a deep need of some good news.

### III. Brief Statement on Justification by Faith (3:21-31)

If Romans is the most important book of the Bible, this section is the most important section in Romans. With full realization of the beauty of the Psalms, the majesty of Isaiah, and the popularity of John 3:16, one has good reason to judge that Romans 3:25, 26 contains more of the Gospel than any other sentence in the Bible. Let us study the section with great care.

The question is, if all are guilty and deserving of God's wrath, how can anyone be saved?

The answer is, God demands righteousness, but He has Himself furnished the righteousness He demands. It is a righteousness that is not based on our obedience to the law. To be sure, the Law and the Prophets have taught this righteousness of God, not of man; but man receives it by faith in Jesus Christ. The faith referred to is not some vague general religious faith. Currently there are voices in the public press exhorting the people to have faith; sometimes the object of this faith is said to be man, sometimes God, and sometimes the object is left unidentified. In contrast, the faith of which Paul speaks is definitely faith in Jesus Christ.

This faith is not itself the righteousness that God gives, nor is it the basis of the righteousness; rather, it is the means of obtaining it.

This plan of redemption is suitable to all, for all men are in the same state; they are all guilty; they have all sinned.

Now comes the main statement on justification. But first, it is extremely important to know what the term justification means. This is discovered by observing how it is used by Paul and by other New Testament writers.

In Romans 2:13 it is said, “The Doers of the law shall be justified.” Since doers of the law would not be sinner, yet they would be justified, it follows that justification does not mean pardon. Doers of the law cannot be pardoned. The remark applies also to Romans 3:4, for God is never pardoned; and to Romans 3:20.

Since justification is connected with righteousness, could “justify” mean to make righteous? Once again, Romans 3:4 shows that it cannot, for no one makes God righteous. When too in Luke 7:29 “the publicans justified God,” they did not make God righteous. (Cf. Lk. 7:35; 10:29)

Key to the meaning is seen in the way justification is contrasted with condemnation. “By thy words thou shalt be justified and by thy words thou shalt be condemned” (Mt. 12:37; cf. Rom. 5:16; 8:33, 34).

To condemn a man is not to make him unrighteous; when a judge condemns a prisoner, he does not make him a criminal. The condemnation is not a moral change in the person at all. To condemn is to declare a man’s guilt. The accused has already committed the crime, he is already an evil character; the judge merely declares publicly that he is guilty. Since justification is the opposite of condemnation, it is God’s judicial sentence that the accused is not guilty. Justification therefore means acquittal.

The accused, however, is guilty. He is a sinner. How then is justification or acquittal possible? Obviously it cannot be merited. Sinners do not merit God’s favor. Justification therefore is a free gift, entirely gratuitous, a matter of grace. Still, this does not explain how a just God can justly declare a guilty sinner to be innocent.

This seemingly impossible result was accomplished through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.

God sent Christ to die as a propitiatory sacrifice. To propitiate means to appease an injured party, to turn aside his wrath, to make him favorable to the offender. This is what Christ’s blood accomplished.

If it seemed unrighteous for God to acquit the guilty, Christ’s death satisfied the requirements of righteousness, so that God could justify the sinner and at the same time remain just Himself. Christ’s death, therefore, was a sacrifice to satisfy divine justice and as a consequence to reconcile us to God.

Of course, not all sinner are acquitted. The benefit is restricted to those who have faith in Christ. Faith is the means by which the benefits of Christ’s death are applied. The basis, as distinguished from the means, of justification is Christ Himself, or more particularly, Christ’s personal righteousness.

Thus justification excludes all human boasting in the deeds of the law. Christ has satisfied God's requirements for us.

#### IV. Abraham, a Confirmation of Justification (4:1-25)

That justification by faith is the only method of salvation, and has been the only method since the fall of Adam, is seen in the example of Abraham. Abraham was justified by faith, not by works, for he had no works of which to boast. Scripture is clear on this point (Gen. 15:6).

The wording here, if detached from the main material of Romans 3:25, 26, might give the impression that faith itself is the basis of justification. But Paul allows himself some abbreviation of language in view of the fact that he had spoken so explicitly in the verses above. He had already spoken of faith in Christ and of being justified by faith in His blood. When God acquits a sinner, he does so on the ground of a righteousness that He gives to the sinner. The righteousness comes to the sinner by faith; but from the beginning (1:17) Paul has indicated that it is the righteousness and not the faith which God regards when He says, Not guilty. One should never forget that it is the object of the faith, and not the faith itself, that produces the result.

The imputation of righteousness, and this is grace, shows that redemption is not something that God owes us for our works. David made that clear (Ps. 32:1, 2). God counts us righteous, not because of what we have done, but because He puts Christ's righteousness to our account.

The principle of grace excludes even circumcision (and baptism and the Lord's Supper as well) as basis of acquittal. Abraham was justified first and circumcised afterward. Hence Abraham could be the father of believing Gentiles as well as believing Jews.

Similarly, the nature both of the promises and of the law supports justification by faith. God's promises are ours for merely believing them; their fulfilment does not depend on our keeping the law. The law specifies penalties for disobedience, and if we depended on the law for God's blessing, faith would be useless, and the promises would be useless too. Not only that, but since we are never sure that we shall obey the law, assurance of salvation must depend on faith, promise, and grace. Only in this way can we be sure.

Abraham is an excellent illustration, for the promise God gave him was hard to believe. Yet he did not stagger at it. Now the book of Genesis is not just so much ancient history. It explains the only plan of redemption that God has ever offered to mankind. Imputation applies to us today as much as it did to Abraham, provided, of course, that we believe on Christ Who was crucified for our sins and was raised again for our justification.

## V. Results of Justification (5:1-21)

Although the results of justification continue through chapters 6, 7, and 8, these three form a special section, so that chapter 5 must be treated as a single unit.

The first mentioned result of justification is peace with God. Previously we had been enemies of God. But through Jesus Christ we receive peace, grace, and hope. Even our tribulations are now a blessing because they produce patience, experience, and a hope that shall not be disappointed. All this depends on the work of Christ, Who died for us even while we were yet sinners and enemies. Now that we have been reconciled to God by the death of His Son, and are no longer enemies, it is all the more certain that He will save us from the wrath to come.

Christ's death is the effective factor; and before further results of justification are given in the next three chapters, it is necessary to explain more in detail just how Christ's death accomplishes its purpose.

Romans 5:12-21 are about the most difficult verses in the epistle. To understand them it is best to fix in mind, first, how they are introduced. The design of the paragraph is to explain justification. From 3:21 on, the merit of Christ's sacrifice has been prominent, and the immediately preceding verses stress that merit. The work of Christ is not to be explained by a comparison with the work of Adam. Any interpretation that destroys the comparison must be incorrect. Of course, the work of Adam and the work of Christ are antithetical in some important particulars; these differences are carefully mentioned and set aside in 5:15-17. But there is also a most important point of similarity; correct interpretation must discover what it is.

The difficulty of the passage is aggravated by its complicated grammatical structure. Verse 12 begins the comparison between Adam and Christ, but it breaks off half way through. The comparison is resumed in verses 18 and 19. Verses 13 and 14 are a sort of parenthetical remark attached to the end of verse 12, and verses 15, 16, and 17 form another parenthesis attached to the end of verse 14. The main thought therefore is found in verses 12, 18, and 19.

The analogy of these verses is this: Christ is the cause of our righteousness and justification in the same way that Adam is the cause of our sin and condemnation. How then did Adam cause our sin?

Did Adam bring sin and death upon all men by reason of the fact that all men followed his example and, themselves, committed voluntary transgressions?

This interpretation must be rejected for four reasons. First, the phrase "all sinned" uses a tense which in Greek refers to a single act in past time and not to many acts in the present. Second, the purpose of these verses (and this is certainly made especially clear in verses 16 and 17) is to show that Adam's one sin, not our many sins, is the cause of death. Third, the idea of

imitating Adam's example is explicitly ruled out in verse 14. And fourth, if we die because we imitate Adam's example, then, to maintain the comparison between Adam and Christ, justification would have to be the result of imitating Christ.

Perhaps then, when it says "all sinned," it means "all became corrupt"; that is, Adam's sin caused him to deteriorate physically and spiritually, and since we naturally inherit his depraved nature, we sin and die.

This interpretation also must be rejected. It is true, of course, that we inherit a depraved nature from Adam; but such is not the sense of this passage. First, "all became corrupt" is an impossible translation. The text says, "all sinned." Second, it ruins the comparison between Adam and Christ. If we become sinners and die because of a moral change for the worse, it would follow that we are justified because of a moral change for the better. Such an idea is essentially a justification by works, or at best, it is the Roman Catholic position of justification by faith plus works. Luther and Calvin, however, have made it forever clear that justification is by faith alone – without works, lest Abraham should boast. Third, verse 15-19 emphasize the *one* sin of Adam as the ground of our condemnation. Neither our depravity nor our sinfulness is said to be this ground.

None of this denies that we are in fact depraved, nor that we commit sins, nor indeed, as we shall see in the following three chapters, that justification is followed by a moral change and good works. It does deny that any of these things is the basis on which God acquits the sinner.

The only interpretation that does justice to the text is that Adam was our substitute or representative. He acted in our stead. Therefore when he sinned and died, we all sinned and we all died. His representative act, his one sin – not many sins that he committed in later life – is the ground upon which God condemned us. His one act made us all guilty.

This view of how Adam's sin is the cause of our guilt preserves the comparison between Adam and Christ, for the whole scriptural description of our relation to Christ is permeated with the concept of representation. We die with Christ; we are crucified with Christ; we rose with Him; and we sit with Him in heavenly places. These phrases cannot be true of us personally, for we had not been born when Christ was crucified. These expressions are true representatively. When Christ died, He paid the penalty of sin in our stead. He took our place. He was our substitute or representative. Therefore as the guilt of the one man Adam was imputed to us for condemnation, so the righteousness of the one man Jesus Christ was imputed to us for our justification.

It is sometimes claimed that this interpretation is the result of theological prejudice. Quite the contrary! The natural mind, which wants to boast, would never have invented this doctrine. The men of the Reformation maintained it because the Bible itself forced it on them. To the self-

righteous, by means of faith, on the ground of Christ's imputed righteousness, is the scandal of the Cross.

## VI. Reply to First Objection: Justification Promotes Sin (6:1 – 8:39)

### 1. Justification Produces Sanctification (6:1-23)

The magnitude of God's grace is seen more clearly when contrasted with the extent of sin. Therefore Paul had just said, "Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound." From this just sentiment, however, the sinful mind has a natural tendency to draw fallacious inferences. Hence Paul introduces an objection to his doctrine by the question, "Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?"

Recall (3:7, 8) that the unbelieving Jews had inconsistently and slanderously accused Paul of teaching "Let us do evil that good may come." It is necessary, therefore, to defend justification against the charge that it encourages sin. This defense is the doctrine of sanctification.

Justification and sanctification are sometimes misunderstood by being too sharply separated and contrasted. The adversative *but* is put between them: We are justified by faith, *but*, for some mysterious reason, we must now do good works. Other Christians avoid the sharp antithesis, but leave the two as somewhat unrelated facts. Instead of using the *but*, they use *and*: We are justified by faith, *and*, to change the subject, we are sanctified by works.

Paul, however, connects them closely. Not *but*, not *and*, but *therefore*. We are justified by faith, *therefore* we should not sin. Sanctification is the purpose of justification. And so surely does justification produce its result that Paul is able to say, "Sin shall not have dominion over you" (6:14). To borrow other scriptural expressions, one might say, justification is the straight gate and sanctification is the narrow way that leads to glory.

In answer to the question, "Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?" the main point of the first fourteen verses is briefly this: No one who comes to Christ for salvation from both the guilt and power of sin can possibly want to continue sinning. Christ's work on the cross was an expiation of sin. The sinner who trusts in Christ's shed blood knows that his "old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed" (6:6); and considers himself "dead with Christ" (v. 8). If a man does not thus identify himself with Christ's purpose to destroy sin, and if, instead of grief and hatred of sin, he cherishes the notion that he may continue in sin that grace may abound, the conclusion is inevitable that this man knows nothing of Christ and has not been justified. To speak plainly, it is psychologically impossible to trust Christ's redeeming blood

and to want to continue in sin. Sanctification is not merely the purpose of justification, as if the purpose might fail; but rather sanctification is the inevitable result.

There is a progression of thought in chapter 6. The first fourteen verses consider the question, Shall we sin in order that grace may abound? This envisages a wicked calculation of habitual sinning. Verse 15 asks a different question: Shall we sin because we are under grace? This envisages not the wicked calculation of habitual sin, but the lazy indifference of an occasional sinner. Verse 1 asks, Shall we sin *in order that*? Verse 15 asks, Shall we sin *because*?

Lazy indifference may not be so heinous as wicked calculation, but it is equally excluded. With the illustration from slavery that Christ Himself used, Paul constructs an easily understood syllogism: No man can serve two masters; we are no longer servants of sin but slaves of God; therefore it is God Whom we should obey.

## 2. Law and Grace (7:1-25)

In some ways this chapter is perhaps even more difficult than 5:12-21. Yet the Protestant reformers were well agreed as to its meaning. The difficulty is to determine whether Paul is speaking of a regenerate or an unregenerate person. Most of the expressions in verse 7-13 can easily be taken as referring to the unregenerate, especially since the verbs are in the past tense. But can verses 14-25, in the present tense, refer to the unregenerate? Or is Paul describing the normal experience of a Christian?

To answer this question one should observe the position of chapter 7 as a whole. The plan of the epistle makes sanctification the topic of chapter 6 to 8. To expect anything but an incidental reference to the unregenerate state would be to break the continuity of the argument.

Then too, the wider context of all of Paul's epistles, and indeed the whole Bible, teaches that the Christ experiences a conflict with sin, whereas the unregenerate man is at ease in sin. Perhaps the unregenerate may have some twinges of conscience. (1:32; 2:15), but since there is no spiritual life, no new strength, the conflict is extremely superficial (Ps. 73:4-12; 119:70; Mt. 13:13-15; Rom. 3:9-18).

Now the person spoken of in this chapter is inwardly inclined to good. Nearly every one of the last twelve verses emphasizes this in sharp contrast to the four references just listed. Here the person hates the evil he does, he wants to do good, he delights in the law of God after the inward man, and he thanks God for deliverance through Jesus Christ. These things are not true of the unregenerate.

The experience described, therefore, is the normal experience of a devout Christian. The more sincere he is and the more faithfully he tries to please God, the more conscious is he of the struggle. Thus the very occurrence of the struggle is evidence of his regeneration. (Cf. Ps. 38:4; 40:12, Is. 6:5; Mt. 25:41; I Cor. 3:1-4).

The present chapter therefore enforces the teaching of the previous chapter (6:12, 13, 16) that sanctification is not, like justification, an instantaneous act. Sanctification is the life process of growing in holiness. And this requires effort (Gal. 5:17; Jas. 4:7; I Pet. 2:11). Verse 21 therefore is not to be understood as a doomed man's cry of despair, but as the introduction to the thanksgiving evoked by the answer to the question.

These general remarks do not solve all the incidental difficulties of particular verses. There are still a number in the first half of the chapter. But the main idea is not now left in doubt. The law of God is good, it is spiritual, it should be an object of delight. Nevertheless, as the law could not justify the sinner, neither can it of itself sanctify the Christian. The law may indeed show what God requires, but it cannot give the life, inclination, or strength to do good. Grace is needed. But is this grace sufficient? The next chapter answers this question.

### 3. Assurance of Salvation (8:1-39)

This section of three chapters (6:1-8:39) teaches, as we have seen, that justification by faith, far from encouraging sin, produces sanctification. The present chapter, the last of the three, considers assurance of salvation. This assurance is a stage in the process of sanctification.

The break between the chapters, which, of course, is not of Paul's doing, is an unfortunate medieval blunder, for it obscures the fact that 8:1 is the conclusion of the thought in 7:25.

*Because* God has delivered me from this death, of sin, *because* He has given me the strength to struggle, *therefore* there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus. This assurance is supported in seven short paragraphs.

(1) We are freed from the law (8:1-4). The law could not justify the sinner; it can only condemn him. But Christ did what the law could not do; and therefore its condemnation does not reach the believer.

(2) Salvation is actually begun in regeneration, justification, and sanctification (8:5-11). The Spirit of God dwells in the believer. Therefore, instead of being carnally minded, and at enmity with God, the believer is interested in the things of the Spirit. The work of the indwelling Spirit extends even the resurrection of the mortal body.

(3) We are children and heirs of God (8:12-17). The indwelling Spirit makes us children and enable us to address God as father. When we think of God as father, the Holy Spirit is witnessing *with* (not to) our spirit that we are God's children; and if children, then we must be heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ.

(4) Affliction does not refute this (8:18-28). Christ was the Son of God, and He suffered; if we suffer with Him, it confirms rather than refutes our sonship. These sufferings are not restricted to what people ordinarily call persecution. They include all our earthly limitations and weaknesses,

all our trials and burdens, and our subjection to physical death. In these sufferings we may groan and not know what to pray for; but the same indwelling Spirit “maketh intercession for saints according to the will of God. And we know all things work together for good to them that love God.”

(5) We have been predestinated to eternal life (8:28-30). Reasons for assurance have been building up toward a climax. They converge on the eternal purpose of God. The transition from the previous paragraph is the phrase, “who are called according to his purpose.” God has a plan or purpose for history; this plan includes not only the grand scheme of things but also every detail, for God works *all things* together; according to this divine purpose God has called or chosen them who now love Him. For those persons who He foreknew or chose, He also predestinated to live a Christ-like life; and those whom He thus predestinated, He called; since they were effectually called, He justified them; and those whom He justified, He will also glorify. There is in this progression no point at which an individual can drop out. Every one of each preceding class is included in each succeeding class. All the predestinated are justified; all the justified shall be glorified. Since this process from beginning to end is controlled by God, and does not depend on our working all things, the doctrine of predestination is a most important ground of assurance of salvation.

(6) God is for us (8:31-34). He was so interested in our salvation that He did not spare His own Son; it cannot be supposed that God would give His Son and hold back the lesser gifts of sanctification and glorification. God is in control. It is He Who has justified us; and that settles the matter.

(7) God’s love is immutable (8:35-39). This final paragraph adds no further grounds of assurance, but rather summarizes them and enforces their application. A series of factors are mentioned, famine, peril, sword, angels, powers, things to come, that sometimes becloud a Christian’s assurance; but none of them is omnipotent, and God is. He has chosen to love us. Therefore nothing can separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

## VII. Reply to Second Objection: It Annuls God’s Promises (9:1-11:36)

### 1. God’s Sovereign Choice (9:1-33)

Paul naturally yearned for the salvation of his own race; and he saw that rejection of Christ by the Jews and the justification of Gentiles by faith produce the illusion that the Word of God was of no effect. Had not the promises been given to the Israelites?

No, they had not. At least the promises were not given to the physical descendants of Abraham as such. Ishmael was excluded in favor of Isaac. Esau also was excluded in favor of Jacob. These exclusions are inherent in the promise itself; that is, the choice is God’s.

Note well that the choice was made before the children had been born and before either of them had done any good or evil. This was to show that the determining factor is God's purpose. Election does not depend on our works, but on Him that calleth.

Was God then unjust to choose Jacob, and not Esau, before they were born and apart from their works? Not at all. In the first place, it is not a question of justice, as if Jacob and Esau had some claim on God, but of mercy and compassion. Furthermore, it was God's prerogative also to harden Pharaoh's heart for the purpose of displaying His power in him.

Is then God unjust in punishing the wicked, seeing that no one can possibly resist God's will? Not at all. No one has any right to find fault with God. God is like a potter. Out of the very same lump of clay He makes one vessel for honor and another for dishonor. It is ridiculous to suppose that the clay can dictate to the potter.

God therefore fitted out certain vessels for destruction in order to make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy which He prepared unto glory. And these vessels of mercy include some Gentiles and exclude some Jews.

The distinguishing factor between the two groups is faith in Christ. Some Gentiles have faith; but some Jews, in fact the majority, trusting in their own works, find Christ to be a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense.

## 2. Jewish Zeal and Disobedience (10:1-21)

Nevertheless, Paul naturally desires the salvation of the Jews. Unfortunately, they are ignorant of the incarnation and the resurrection, though Moses prophesied of the Messiah, and their zeal is centered in multitudinous works. The righteousness of faith, on the other hand, comes more easily, simply, by the acceptance of the Gospel.

Now, the Gospel is briefly this: If thou shalt confess that Jesus is Lord, Adonai, the Jehovah of the Old Testament, and sincerely believe in his resurrection from the dead, thou shalt be saved. And this applies to Jew and Gentile alike.

But faith or belief in this Gospel depends on hearing it; and this presupposes preaching; and this requires the dispatch of missionaries and evangelists to all nations. Now, the Jews have indeed heard, but they did not believe our report; therefore God is provoking and angering them by choosing the Gentiles.

## 3. The Future of Israel (11:1-36)

Hath God then cast away His people forever? Not at all. First, His people, in the sense of those individuals whom He foreknew, God has not cast away. This does not mean all the Jews. For as it was in the time of Elijah, so now the elect are a remnant. Election is of grace, not of works, so that while the remnant obtained grace, the rest were blinded. God gave them the spirit of slumber and caused them to stumble in order to bring salvation to the Gentiles.

Of course, no one would suppose that God would cast away the remnant elected by grace. But there is also another sense in which God will not cast off His people. The Jews as a race still figure in God's plan and they will have a glorious future. For it the impoverishment of the Jews in the first century enriched the Gentiles, the return of the Jews in the future will produce much greater blessings. It will be like life from the dead.

The history of the Church can be illustrated by an olive tree. Some of its original and natural branches were broken off so that branches from a wild olive tree could be grafted in. This, of course, is no compliment or ground of boasting for the Gentiles. And if God did not spare the natural branches because of their unbelief, the Gentiles should take heed lest God spare not them also. Furthermore, if God has grafted in wild branches, is it not all the more certain that He will graft back the natural branches at some future date?

The blindness of the Jews is to continue until "the fullness of the Gentile" be come in. This fullness may indicate a time when the great majority of Gentiles then living shall have been converted. Virtually the whole world will be Christian. Such an interpretation makes a proper contrast with "all Israel" in the next verse. Or "the fullness of the Gentiles" might possibly refer to a time when all the Gentiles whom God has chosen for salvation, even though not a majority, have been saved and God will save no more of them. At any rate, when this fullness occurs, then the great majority of the Jews shall be saved also. This ultimate conversion of the Jews was prophesied in the Old Testament.

"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! ... For of him, and through him, and to him are all things: to whom be glory forever. Amen" (11:33, 36).

## VIII. Practical Exhortations (12:1-16:27)

### 1. Service in the Church (12:1-21)

With the main exposition of doctrine completed, Paul here turns to a series of directions for everyday living. There are some coherent paragraphs in these five chapters, but there are many passages which are merely lists of successive items.

First comes a general exhortation to present ourselves as living sacrifices to God (12:1, 2). Such service is intelligent worship. Then Paul passes on to the idea that each person has his particular function in the Church. There are many members of the one body and God has given them different measures of faith. Some are called to prophesy, others are called to minister, to teach, to exhort, or to rule. Each should perform his office with simplicity, diligence, and cheerfulness, remembering that they are all members of the one body.

The virtues which are to be exemplified in this service, some of which indeed apply beyond the strict confines of the church organization, are love, zeal, hope, patience, and hospitality. Humility should replace conceit. Peace should be sought rather than vengeance. "Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good."

## 2. Political Duties (13:1-14)

Government is not merely a human invention; it is ordained of God for the good of the governed; and therefore a Christian is obliged to obey the laws, not only from fear of civil penalties, but chiefly for conscience toward God. The employment of the sword and the collection of taxes are, briefly, the two chief functions of the State. By the term "sword," Paul means the penalties of disobedience, obviously including capital punishment, and doubtless war as well.

From this passage of James I of England and other absolute monarchs have argued for the divine right of kings, and some theologians have concurred that subjects must invariably submit. John Calvin and John Knox, on the contrary, pointed out that rulers also have obligations, they may be disobeyed and even replaced. Peter (Acts 5:29) said, "We ought to obey God rather than men." The midwives of Egypt also (Ex. 1:17) and Moses' parents (Ex. 2:3) disobeyed Pharaoh. If then government is ordained of God, it would seem reasonable that it has no authority contrary to God's commands.

But in all ordinary cases, and this is most of the time, a Christian should obey the law.

He should, of course, obey the law of God – the Ten Commandments which specify the contents of love. The light of the Gospel has dawned, heaven is nearer than it was, so therefore "let us put on the armour of light."

## 3. Personal Responsibility (14:1-23)

Some people are weak in the faith. Instead of limiting their scruples to the precepts of God's Word, they are conscientiously opposed to eating pork and are strict in the observance of feast and fast days.

Such persons should be received into church membership and should not be despised. But they are not to be received for the purpose of disputing matters in doubt; that is, the weak and superstitious Christian who eateth not is not to set the standards for Christian conduct. It is not their prerogative but God's to judge the actions of the more mature Christian. Both groups are trying to serve the Lord, and all shall stand before the judgment seat of Christ. Each individual therefore must personally assume his responsibilities as he sees them.

Although it is the weaker group that is apt to be censorious and cause friction, it devolves chiefly upon those who are stronger in the faith to diminish the friction by a policy of accommodation. Eating pork and drinking wine are not sins, they are matters of indifference; but precisely because they are indifferent they do not constitute the Kingdom of God. The Kingdom consists of righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. Therefore if any form of indifferent conduct is likely to cause a weaker Christian to violate his conscience, the stronger Christian, though he may allow himself these things on other occasions, is obliged to forego them in such circumstances. For violation of conscience, the doing of what one believes wrong, is a sin that God condemns. No one should lead a weaker Christian into this sin.

#### 4. Paul's Missionary Ambitions (15:1-33)

The opening verse of this chapter confirms and enforces the duties just enjoined partly by an appeal to the example of Christ. We should try to please our neighbor, when it is to his good, for Christ please not Himself. Christ also received us, and therefore we too should receive the weak in faith.

The work of Christ brings to Paul's mind the calling of the Gentiles, and this introduces Paul's missionary ambitions. He has been particularly anxious to preach the Gospel in places where Christ has not been named. This aim of starting new churches in unevangelized territory is the reason why Paul has not been able to visit Rome. Fortunately, at present his work in Greece is about finished and he can think of taking the Gospel to Spain. This will give him the oft desired opportunity of visiting the imperial city. First, however, he must deliver to the poverty stricken saints in Jerusalem the relief money that the Greeks have so generously contributed. Then he plans to sail for Spain. He asks the Roman Christians to pray for his safety during his stay at Jerusalem, for there is always the danger that the Pharisees might arrest him and have him executed.

#### 5. Personal Greetings (16:1-27)

In his travels, Paul had met multitudes of people. A number of his converts, for one reason or another, had gone to Rome. Therefore Paul sends greetings to more than two dozen saints by name. Phebe, who apparently is to carry the letter, he commends to the Romans for her faithful service. Priscilla and Aquilla, who have hazarded their lives for Paul, not put their house in Rome at the disposal of the Roman church for one of its particular congregations, and so on.

In conclusion, Paul warns the Romans to avoid those who deviate from the doctrine that has been taught. They may be fair of speech, but they serve not our Lord Jesus Christ.

Then after including some salutations from his associates, Paul ends the epistle with a benediction and a doxology.